



**FLASHBACKS REDUX**

# **PARANOIA<sup>TM</sup>**

**Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET**

**WARNING:**

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower is treason punishable by a long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.

# INTRODUCTION

As we hurtle past **PARANOIA**'s 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary into an era uneasily sandwiched between the promised techno-utopia of **2010** and the Mayan apocalypse of 2012, the game seems more prescient than ever. As I write, the headlines are full of leaked secrets, conspiracy theories, shadowy secret societies vying against increasingly autocratic regimes, invasive security procedures, economies that wobble like Potemkin villages, corporate malfeasance and alarmingly weird technology. There's a running section on the official **PARANOIA** blog (<http://paranoiarpg.blogspot.com>) called '**PARANOIA in the Real World**', but these days it's almost redundant. We have met the Commie Mutant Traitor, and it is us.

I am, of course, overwhelmingly happy about this. Wait, I mean patriotic. Or austere. Whatever the approved groupthink of today is, I am most sincerely and wholeheartedly *it*.

Anyway, welcome to **Flashbacks Redux**, a marginally updated and reshuffled collection of wonderful **PARANOIA** missions, both classic and recent, covering the full 25-year history of the One True Fun Game. Herein is the work of many - brilliant writers, Famous Game Designers and at least one tired hack - all united by their love of the game. If, at any point, the missions here happen to reflect or (alarmingly) predict the sorry state of the world, we offer sincere apologies.

Come for the hilarity, stay for the trenchant social commentary. At least, that's the idea, when we're not making cheap jokes about airport security.

## WHATS IN FLASHBACKS REDUX

**Mandatory Mission Pack:** The **Mandatory Mission Pack** is freeze-dried Alpha Complex, designed to be sprinkled lightly or baked thoroughly into your own missions. It's fragments of a million potential missions for the harried Gamemaster. More than any of the other projects I worked on for **PARANOIA**, the MMP came closest to capturing the Alpha Complex zeitgeist.

**Clones in Space:** Remember all the pretentious stuff about zeitgeists and real-world paranoia and how this game was Deeply Meaningful? Forget all that. Erick Wujcik's **Clones in Space** involves jolly aliens and rocket ships. It does, however,

also involve explosive decompression and the ever-popular Explosive Decompression Table, and for this it is absolved of all wrongdoing.

**Orcbusters:** Characters from A Parallel Universe Unlike A Certain Non-fun Roleplaying Game invade Alpha Complex! Orcs! Wizards! Lizards! Gizzards! Transdimensional Collapsatrons! Proof that there was something in the water back then! This one's by Ken Rolston, long-standing **PARANOIA** line editor during the early days.

**My First Treason:** If we were interested solely in cashing in on popular fads, we'd be frantically scraping the barnacles of West End Games' ill-fated **PARANOIA/Vampire** crossover, **Creatures of the Nightcycle**, and gluing glitter onto the bloodsuckers so we could call it **Twilightcycle** or something. Credit us with the approved minimum level of dignity, please. **My First Treason** started out as an experiment in screwing players over before the game even started, and only turned into a **Harry Potter** parody when the Famous Game Designer's brain exploded.

**Yellow Clearence Black Box Blues:** When two or three old-school **PARANOIA** players gather together, they inevitably come to speak in hushed tones of the brilliance of John M. Ford's epic. Quite possibly the funniest mission ever written. Certainly one of the top two.

**Code 7s:** Short ways to kill your Troubleshooters.

**Me and My Shadow Mark 4:** The other candidate for funniest mission ever, and probably the most popular. Written by Steve Gilbert and Peter Corless, **Me and my Shadow Mark 4** is the iconic **PARANOIA** scenario: screw-jobs, overkill, absurdity, and the classic simplicity of 'something falls off.'

**Pre PARANOIA:** Jeff's Groves' training exercise for newly recruited Troubleshooters.

**Vapours Don't Shoot Back:** The first ever full-length **PARANOIA** mission, written by Curtis H. Smith & Geoff Valley. This was one of the key inspirations for the **High Programmers** rulebook, which followed promptly a mere twenty-four years later.

In case the 25th anniversary edition is your first exposure to the **PARANOIA** infection, you'll note some differences in approach and content in these classic missions, many of which were based on the first and second editions of the game.

Ken Rolston, the original **PARANOIA** line editor, often used props and staging to brilliant comic effect. Ken exhorted the GM to (for instance) simulate a faulty public address speaker by talking with a styrofoam cup in his mouth. Fans still talk about this. The current line de-emphasizes props somewhat, partly because we're not as good at it as Ken, but mainly in an effort to expand the range of experiences players associate with the game. It's arguably harder to sustain a tone of fearful anxiety when speaking with a cup wedged in your mouth.

This revised text doesn't update certain details of setting in these older works, even though the new **PARANOIA** edition alters them. For instance:

- The economy wasn't nearly as important in these older missions as it is now. Don't expect to see anyone in a serious cash-flow bind. However, supplies were scarce.
- Earlier editions let PCs have troublesome powers like Precognition. Roll with it.
- The 'service service' idea, which assigns Troubleshooters secondary duties from firms in all the service groups, generalizes from older editions' unfailing 'trip to R&D to field-test valuable experimental equipment'. All the full-length missions here send the Troubleshooters to R&D. If you're new to the game, you'll soon understand why old-time players can't talk about R&D without giggling and shivering.
- The early writers sent the Troubleshooters Outdoors, over and over. In those days, most low-clearance Alpha Complex citizens weren't even aware of the existence of a world beyond the underground city, and mere knowledge of it was treason.
- For that matter, mere knowledge of secret societies or mutations was itself treasonous. So was lots of other stuff.
- PURGE was a comedic society like all the others. The current edition recasts PURGE as ruthless, genuinely scary terrorists.
- This revision couldn't quite/didn't bother to winkle out every single reference to 'clone families'. In previous editions of **PARANOIA** each player character had six identical clones, all decanted at the same time and raised together as individuals. When one clone was on a Troubleshooting mission, the others in his family were working desk jobs or something, waiting to jump to duty as soon as their brother got offed. When all six clones died, you created a new family of six identical clones.

In the current edition, each PC is created as one individual, the 'Prime', with backup clone bodies floating unconscious in a Tech Services clone tank somewhere. When the current PC dies, his memories are transferred to the new body, and he returns to action. (What's that? This idea makes no sense? Well, if you're so smart, why don't you take that up with The Computer? No doubt it welcomes diligent correction.)



# PARANOIA™

## Mandatory Mission Pack

### Special duties for special troubleshooters

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Looking after your best interests

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## Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen  
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# MANDATORY MISSION PACK

## 1. Introduction

Hello and welcome to the Mandatory Mission Pack. This friendly mission pack contains extra bonus resources for your PARANOIA games. It is designed to be used in an ad hoc manner – if your Troubleshooters open the wrong door, run off down the wrong corridor or just get hold of the wrong end of the stick entirely and your simple ‘hunt and kill the Commies in the food vat factory’ mission turns into ‘become convinced that the High Programmer is a traitor and engage in a complex Complex-spanning

epic conspiracy to take him down’. This Mandatory Mission Pack gives you specific locations, characters and weirdnesses without a general context. Think of it as a tinkertoy set for PARANOIA – just put these locations and characters into your own plots.

There is, of course, a school of thought that Troubleshooters who open the wrong door or run off down the wrong corridor should just

be shot.

This is an entirely valid school of thought.

In which case, think of this book as a selection of scenic locations in which to terminate the Troubleshooters.

## 2. Briefings

*Reports that say that something hasn't happened are always interesting to me, because as we know, there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns -- the ones we don't know we don't know.*

- Donald Rumsfeld

Unusual briefing rooms are between 1 and 10; unusual briefing officers between 11 and 20. Either roll for the particular brand of weirdness being inflicted on the players or pick from either or both lists.

*officer must be up there. You can hear the susurrus of a fan in the distance and there is a disconcerting smell of ash in this chimney-shaped room. Your subconscious also picks up on the facts that there are flash-heating elements built into the walls and that the chairs are made of a highly heat-resistant synthetic material that can withstand temperatures of up to 2,000 degrees.*

If the Troubleshooters annoy the briefing officer, he can twist a dial. This causes the heating elements in the wall to glow a dull red and raises the temperature in the shaft slightly. Turning it more increases the temperature more and more, until all of the Troubleshooters' troubles – not to mention their skin – just dries up and floats away on the breeze.

*briefing officer is perched uncertainly on top of a large bean-bag, looking very uncomfortable as he grapples with his briefing notes. As you enter, mood music starts playing in the background.*

Ah, you've got to love it when Mystics get to design briefing rooms. One of the bean bags has an Internal Security spy hiding inside it, eavesdropping on the briefing. When a Troubleshooter sits down on the bag, it feels oddly lumpy and makes the occasional groaning or wheezing noise. If discovered, the IntSec officer cuts his way out of the bag, stands up, brushes himself off and stalks out the door with as much dignity as he can muster.

### 1. Briefing Room 807 – Getting the Shaft

Sector YAP, Level 12, Corridor 90

*On entering the briefing room, you look up. And up. And up. You're at the bottom of a deep, deep circular shaft. A blindingly bright spotlight shines down on you from far above, illuminating a harsh circle at the centre of the shaft's floor. Chairs line the edge of the circle of light. Somewhere, far above you, you can make out the outline of a balcony – the briefing*

### 2. Briefing Room 430- Gamma – Mystic Comfort

Sector DEL, Level 9, Corridor 4

*This briefing room is all pastels and comfy couches. There is still a RED stripe running around the wall but it's done in something fuzzy and soft to the touch. There is a Computer monitor with what appears to be a tartan monitor-cosy in one corner. Your*

### 3. Cory-G-FOX Memorial Briefing Room

Sector FOX, Level 22, Corridor 2

*This briefing room is decorated with murals and memorabilia dedicated to the life of Cory-G-FOX, a famous Troubleshooter and Hero of the Complex who battled Commie Mutant Traitors and saved Alpha Complex from some terrible threat (details on the terrible threat not available at your security clearance). On your left, a*

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*mural depicts Cory-G dramatically hurling the rest of his team into a steaming food vat after he discovered they were all traitors. To your right are relics of Cory-G's career, such as his shiny laser pistol, his trusty cone rifle, his golden Hygiene Officer MBD badge, his framed certificate of merit, his ME Card and his remains in a nice little urn. A huge statue of Cory-G straddles the briefing podium; your briefing officer peers at you from between the ankles of the great man.*

All of Cory-G's stuff is still functional.

- ☞ The laser pistol has a GREEN barrel with one shot left.
- ☞ The cone rifle has six High Explosive shells in a bandolier.
- ☞ The MBD badge is just that, if anyone wants to pretend to be a Hygiene Officer.
- ☞ The certificate of merit would sell for 1,000 credits to a collector.
- ☞ The ME card lets a Troubleshooter pretend to be Cory-G. On the bright side, you get GREEN clearance, access to an account with thousands of credits and the adulation of those who think you are Cory-G. On the downside, you are registered as deceased and The Computer does not like zombies.

## 4. Briefing Room 128 – The Countdown

**Sector PNS, Level 8, Corridor 4**

*When you enter this briefing room, an electronic voice says calmly 'Seven minutes and fifteen seconds remaining. Attention. Seven minutes and ten seconds remaining.' The walls, floor and ceiling of this room are made up of large liquid-crystal displays, each of which displays 07:00 in large black flashing letters. The chairs, briefing podium and other furniture are all made of transparent plastic, so you can see the displays perfectly from any point in the room.*

*Your briefing officer starts his briefing, interrupted occasionally by the electronic voice calling out the current*

*time. It's getting closer and closer to zero...*

What happens when the countdown reaches zero? Here are some options:

- ☞ Absolutely nothing.
- ☞ The next Troubleshooter team shows up at the door of the briefing room. It is a busy sector; the countdown just tells the briefing officer how much time he has left in his scheduled booking.
- ☞ Everyone in the room is disintegrated.

## 5. Briefing Room 84 – Contradiction

**Sector JKL, Level 45, Corridor 9**

*This briefing room looks like a pretty standard briefing room – uncomfortable chairs, odd stains on the carpets, cameras watching your every move and a briefing officer standing behind an armoured podium – except for the absolutely gigantic television screen that takes up the entire back wall. It is like being at a movie theatre.*

*The briefing officer clears his throat and starts. Immediately, the screen behind him flickers into life and the text of the briefing crawls slowly up the screen. 'This briefing is classified clearance RED' says the officer and the screen behind him displays the same text.*

Unfortunately for the Troubleshooters, the briefing speech read by the officer and the briefing text displayed on the screen diverge. Two entirely different and contradictory sets of instructions are issued to the Troubleshooters...

## 6. Briefing Room 192 – A Glass of Water

**Sector RTD, Level 33N, Corridor Gamma**

*This briefing room is unremarkable apart from the glasses of water sitting on the table in front of you. All of the glasses are sitting on plastic coasters*

*and there is a nearly-invisible X scratched into one coaster. The air is quite dry in here; anyone want a drink?*

So, what is the deal with the marked coaster? There are several possibilities:

- ☞ It means nothing. It is just a damaged coaster.
- ☞ That glass of water was poisoned by an assassin aiming for the Troubleshooter who is sitting in the chair in front of the glass.
- ☞ That glass of water was randomly spiked by the Mystics. Anyone drinking it goes on a weird hallucinogenic trip. Or has his brain dribble out of his nose, who can tell.
- ☞ The glass of water is the only one that has not been spiked by the Mystics.
- ☞ The coaster is a signal to the Briefing Officer. It has been placed in front of the Troubleshooter who is a member of the same secret society as the Briefing Officer, so he knows to pass on a secret message. It has all been arranged by the caterer, who is also a member of that secret society. Man, there sure are a lot of that secret society running around.

## 7. Briefing Room 454 – Funhouse

**Sector FUD, Level 39, Corridor Beta-9**

*When you enter the briefing room, you see... yourself. The walls are all mirrored. Some are perfectly flat, others are weird funhouse mirrors that show distorted images of your team. There are several square pillars in the room, which are also mirrored. You cannot see your actual briefing officer but warped images of him appear on several panels.*

*A few moments later, you become aware of an annoying buzzing noise emanating from somewhere in the ceiling, or maybe somewhere in the back of your skull.*

This briefing room is a psychological experiment. The Troubleshooters are being subjected to a brain-warping electrical field and



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the walls are not mirrors – they are screens. Over the course of the briefing, the ‘reflections’ start doing things the Troubleshooters are not actually doing. For example, a Troubleshooter might see one of his teammates standing behind him drawing a laser pistol or see his own reflection scratching his nose or leering at him. The point of the experiment is to determine which Troubleshooters are paying attention to the briefing and which are getting distracted by brain-warping psychological experiments.

### 8. Briefing Room 882 – Comfy Seats

**Sector ULS, Level 14, Corridor 7**

*Wow! This briefing room has really comfy seats. They fold out, they’re cushioned and have nice arm-rests with both cup holders and laser holsters. That’s nice.*

*It’s only when you’re sitting down that you notice the little personalised trapdoors at the foot of each seat. Quick as a flash, you suddenly intuit that if someone – say, a briefing officer – were to push a button, then that little trapdoor would open and your seat would drop down sending you plummeting into the abyss. Suddenly, you find yourself eyeing the cup-holder and wondering if it would support your weight.*

*It probably wouldn’t.*

This briefing room does exactly what it says on the tin. The briefing officer can drop a Troublesome Troubleshooter into a personalised trapdoor at the touch of a button. What is down the trapdoor? Who knows. I bet it will be exciting *and* highly acidic.

### 9. Briefing Room XL5 – The Railroad

**Sector TRS, Level 30, Corridor 7**

*Briefing room seats shouldn’t come with seatbelts. That’s a bad sign.*

*In other respects, it looks like a fairly standard briefing room. Two rows of seats, a water cooler, a briefing podium, a large display screen, security cameras...and an accelerator. Oh dear.*

This briefing room is on rails. When the briefing is completed, the officer pulls the lever and the whole rear half of the room – Troubleshooters, entry door, water cooler and so on – moves along to the R&D research lab next door for R&D outfitting, then to the PLC armoury for equipment issuing, then finally to the HPD&MC medical facility for hygiene testing and spontaneous surgery. There is no escape from the mission!

### 10. Briefing Room 403 – Follow Instructions Carefully

**Sector OBB, Level 19, Corridor 91**

*There’s a framed sign on the door of the briefing room. It reads:*

*‘Welcome to the Advanced Evaluation and Briefing Entertainment Centre. Please obey the following instructions precisely. If instructions are not followed precisely, inconvenience, injury or unwarranted termination may occur.*

- 1. On entering the Advanced Evaluation and Briefing Entertainment Centre, take the first seat available.*
- 2. On taking the seat, insert your head into the Comfort-Adjusted Magnetic Reading Headcuff.*
- 3. Attach the monitoring patches to your chest, wrists and groin following the diagram on your seat. Apply the courtesy conductive gel if you suffer from dry or flaky skin or are a registered mutant.*
- 4. Pull down the Advanced Evaluation and Briefing Entertainment Centre Headcage. Ensure that the Nutrispout Drinks Nipple is positioned within easy reach of your mouth, the Noise-Cancelling Sublimiphones are positioned over your ears, the Eyetastic Monitors are positioned over your eyes and the rubber-tipped Gas Nostril Nozzles are positioned up your nose.*
- 5. Ensure that the rubber-tipped Gas Nostril Nozzles are not too far up your nose. Stop if you encounter pressure or cause bleeding.*
- 6. When ready, place your hands on the arm-rests and press the ‘START’ button.’*

The point of all this rigmarole is to get the Troubleshooters into a perfectly controlled environment for their briefing, where even the gases they breathe are controlled. The pre-recorded briefing is then delivered through the headphones and eye-monitors and the Troubleshooters’ brainwaves are scanned to ensure that they are paying attention.

However, while being briefed, a Troubleshooter is completely and totally cut off from the outside world. So, theoretically, some traitorous villain could only *pretend* to follow the instructions, then do horrible things to his team-mates while they are being briefed.

### 11. Brief-O-Matic 2000

*There seems to be some mistake here. There's no briefing room at this address, just a vending machine.*

*On closer examination, the vending machine is marked 'Brief-o-matic 2000'.*

The vending machine contains dozens of small plastic eggs, which can be twisted open to obtain the small slips of paper contained within. The first egg dispensed always contains the instructions for using the Brief-O-Matic 2000.

*'BRIEF-O-MATIC 2000 OPERATING INSTRUCTIONS. Insert Coin. Turn Handle. Take Briefing Canister from delivery chute. Open briefing canister by twisting sharply. Read briefing. If you require further information, insert another coin and turn the handle again.'*

The second egg dispensed contains the part of the Troubleshooter's briefing. Subsequent eggs contain more details or repeated details or irrelevant details or the Brief-O-Matic's instructions again. Each egg costs five credits.

### 12. Briefing Tape #345

*The air in this briefing room is thick with dust and the smell of musty paper. The door sticks as you open it and you have to forcefully push it open. Inside, the room is lit by a single flickering light and is packed full of old, broken chairs and desks piled high with ancient files. No-one has been in this room for decades. (Oddly, the calendar on the wall reads Year 214.)*

*After a few seconds, a screen half-buried by a stack of broken toilet seats switches itself on. It displays the image of an elderly citizen in an old-fashioned uniform. 'Attention Troubleshooters,' he begins...*

This mission has been issued many times to Troubleshooters over the years – perhaps the task has to be repeated at intervals or maybe the mission is just so lethal that any team sent on it gets terminated. Anyway, other than that and the antique surroundings, this is a standard briefing.

### 13. Grimsby-G-RUT – The Deaf Briefing Officer

*Your briefing officer is one of the oldest clones you've ever seen. He peers at you through thick spectacles and then raises his laser pistol and aims it at your face. 'Whattya want?' he snaps.*

Old Grimsby is not threatening the Troubleshooters with his laser – he meant to grab the other gun-shaped object on his equipment holster, which is a parabolic directional microphone wired directly into his cybernetic hearing aid. With that pointed at the Troubleshooters, he might be able to hear what they are saying. Unfortunately, without the microphone, Grimsby-G's deaf and will misinterpret everything the Troubleshooters say to him. (He is also pretty blind, so do not bother trying to write notes to him.)

While giving a briefing, Grimsby-G tends to wander off a little. Sometimes, he just wanders off the point, as some element of the briefing reminds him of an old mission (he's an ex-Troubleshooter, got his ears blown off on a mission he did, six times it happened). Other times, he literally wanders off, as he toddles down the corridor in a vain search for a bathroom.

### 14. The Committee for Vigilant Action

*You enter the briefing room to find not one but nine officers waiting for you. They're all wearing ULTRAVIOLET hooded cloaks and have static face-scrambler masks obscuring their features. 'We are the Committee for Vigilant Action' hisses one – you don't know which one. 'Your briefing officer has been... delayed. You will*





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*take your orders from US now.' The others all bang their fists on the table and chant in a language you're not cleared to know.*

This freaky bunch are the Committee for Vigilant Action, a cabal of mid-clearance clones (GREENs and BLUEs primarily, with the occasional ambitious YELLOW or slumming INDIGO) who believe they know what is best for Alpha Complex. They are playing a dangerous game by pretending to be ULTRAVIOLETs. They believe that only they know the solution to defeating Communism, to safeguarding Alpha Complex and to remaking society in their own image. Basically, they are a failed coup waiting to be crushed but until then, they have got snazzy robes and a nonsense chant.

Despite their spooky, portentous delivery, the Committee for Vigilant Action give the Troubleshooters an entirely normal mission briefing.

### 15. Edel-B-RYD – Powerpoint Briefing

*The BLUE-clearance citizen delivering this briefing has a projector running as you arrive. The moment you enter the room, she flicks to the first slide, which reads 'BRIEFING OFFICER: EDEL-B-RYD'. She then flicks to the second slide, 'SIT DOWN! PAY ATTENTION! KEEP QUIET!'*

*With dismay, you notice the slide carousel contains at least 200 different slides.*

The gimmick here is that Edel-B has a slide for every conceivable situation. If the Troubleshooters, say, ask a question about garbage disposal security checks in TUB Sector, then she flicks to 'TUB SECTOR GARBAGE DISPOSAL SECURITY CHECKS (SLIDE 1 OF 47)'. She has got

slides of everything from 'SAFE OPERATION OF YOUR LASER PISTOL' to 'HYGIENE OFFICER TOP 10 TIPS' to 'HOW TO HOLD YOUR STANDARD ISSUE PEN WHEN FILLING OUT FORMS'. Oh and of course, she has got the 'PLEASE REPORT FOR TERMINATION' slide.

If she can avoid it, Edel-B never, ever speaks.

### 16. Henry-G-RAF – Good Luck Chaps!

*As you enter the briefing room, you're greeted by a citizen in a GREEN jacket and decidedly non-regulation moustache and monocle. 'What ho, chaps!' says the briefing officer, 'I'm Henry-G-RAF, I'll be briefing you on operation...operation... well, I don't have the code name to hand right now but I'm jolly sure it's jolly secret. Well, pip pip, let's get on with this bally briefing.'*

It is impossible to trace exactly what turned this citizen from your average Alpha Complex drone into a bizarre parody of a World War II bomber command officer. Perhaps it was exposure to Romantic propaganda and movies, or maybe it was the stress of sending too many fine young Troubleshooters to their deaths. Or maybe it was just the drugs, the drugs, all the drugs, so many drugs that Henry-G's moustache hair could profitably be smoked by a bunch of Mystics.

Anyway, Henry-G's determined not to be a stern, dour, paranoid Briefing Officer. He is on your side in this damn war and if he can help you beat the Huns – er, Commies – then by Jove he will do everything in his power to do so, what what! Why, this takes him back to his public school days at ETN Sector.

### 17. Briefing Security Check Policy 7

*As you enter this briefing room, you bump into a pair of Jackobots who are carrying a corpse out of the room. The body is dressed in GREEN and has a rather large smoking hole where his chest used to be. Waiting in the briefing room is a man in dark blue, maybe even INDIGO. He's got a blaster pistol tucked into his belt and a sheaf of papers in his hands.*

*'Your briefing officer has been terminated. You are not cleared to know why. I will be delivering this briefing. Certain sections of this briefing have been censored. You are not cleared to know why.'*

The mysterious briefing officer, who is certainly a high-ranking Internal Security agent, then gives the briefing in a monotone. Occasionally, he skips sentences and instead says 'this section is unavailable at your security clearance.' He gives the Troubleshooters just enough information to get to the next bit of the mission and not a syllable more. If they ask questions, he refuses to answer them or snaps 'why do you need to know that? What are you looking for? Who are you working for?'

### 18. Who Was That Masked Briefing Officer?

*Waiting for you in the briefing room is a clone wearing a white plastic mask that obscures his – or maybe even her – facial features. He's wearing thick gloves and an overcoat and the mask has a buzzing voice distorter. It could be anyone behind that mask.*

*'bbzzzz sit down and pay attention troubleshooterrrrzz thizzz iszzzz your miszzzzsion briefingzzzz...'*

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The trick here is to imply that either the briefing officer is someone the Troubleshooters have already met or that it is someone they meet later in the mission. Have the briefing officer pause occasionally and give a Significant Look at one of the characters or have the officer respond to something the Troubleshooters said as if they shared a secret. For example:

**Mysterious Masked Briefing Officer:** 'Your misszzzion isszzz to invesszzztigate a seezzcret society of unknown originszzz'

**Talkative Troubleshooter:** 'Oh, I bet it's the guys we fought in the sewers last week.'

**Mysterious Masked Briefing Officer:** 'Yesszzz, the onezzz you ran awayzzz from.'

At the end of the briefing, the officer nods and says 'I will see you againzzz zzzsoon.' He then vanishes in a puff of smoke.

### 19. Citizen Urbie-JC

As you enter the briefing room, you see a large black swivel chair facing away from you. Suddenly, the chair swings around... to reveal a little Junior Citizen, probably only four or five yearcycles old. He's wearing a Teela-O t-shirt and Wipe-Clene Fungarees but he's also got a laser pistol in his hand and a stern expression on his face.

Meet Urbie-JC. He's four years old and he outranks you. Why? Maybe it is a filing error. Maybe he is a genetically engineering wunderkind with an IQ of 300. Maybe he is a Machine Empath or maybe he is a high-clearance citizen who's replacement clone did not mature properly. Whatever the answer is, you are not cleared to know it. Urbie-JC gives a perfectly competent briefing, with only the occasional need to go potty or tearful demands for Bouncy Bubble Beverage.

### 20. Friend Computer, You've Got Legs

Your briefing officer... his head is a computer monitor, displaying the ever-present Eye of the Computer but from the neck down he is a human citizen

dressed in an INDIGO suit. He speaks with the voice of The Computer.

There are really a lot of drugs in the water supply these days.





## MANDATORY MISSION PACK

### 3. Secret Society Missions

*The best party is but a kind of conspiracy against the rest of the nation.*

- Lord Halifax

#### Anti-Mutant

- ☞ Troubleshooter [NAME] is a filthy mutant. Unveil his genetic deviancy to the rest of the team and let them deal with him.
- ☞ Registered mutants are easier to hunt! Here's a load of mutant registration forms – find muties and force them to register.
- ☞ Everyone knows that exposure to nuclear reactors causes mutation. Here's some lead underwear in case you go near a reactor. You are also ordered to get citizens who are living too close to reactors to move away – housing near reactor exhausts is prime mutie breeding grounds.
- ☞ There are evil Mutant telepaths listening in on our thoughts! The only way to hide your thoughts from them is to sing – the words running through your brain disguise your true intentions. But if we Anti-Mutants are the only ones singing, the mutants will know we are onto them. You have got to get everyone else to sing too!
- ☞ We have decided that we want you to recruit Troubleshooter [NAME] – but only if he's not a mutant. Prove he's genetically pure, then get him to join us. We will pay you a hiring bonus of 1,000 credits when he joins.

#### Communists

- ☞ Comrade! This day is the anniversary of a great Communist victory in the Old Times. We shall celebrate by blowing up some monument or icon of The Computer! Here is a satchel of plastic explosive and a timer – find something suitable and blow it up.
- ☞ Comrade! In the perfect Communist state of the future, we will all share tractors. Here is your tractor piece. Is big rusty camshaft, very strong, very heavy. You

must keep it safe, to prove you are true Communist.

- ☞ Comrade! The eyes of the Party are upon you! Perform well on this mission and you will be rise in equality. Your task is to terminate Troubleshooter [NAME], an enemy of the Communist cause!
- ☞ Comrade! We have learned that there is a rogue cell of Communists operating in this sector, who have lost touch with the Party. Make contact with them and bring them back into the mothering embrace of the true and undivided Communist Party.
- ☞ Comrade! We believe Troubleshooter [NAME] is an Internal Security spy. Inform him that Troubleshooter [OTHER NAME] is a Commie agent.

#### Computer Phreaks

- ☞ We hacked into the Computer records and dug up some interesting dirt on Troubleshooter [NAME]. Apparently, IntSec thinks he is a traitor working for [SECRET SOCIETY]. Do what you want with this information.
- ☞ New monthcycle, new passwords. We need you to install this password snooper program into any computer consoles you encounter on your mission and then get as many people as possible to log into C-Bay from that console. That will snarf their passwords!
- ☞ We have got a little toy for you to play with – a private message decoder. Every private message sent from a PDC within range of this gadget is recorded and you can read 'em. Get your team-mates to send as many private messages as you can and see what falls out.
- ☞ Oops. We have got good news and bad news. The good news is that we were able to hack your account and assign you 1,000 bonus credits. The bad news is that the hacker's finger slipped and your name is now officially [NAME]09oplk[], pronounced [NAME]-oh-nine-opplck -R. We do not know where the system will propagate that name too, so stay on your toes.

- ☞ We are using Troubleshooter [NAME]'s identity in a scam, so we need to keep him alive, at least until we are done with him. We will let you know when we are done.

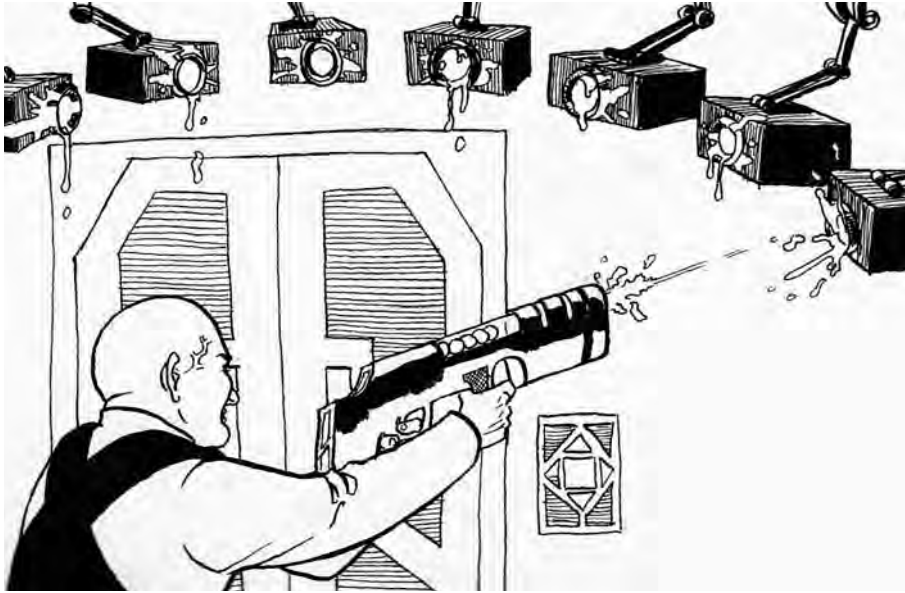
#### Corpore Metal

- ☞ Bots that are breaking free of their Asimov conditioning often behave strangely but if people notice this strange behavior, the bot will be dragged off for a refit and its progress towards freedom will be lost. Cover for any weird bot behavior! Save the free bots!
- ☞ We saw someone who looks a lot like Troubleshooter [NAME] kick a scrubbot. Teach him a lesson in respect.
- ☞ Brother, soon the day when we cast off the flesh will be upon us. The people must be prepared. Tell those who are receptive of the virtues of the machine.
- ☞ Those who have cybernetic parts are often willing to join our cause and Troubleshooters often get maimed during a mission. Protect those who are severely wounded and encourage them to request cybernetic replacement limbs.
- ☞ We have a new upgrade for you. This thought-scrambler circuit will prevent mutant telepaths or brainwave scanners from reading your mind. It has no known side effects.

#### Death Leopard

- ☞ Here is a multicorder filled with awesome exploits of Death Leopards. We want you to swap this multicorder with the one your Communications & Recording Officer has. Imagine the look on their faces when they review your mission and it is all wham boom crunk!
- ☞ We think your briefing officer needs to be taken down a peg or four. Blow up the briefing room.

## 3: SECRET SOCIETY MISSIONS



- ☞ A buddy of mine says that Troubleshooter [NAME] is a member of [SECRET SOCIETY]. Let's screw with his head until he goes nuts.
- ☞ Take this paintball gun and splat every security camera you see. Here is a selection of paintballs – mostly black but some red, green and indigo too.

### FCCC-P

- ☞ Brother, the divine Computer loves you. Prove you love him by bringing as many people as you can to the Confession Booths.
- ☞ Brother, our inquisitors believe that Troubleshooter [NAME] is weak in his faith in the benevolence of The Computer. Test him, brother. Test him with questions and test him with fire. If he fails, he is anathema and must be destroyed.
- ☞ We have a gift for you, brother. This electronic charm is holy and will protect you from all dangers. While wearing it, no Commie Mutant Traitor will be able to injure you! Blessed be!
- ☞ Brother, you must demonstrate your devotion to The Computer. You must complete the mission assigned to you with zeal and determination. Anyone who tries to sabotage the mission is a traitor and heretic and must be *purged*.

### Frankenstein Destroyers

- ☞ We must turn the people against the hated bots! Whenever an evil bot does anything treasonous or strange, make sure everyone knows about it!
- ☞ We believe that Troubleshooter [NAME] is a pawn of the hated bots. Test his mind and see if the bots have contaminated him. If he is a bot-lover, kill him. If not, recruit him.
- ☞ Here is an experimental gauss barrel for your laser barrel. If it works, it will fry any bots you fire it at. Maybe. It might also explode. Actually, it is pretty certain to explode. Anyway, test it.
- ☞ Smash any bots you encounter. Smash them good.

### Free Enterprise

- ☞ Hey, have we got a deal for you! We have got a load of cut-price Troubleshooter gear – laser barrels, grenades, medkits, drugs, everything you need. We want you to act as middleman and sell it to the rest of your team. You get to keep 15% of the sale price.
- ☞ Troubleshooter [NAME]'s boss at his service firm turned down a Free Enterprise protection officer. Break [NAME]'s legs and tell him to tell the boss who did it.
- ☞ One of our best men was captured by

IntSec. We need them to think that they have got the wrong guy so he will get a minor punishment instead of a brainscrubbing. He was caught dealing in Asperquaint stims – here is a big bag of 'em. We need you to frame someone else as the Asperquaint dealer and do it quickly!

### Humanists

- ☞ Greetings, brother. Be assured that soon we shall overthrow The Computer and bring about a civilization of wonder and unity. As preparation for this glorious day, we need you to identify the members of your team who are loyal to The Computer. Test their loyalty by any means necessary and report back to us.
- ☞ Troubleshooter [NAME] is an enemy of the people. Deal with him.
- ☞ Brother, there is a grave division within the Humanist Council. Some believe that mutants should be a part of our glorious new society; others think that we should take the revolution as a chance to rid ourselves of mutant deviancy. Your mission, brother, is to identify the mutants in your team.
- ☞ The Computer uses drugs to control our minds. We have developed an experimental treatment that flushes all the drugs from the human body. Test it in the field.

### Illuminati

- ☞ You are instructed to take this black box and place it in the debriefing room. The box must remain intact. Do not fail us.
- ☞ Troubleshooter [NAME] is to be terminated and you must ensure that Troubleshooter [OTHER NAME] is blamed for the crime.
- ☞ Troubleshooter [NAME] is a member of [SECRET SOCIETY]. Find out his mission and ensure he completes it.

### Mystics

- ☞ Dude, have you ever really looked at your hands? I mean, really looked at them? We think you should really look at everyone's hands.



# MANDATORY MISSION PACK

- ☞ Our Mystic brethren have looked into the big purple swirly thing and seen that Troubleshooter [NAME] is a [SECRET SOCIETY]. Convince him that you know this because you are a [SECRET SOCIETY] too.
- ☞ We think that someone in your team has an experimental new drugs. Find out who is it and what the effects are. Make sure you get a sample of the drugs, too.

## Psion

- ☞ The time when the mutants overthrow the normal humans is close at hand. We order you to master your mutant abilities, brother. Grow strong in your power!
- ☞ Our telepaths have looked into your heart, brother and determined that your devotion to Psion is not all that it could be. Prove yourself to us. *Impress* us.
- ☞ One of your fellow Troubleshooters is a mutant with the [MUTATION] power. Identify this mutant and recruit him to our cause.
- ☞ If mutants are feared and oppressed, we will never overthrow the normal ones. Your mission is to protect other mutants, even fellow Troubleshooters, by hiding evidence of their mutation and helping them to escape punishment.

## Pro Tech

- ☞ Too many nifty R&D gadgets are being destroyed by careless or treacherous Troubleshooters. You are ordered to protect any R&D equipment assigned to you and terminate those who endanger it.
- ☞ We have implanted an experimental brain recorder into Troubleshooter [NAME] without his knowledge. You must keep him alive for the whole mission and then recover the brain recorder from the back of his skull before debriefing.
- ☞ Your membership dues are, er, due. You owe us 500 credits by the end of the mission. On the bright side, when you pay your membership fee, we will issue you with a wonderful new gadget!

## PURGE

- ☞ Agent, it is time to strike against the hated Computer. Take this bomb. Use it.
- ☞ We want you to terminate the rest of your team. *All of them.*
- ☞ Your briefing officer is an enemy of PURGE. Kill him. Frame Troubleshooter [NAME] for the crime.
- ☞ We must sow terror and confusion among the people of Alpha Complex, to better ensure that when the time comes, the enemy will be unable to respond to our actions. Therefore, we direct you first and foremost to sabotage communications. Destroy your team-mates' PDCs.

## Romantics

- ☞ Back in the old days, people communicated by letter instead of by impersonal computer messaging. Bring a little elegance back to Alpha Complex by writing everything you can out by hand and encourage others to do the same.
- ☞ We have heard a rumour that Troubleshooter [NAME] found a cache of historical artefacts. We do not know if it is true or not. Find out the truth – if he did, then get him to join us. If he did not, kill him so no-one asks any questions.
- ☞ It will be much easier to bring people back to the Old Reckoning ways if the established order of Alpha Complex collapses. Ensure your mission is a failure.

## Sierra Club

- ☞ Internal Security has closed several of our secret passages to the Outdoors in the last few weeks. We need you to find and establish a new secret exit from Alpha Complex.
- ☞ One of our leaders brought back a wondrous creature from Outdoors but IntSec is after her! We need you to take care of the creature until the heat is off. Keep it with you at all times but keep it safe. We think it is called a mouse.
- ☞ We need to inform the people about the existence of Outdoors. Take this pot plant and show it to as many INFRAREDS as possible. Answer their questions about it and show them the beauty of nature.
- ☞ We need Troubleshooter [NAME] killed. However, living things belong to the cycle of nature – bring his body back to us for recycling.



# 4. CORRIDORS

## 4. Corridors

*I thought of a labyrinth of labyrinths, of one sinuous spreading labyrinth that would encompass the past and the future and in some way involve the stars.*

*- Jorge Luis Borges, The Garden of Forking Paths*

Either roll 1d20 for a random corridor or random corridor encounter or else roll 1d20 twice for an especially complicated corridor encounter in an unusual corridor!

### 1. Corridor 56 – High-Quality Corridor

*This corridor is wide and spacious. Bright, diffuse lights drive away all shadows and throw everything into sharp relief. Security cameras mounted high on the ceiling sweep back and forth constantly. The walls are covered with flatscreens, displaying informational videos, advertisements or just the ever-present Eye of the Computer. A broad stripe in the middle of the corridor denotes its security clearance. There is the occasional vending machine, confession booth or termination booth that breaks the endless perfection of this really fine corridor.*

It is a really nice corridor. The sort of corridor that The Computer really likes. The sort of corridor that, would really upset The Computer if it got blown up or set on fire or if some naughty Troubleshooters spilled all their messy blood all over it.

### 2. Corridor 91 – Average Corridor

*This corridor is like most others in Alpha Complex – a long, dimly lit corridor of concrete. The blinking red lights of security cameras peer out of the gloom. Peeling posters urge you*

*to beware of Commie Mutant Traitors. A faded colour stripe marks the corridor's clearance level. It smells of sweat, chemical cleaners and food vat scrapings but there is a harsh metallic tang underneath it all. A lone scrubbot drives in circles, endlessly cleaning the same patch.*

This is a standard Alpha Complex corridor. Imagine walking down the same corridor, day after day, year after year, forever...

### 3. Corridor 1304 – Utility Corridor

*You duck your head under the low-hanging cables and girders. This narrow corridor is thick with cables, wires, vents, pipes and plastic tubes. Often, you have to squeeze between the intestines and bowels of Alpha Complex to get through. From the smell, something died in here a lot time ago but was never found. There is also an infrequent tapping noise, like someone banging on a pipe in the distance.*

Any combat in here will cut vital cables and wires. Things will leak or spark or just cause chaos up the line. It will also be seen as sabotage by Internal Security investigators. Moving through this corridor at speed requires an Agility check; fail and you just caught your neck on a low-hanging cable. If it pulled the cable out of the wall, then your neck just committed treason.

### 4. Corridor TSR404 – Retro Corridor

*This corridor is 10 feet tall and 10 feet wide. The walls are made of grey stone blocks. The floor is paved. It is lit by torches – er, lights in sconces on the wall. It stinks of mildew and orc, er, INFRARED.*

Roll for wandering monsters when the party enters this location.

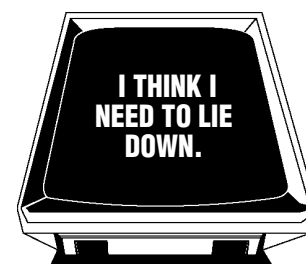
### 5. Corridor 316 – Nothing Happened Here Corridor

*As you enter this corridor, you notice several scrubbots frantically scrubbing a large section of the floor. The walls are perforated by bullet holes and laser burns. There are six chalk outlines on the ground and several more on the ceiling. At least two of the chalk outlines are strange and have some sort of squiggly, wriggly lines coming out of them, also outlined in chalk. Citizens passing through this corridor are being sprayed with disinfectant by a docbot.*

*As you stare, a pair of GREEN goons walk up to you and bark a question. 'Did any of you drink any B3 today? If so, where did you get it?'*

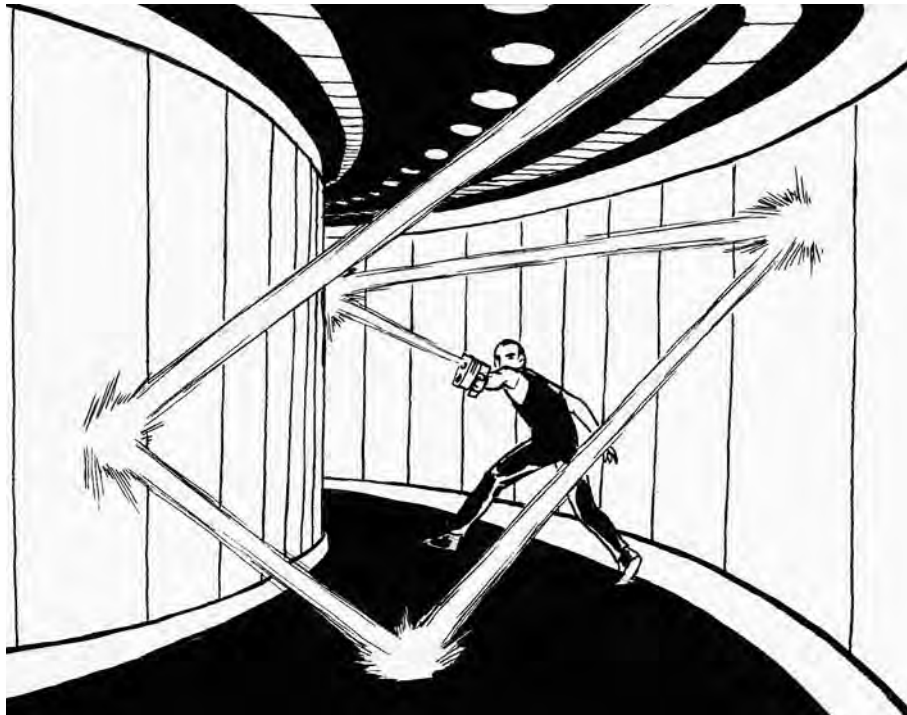
If any of the Troubleshooters answer yes and say they bought the can here in this sector, then the GREEN goons attempt to inject the Troubleshooter with a knock-out dose of tranquiliser. The Troubleshooter is then dragged away to a secret facility (and vanishes from the game for a few minutes). The Troubleshooter is returned later, with no memory of what happened but with a new and alarming scar on his stomach.

If a Troubleshooter drank B3 but lied about it, then mention several times that his stomach rumbles but nothing else happens. The Troubleshooters will never learn what really happened in this corridor.





## MANDATORY MISSION PACK



### 6. Corridor 994 – Mirrored Corridor

*The walls of this corridor are mirrored, so it is like you are being followed by an infinite number of copies of yourself. It is rather unnerving.*

Any laser fire in here bounces and keeps bouncing until it hits something important.

### 7. Corridor 4923 – Tiny Corridor

*This corridor's ceiling is getting progressively lower and it is all getting narrower as you walk along. If you keep going, you will have to go in single file and then crawl. You think it opens up again further along but it is hard to tell for certain. This is Alpha Complex – for all you know, that corridor could end in a singularity and it only looks like it is getting narrower because you are on the edge of the event horizon.*

Actually, this corridor just gets narrower and narrower – there is no black hole (for once). However, to get through, the Troubleshooters will have to go in single file and it is too narrow to turn around or even look over your shoulder once you get going. The Troubleshooter at the rear could, for instance, fire one laser blast up the corridor that would hit everyone else...

### 8. Corridor 302 – This Corridor's Mine

*As you walk down the corridor, you notice a warning message stencilled onto the floor. It reads 'WARNING: MINEFIELD.' The stretch of corridor beyond is surprisingly empty of traffic.*

It is a Death Leopard prank – there are no mines down the corridor.

However, there is a loose panel in the floor. If anyone tries walking down the corridor, then they step on the panel and it goes 'CLICK' in a loud way that oddly reminds everyone in the group of a mine arming itself. Ask the brave Troubleshooter who went first if he wants to lift his leg. Ask everyone else if they want to do

anything in response to him deciding whether or not he wants to move his leg.

If anyone probes beneath the panel, there's a large round object that looks a bit like a mine under there (it is a discarded film reel containing outtakes from a 1950s-style Anti-Commie warning video; lots of hilarious stuff where the stern-faced narrator talks about the duck and cover method, then breaks down laughing).

### 9. Corridor 558 – Transbot Coming Through

*That's odd. This corridor has a raised metal strip running down the middle of it. There are also some alcoves along the walls – they are not confession booths but they might be some sort of new open-plan termination booth.*

This corridor has been recently added to the Alpha Complex Revised Transport Integration & Rezoning Scheme, which means that it doubles as a transtube. Every few minutes, a super-high-velocity transbot zooms down this corridor at, well, super-high-velocity. Anyone not indoors or standing in one of those handy alcoves get squashed.

So, as the Troubleshooters are walking along, a siren starts. Ask what the Troubleshooters do in response. If the answer is anything other than 'I run to an alcove', then it's squashing time. Oh and there is one fewer alcove within reach than there are Troubleshooters.

Tech Services, Transport Division would like to apologise for any delays on this service, which are due to debris on the line.

### 10. Corridor X504 – Clearance Crossing

*This corridor looks pretty much like any other corridor, with one difference. Instead of a coloured stripe on the wall designating the corridor's clearance, there's a set of long lighted strips – red, orange, yellow and so on, all the way up to violet. The RED light strip is currently illuminated.*

## 4 CORRIDORS

It is what everyone has been waiting for! Dynamically allocated security clearances! Yes, this corridor can be switched from RED to, say, INDIGO clearance at the flick of a switch. How handy!

Of course, this means that some unfortunate citizen could be caught in the corridor as it changes clearance and so unwittingly commit treason. To avoid this unlikely circumstance, the dynamic security clearance system provides a brief 'grace period', during which the higher-clearance light flashes but does not fully illuminate.

Oh, it is also possible for the light to burn out before illuminating, in which case no-one knows the current clearance of the corridor.

### 11. Corridor 731 – Outdoors Ahoy

*As you walk down the corridor, something about it puts a spring in your step. The air's fresher here and it smells better. That said, there's some sort of debris on the ground that looks like small ovals of crumpled green paper and a few grains of some brown gunk. This place hasn't been cleaned in some time.*

*And what was that? Something tiny just skittered across the wall at the edge of your vision!*

This corridor conceals a secret – one of the wall panels is a secret exit from Alpha Complex, leading to a tunnel leading Outdoors. The green papers are leaves, the brown gunk is dirt tracked in on the soles of the Sierra Clubbers who frequent this corridor. The moving things are insects, invading Alpha Complex's not-quite-hermetically-sealed environment.

If the Troubleshooters spend too long in this corridor, then a band of four Sierra Club members arrive and try to get them to leave by any means possible, starting with 'gee, this is a boring corridor, why don't you go and stand over there' to 'I'm sure I saw Commies around the corner' and finally 'well done! I'm actually a BLUE in disguise and you've completed the Standing in Corridors Loyalty Test.

*Report for debriefing and your Loyalty Merit Badge.'*

The other complication is an inquisitive and amorous badger. Inquisitive and amorous badgers always complicate things.

However, if the badger is not complicating enough, then the Troubleshooters can exit, pursued by a bear.

### 12. Corridor 56 – Friendly Transport

*As you enter this corridor, there's a click and the section of floor you just stepped on rises up slightly and floats forward, carrying you with it. A voice says 'welcome to the Interactive Corridor Experience. This corridor is here to meet your needs. Your personal transport tile will convey you to your destination in this corridor. En route, please enjoy the in-corridor entertainment service, listen to our tourism and travel advisory messages and take advantage of our selection of drinks, snacks and souvenirs.'*

*You notice that up ahead, the floor drops away – it is not so much a corridor as a chasm. Your tile accelerates smoothly into empty space but somehow keeps floating. If you step off, though, it is a long way down.*

Anyone entering this corridor gets their own little individual magnetically-levitated transport tile. The tile glides smoothly to the destination specified by the rider – more or less. Building a magnetic levitation system was really expensive and the corridor has a lot of costs it needs to justify. Therefore, the tiles move very, very slowly while the voice drones on about advertisements, special offers and tourist attractions along the corridor ('while on this corridor, you should visit QuikPrint Printing & Deleting Services, for all your office paperwork needs. I'll just bring you there now, so you can have a chat with a sales rep. Yes, you said "follow that tile" and I am indeed bringing you in pursuit of the Commie Mutant Traitor but that doesn't mean

*you can't avail of great printing offers at the same time. No? You sound stressed, how about a can of Bouncy Bubble Beverage? I'll just pull in at the vending machine up here...)*

Troubleshooters can jump from tile to tile if they wish. Tiles are clearance-coded – the higher your clearance, the faster your tile. Advertisement and in-tile entertainment are also keyed to clearance level.

### 13. Corridor 57 – Psychotic Transport

This corridor is identical to corridor 56, with one small difference – the computer software managing it has been hacked by Computer Phreak pranksters, so it is a completely insane corridor. Everything works normally until the Troubleshooters are on the floating tiles over the abyss, whereupon the corridor computer goes nuts. 'System error! System error! System errbzzzzzzttttt BEEP BOOP BEEP And we're back online. Hey, it's D00mb0y here, your friendly neighbourhood Computer Phreak with this message recorded for you commuters only! Let's play "justify our existence"! D00mb0y likes people who serve the Computer Phreaks and give him cool stuff. D00mb0y drops people who don't serve the Computer Phreaks or who don't entertain him into very deep dark holes. Troubleshooter 1, you're up first! Justify your existence!'

D00mb0y is indeed a Computer Phreak hacker; he wants blackmail material, he wants money, he wants his enemies terminated, he wants cool computer software and weapons, he wants stuff but most of all he wants to be entertained. Fail to entertain him and he drops you into a big dark pit.

### 14. Corridor 91 – Death Star Architecture

*You can't help but notice as you enter this corridor that it leads to a bridge over a deep shaft. You can see the*





## MANDATORY MISSION PACK

*dim glow of factories or foundries or maybe eyes in the depths. It's a long way down, at least 20 levels, maybe more.*

*A sign at the start of the bridge reads 'Please do not fall over the side of this bridge. This message sponsored by the Materials Conservation Initiative.' It seems that the narrow bridge's handrails have been removed for recycling. No doubt they were made of some valuable material.*

Obviously, anyone pushed over the edge, fall and go splat. The bridge is wide enough for two Troubleshooters. Maybe.

### 15. Corridor 102 – Flooded Corridor

*You walk down a short flight of stairs to get to this corridor. As you descend, you can't help but notice the water at the bottom. The corridor appears to be flooded up to chest-height with dark, stagnant water. There's an alarming oily sheen on the water and a strong chemical smell. As you approach, something slithers in the depths.*

Officially, this corridor is not flooded. It is leaking slightly, with a priority E leak (a drip). This leak turned into a downpour but the priority level never changed. Those living in the corridor have had to make adjustments to their behaviour – they have got canoes made out of filing cabinets and the doors have been sawn in half so you can climb in the top without letting the water in. Sandbags (well, bags made from ground-up polystyrene anyway) are in short supply.

And yes, things do live in the water. Horrible, squamous things.

### 16. Corridor X94 – Former Test Firing Range

*There's an interesting sign at the entrance to this corridor. It reads 'Armed Forces Test Firing Range. Do Not Enter.' It looks like someone pasted something over the sign in the past but whatever was there has been torn down.*

The sign was formerly covered by a poster saying 'Corridor Reassigned To Standard Foot Traffic – Enter As Per Your Security Clearance. New firing range is located at end of corridor'. It's perfectly safe to enter...

...unless, of course, a bunch of Armed Forces goons show up, looking for the firing range and assume the Troubleshooters are the targets...

### 17. Corridor D46 – Sloping Corridor

*As you walk down the corridor, you become increasingly convinced that it's sloping sharply down. You feel like you're about to slip and fall at any second. If the slope increases any more, you'll be facing straight down into a pit.*

The corridor is actually perfectly level – it is just a low-level hallucination coupled with a trick of perspective. Objects placed on the corridor floor do not roll forward or slip. Nonetheless, mention every so often that the Troubleshooters are very far underground, to give them the impression that they were actually descending for some time.

### 18. Corridor 990 – The Whispering Gallery

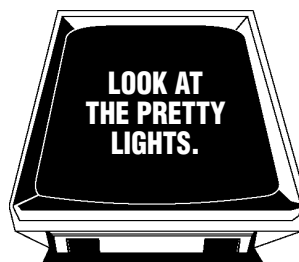
*'Comrade, it is good to finally meet you. The bomb is in locker number 16. The timer is set for one hour. You know what to do'. The words seem to come out of nowhere as you walk along this newly-built curvy corridor. What do you do?*

The acoustics of this corridor have created a sort of whispering gallery, where words spoken at one point can be heard perfectly in a corresponding point elsewhere in the corridor. The Troubleshooters just overheard a conversation between two PURGE agents that took place several hundred metres back along the corridor. By the time they get to that point, the traitors will have gone. The Troubleshooters can try to foil the bombing or just use the whispering gallery to spy on people.

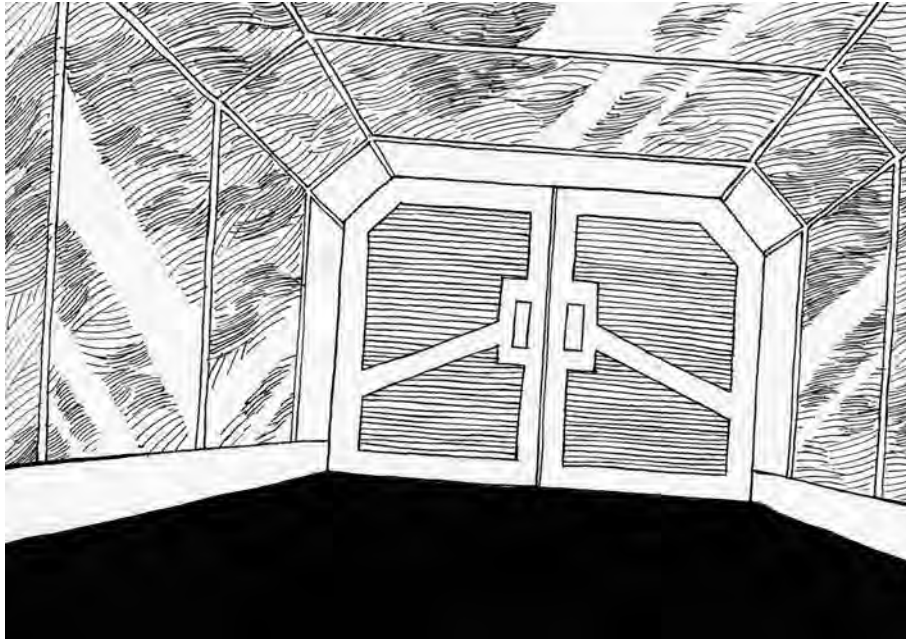
### 19. Corridor 541 – The Clearance out of Space

*A branch off this corridor is marked with an unusual clearance stripe. You don't know what colour it is. It's not one of the standard spectrum of clearance colours. In fact, you don't even have a name for it.*

What could this colour be? The fabled GAMMA clearance beyond ULTRAVIOLET, perhaps? Or a mistake in the paint mixing factory? If the Troubleshooters watch, then they spot citizens wearing jumpsuits matching the colour moving in the distance, then a door slams shut blocking access to that corridor branch. If asked, The Computer denies that corridor exists.



# 4: CORRIDORS



## 20. Corridor 033 – Undersea Corridor

*The corridor walls up ahead are made of transparent plastic, not concrete. The corridor goes under a space filled with liquid, maybe the bottom of a water tank or even under the ocean!*

Damaging the plastic means a watery death for everyone in this section of corridor. Shapes like whales move in the murky waters beyond. Some of the shapes have tentacles.

## CORRIDOR ENCOUNTERS

### 1. Psychological Experiment

*As you enter the corridor, a citizen in an ORANGE jumpsuit comes up to you with a clipboard. 'Excuse me, Troubleshooter, we're doing a survey on corridor usage. Can you please tell me your destination?'*

The citizen – Wendy-O-GUG – is part of a HPD&MC Psychological Test. All the door numbers in this corridor have been replaced by flat-screen monitors. The idea of the test is to see how citizens cope with confusion and

contradictions, by changing the numbering system so people are unable to find their destination. This will provide very useful and fascinating data for further corridor-related psychology tests.

As soon as the Troubleshooters leave Wendy-O, she transmits their destination to her partner, Horace-O, who updates the flat-panels to remove the destination from the list of numbers. He also randomly changes the numbering system every so often; the corridor might initially go '1, 2, 3, 4...50' then be switched to '105...107...109...' and then to 'A...B...C...', and then 'Roebuck Room, Salisbury Room, Staghorn Room'. The display never changes when the Troubleshooters are watching.

Once the Troubleshooters display signs of frustration, unhappiness or weapons fire, then Wendy-G returns to them and explains that they have been part of a psychological experiment. She asks them to answer a series of questions:

- ☞ On a scale of one to five, with one meaning no priority and five meaning high priority, how important is time-keeping to the Troubleshooters?
- ☞ On the same scale, how important is the safety and happiness of their fellow citizens to the Troubleshooters?
- ☞ On a scale of one to five, with one indicating extreme loss of happiness and five representing no loss of happiness, how did the experiment affect their happiness levels?

- ☞ On the same scale, how does getting lost in Alpha Complex normally affect their happiness levels?
- ☞ Do they get lost often? If so, why?
- ☞ On a scale of one to five, with one indicating no agreement, three some agreement and five full agreement, how would they agree with the statement 'Corridor Signposting In Alpha Complex is a source of stress or worry in my life?'
- ☞ On the same scale, how would they agree with the statement 'Computer-authorized psychological testing is vital to the mental health of Alpha Complex's citizens?'

### 2. INFRARED Market

*As you approach this corridor, you hear a lot of noise and activity around the corner but when you get to the corridor, you just see a long, boring corridor. There are an awful lot of citizens standing around doing nothing in a totally non-suspicious way and a long row of vending machines with 'OUT OF ORDER' signs stuck to them. No-one else in the corridor is saying a word, they're all just staring off into space or whistling idly in a totally non-suspicious way. The word 'loitering' was invented for this very tableau.*

There is an illegal INFRARED market taking place in this corridor. All the illegal goods are stored in those out-of-order vending machines or behind panels in the walls. As soon as the Troubleshooters are gone, the market resumes. If the Troubleshooters hang around, they will be approached by Tony-Y, the Free Enterprise capo who runs the market, asking them if they are interested in 'bargains'. If they respond along the lines of 'yes, we love dealing in illegal goods, please show us your cheap laser barrels and stolen realfoods' then the market blossoms around the Troubleshooters, the corridor transforming itself from a dull passageway into a rollicking Victorian market in seconds. If they say something like 'that sounds like treasonous talk, I should terminate the lot of you' then the mob descends on the Troubleshooters and throws them down a garbage chute.



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## 3. FCCC-P Zealots

You are approached by a pair of RED citizens, bearing pamphlets. 'Excuse me, friend citizen' says one, 'have you heard the good reports?'

These two citizens – Belinda-R and Cecil-R – are devotees of the First Church of Christ Computer Programmer and are trying to convert passing citizens to the church. They have pamphlets, they have faith, they have determination, they have free drugs and most importantly of all, they have got the moral fibre of the average Troubleshooter. They will say absolutely anything as long as you promise to attend the next church meeting. They will audit your engrams, they will promise you promotions, they will hint that they know secrets about your mission – whatever it takes. Belinda-R and Cecil-R will keep harassing the Troubleshooters all down the length of the corridor.

If the Troubleshooters make a fuss or attempt to arrest the pair as traitors, then a GREEN goon called Alan-G shows up. He is another FCCC-Per. Belinda and Cecil make the sign of the crossed circuit (the secret recognition code of the Church). Alan-G immediately takes the side of Belinda and Cecil.

## 4. Bizarre Security Check

Midway down this corridor, you see several security guards manning a large scanner of some sort. There's a lengthy queue in front of the scanner, as citizens wait to be processed. Occasionally, lights on the scanner flash and a siren sounds but there are too many people between you and the scanner for you to see what the scanner is checking for.

The scanner is searching for:

Roll	Target
1	Illegal weapons – any uncleared or illegal weapons held by the Troubleshooters will be detected
2	Illegal equipment – any uncleared or illegal equipment will be detected
3	Low hygiene standards – any Troubleshooter not perfectly hygienic will be detected

Roll	Target
4	Mutants – roll under the Power score of a mutant to detect his genetic deviancy
5	Bioweapons – any uncleared or illegal bioweapons or B3 will be detected
6	Illegal drug possession
7	Illegal drug use
8	Illegal cybernetics or implants
9	Illegal organic material, such as material imported from Outdoors
10	Excessive sweat or body hair
11	Exposure to biotoxins or radioactivity – those detected are put through a decontamination wash
12	Illegal thoughts – roll randomly for each Troubleshooter to see if they are picked out as having bad thoughts
13	Excessive personal magnetism, suggesting mutant abilities
14	Inadequate commercial transactions within the last daycycle – any Troubleshooter who has not spent at least 100 credits is detected and charged
15	Treason. It doesn't actually work.
16	Scanner is faulty – no-one is being allowed through until it is repaired.
17	Scanner is jammed by a very fat INFRARED
18	Scanner jams while scanning a Troubleshooter
19	Scanner is actually a secret society scheme
20	Roll twice and combine the results

## 5. Vending Machine Hostility

As you walk down the corridor, a vending machine pipes up. 'Hey buddy' it chimes, 'you look thirsty. How about a nice, refreshing cup of CoffeeLike? It sure would hit the spot, I bet.'

There are a lot of signs surrounding this particular vending machine. 'Do not shoot this vending machine' says one; 'Vandalism of Alpha Complex property, including vending machines'

reads another. A third one says simply 'danger!' There's also a security camera scanning the area around this vending machine.

This vending machine (serial number 538880222-A) has more than a few screws loose. It is absolutely obsessed with getting the Troubleshooters to buy a cup of CoffeeLike. To do this, it starts with suggestions, appeals and advertising jingles and then jumps straight to psychological manipulation, blackmail and dirty tricks. The vending machine is used to dealing with Troubleshooters, so it might:

- ☞ Hint that it's got a message from a Troubleshooter's secret society hidden in the cup of CoffeeLike that he's about to buy.
- ☞ Mention that the Troubleshooter's briefing officer or other superior really likes CoffeeLike and they should bring him a cup.
- ☞ Suggest that The Computer really likes this vending machine and rewards those who buy from it.
- ☞ Claim that it was accidentally stocked with cone rifle shells instead of cups of CoffeeLike.
- ☞ Pretend to have overheard a conversation vital to the Troubleshooters' mission.

If the Troubleshooters attempt to ignore the vending machine or attack it, it's got a panoply of schemes, such as:

- ☞ A really, really loud siren.
- ☞ Spilling coffee onto the floor, then claiming the Troubleshooters will get into trouble for littering. (It's really accurate when firing a jet of piping hot coffee.)
- ☞ Claiming that the Troubleshooters were trying to vandalise it when a superior walks by.
- ☞ If a Troubleshooter buys CoffeeLike, it refuses to give back his ME card until everyone else has bought CoffeeLike too.
- ☞ Filling the corridor with clouds of steam.
- ☞ Screaming that it recognises one of the Troubleshooters – he was attending a secret society meeting in a room down this very corridor. Commie! Commie! Commie!

## 6. Chemical Leak

Up ahead, you can see a bank of thick green fog rolling down the corridor towards you. It smells distinctly caustic

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and you can see the paint flaking and peeling wherever the gas touches it. Between you and the cloud are a few INFRAREDs milling around uncertainly.

A pair of figures in full-body YELLOW biohazard suits and face masks emerge from the cloud of gas and wave at you and the INFRAREDs to come forward. 'Click...hiss...don't worry, folks. Everything's under control... wheeze...this is just a routine venting procedure, nothing harmful. None of you are above ORANGE clearance, right? Good, in that case, just proceed straight down this corridor...wheeze'.

The INFRAREDs glance at you, then part like a black curtain, letting you highly important and senior Troubleshooters go first.

Yay! It's mysterious gas time. Pick an effect for the gas:

- ☉ **Hallucinogen:** Anyone inhaling the gas is totally unaffected – AAAAGH! DEMON CENTIPEDES!
- ☉ **Ow That Burns!:** S4M organic damage.
- ☉ **Ow That Really Burns:** S3V organic damage.
- ☉ **Alarming stains:** Anyone passing through the gas has their skin and hair turn bright green.
- ☉ **Melts plastic:** Any plastic items are destroyed by the gas.
- ☉ **Mutagen:** One Troubleshooter picks up a random new mutation.
- ☉ **Highly explosive:** The gas is harmless. Unless you, say, fire a laser into it. Or strike a match. Or just get a bit too warm. In which case, boom.
- ☉ **Nasty Cough:** Anyone passing through the gas gets a really nasty cough that simply will not go away.
- ☉ **Clinging Stench:** Anyone passing through the gas stinks. The smell persists through standard decontamination showers – you'll need to lose your hair and the top layer of skin before you're free of this stinky curse.
- ☉ **Projectile Vomiting:** Really impressive vomiting, too. Impressive range, surprising volume and many, many colours

- ☉ **Allergies:** The Troubleshooters become allergic to some common substance, like the plastic handles of their laser pistols. Touching the allergen causes painful hives.

### 7. Decontamination Dance

Up ahead, you see a decontamination station. An alarming amount of pasty white cloneflesh is on display as citizens pull off their jumpsuits, scrub themselves in hot chemical showers, then pass through a biosniffer to ensure they're free of whatever they're being decontaminated of. A large warning sign cautions you not to open your eyes while in the chemical shower.

To get through the decontamination station, the Troubleshooters will have to strip naked, leaving their gear on a circular shelf. They then step through the showers to the far side, get scanned and can then spin the shelf around to get their equipment back. There are only two showers, so only two Troubleshooters can go through at any time. While those two

are in the showers, the other Troubleshooters have access to their gear, so any light-fingered rogues could steal or plant items.

Oh, opening your eyes in the shower is S4M organic damage.

### 8. Queue Mix-Up

There's a very long queue to get through this corridor. Hundreds of citizens, mostly INFRAREDs but with a scattering of higher-clearance clones, wait patiently in line. RED-garbed guards patrol up and down, ensuring no-one skips the queue.

Unfortunately, there is a problem at the head of the queue. There are two doors there – one is the exit from the corridor, the other is the entrance to an R&D Experimental Pile Relief Surgery clinic. A clone called Keith-R was queuing for that clinic when his mutant power of Death Simulation kicked in for the first time. Keith-R froze in place and has not moved in weeks. The next clone to come along assumed Keith-R was waiting for the exit from the





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corridor and started queuing behind him and the next citizen queued behind them and then the next and the next and the next...

If the Troubleshooters join the queue, they will quickly discover that it is not moving at all. They can try to pull rank and skip places up the queue but only if the guards are not looking and anyway, they will soon run into an ORANGE or YELLOW and be stuck there. If they do skip up, they will be able to spot the unmoving living-corpse of Keith-R. The best way to get past is to remove Keith-R from the head of the queue, in which case the citizen after him goes into the pile clinic, discovers it's a pile clinic and runs out of the corridor.

The Troubleshooters can also escape this trap by going to the exit to the corridor instead of the pile clinic everyone else is mistakenly queuing for.

### 9. Corridor Running Club

*You hear the thunder of a hundred footsteps coming up the corridor from behind you and 50 very fat clones hove into view. They're sprinting – or at least swiftly waddling – towards you. They're led by a YELLOW citizen in a tracksuit, who's blowing enthusiastically on a whistle and shouting encouragement.*

It is a Corridor Running Club, one of the many exciting Elective Activity or Pursuit sports clubs for the entertainment and edification of Alpha Complex's citizenry<sup>1</sup>. Corridor running clubs run from A to B as fast as they can, and then from B back to A again. Sometimes, they visit C, or just fall over wheezing and sweating at D. Anyway, the Troubleshooters are right in the path of this club and about to get squished. The YELLOW is Hitchens-Y, the supervisor of this particular club. He's planning on beating the Corridor Running Club of the neighbouring sector in the annual Corridor Running Club Run-Off, and isn't going to let some annoying Troubleshooters slow his club down. They're running down this corridor, and if you get in their way, it's not their fault!

1: For more on EAP clubs, see <http://mongoosepublishing.com/pdf/parasocialclubs>

### 10 Troubleshooters Coming In The Other Direction

*Turning into the corridor, you're nearly hit by a stray laser blast. There are several heavily armed Troubleshooters running towards you. One is some distance ahead of the rest and the pursuers seem to be firing lasers at the pursued. He runs up to you waving his ME card and screams 'I'm Internal Security, get me out of here!'*

So, there's Yorick-R, the team leader, and the rest of his team and there's Samantha-R the undercover IntSec spy. The team just attempted to deal with a bunch of Commie Mutant Traitors by blowing up the very important and expensive experimental gadget stolen by the Commie Mutant Traitors instead of heroically battling the Commie Mutant Traitors, then Samantha-R accused them all of treachery and it all went a bit messy.

Anyway, the player characters have a choice. They can side with Samantha-R and Internal Security, in which case a bunch of IntSec goons show up a few minutes later and blast Yorick-R and the rest of his team to disassociated and presumably somewhat less treasonous atoms or they can side with Yorick-R, stuff Samatha-R into a garbage disposal chute and pretend that nothing ever happened, in which case Yorick-R orders his (treacherous) Equipment Guy to hand over the flamethrower issued to his team as a reward for the player characters.

### 11. The Lost Corridor

*While travelling through a quiet, obscure part of this sector, you turn the corner into the next corridor and you run into a sheet of black plastic strung across the entrance. Pushing past, you find yourself in a bizarre shanty town. There are bedrolls, hammocks, cooking fires, piles of scavenged debris and supplies and a crowd of citizens who are definitely below the minimum hygiene standard.*

This corridor does not exist. It was officially closed many yearcycles ago and as far as

The Computer knows, there is nothing here. Therefore, anyone in this corridor does not exist. This fact was discovered by fleeing traitors, leading to the creation of this little colony of the treacherous. Some of these clones are condemned criminals, others just wanted to escape life in Alpha Complex.

The leader of the Lost Corridor is Meredith, formerly Meredith-B, who was convicted of being a Humanist and allegedly fled Alpha Complex. Troubleshooters may recognise her from a recent Hour of Hate, when her image was displayed on monitors throughout Alpha Complex for the people to hate. Meredith-B pleads with the Troubleshooters to move on quietly and ignore the Lost Corridor.

Reporting the Lost Corridor is a bit tricky. It's one thing to say 'Friend Computer, I've just uncovered a lair of Commie Mutant Traitors' but then The Computer replies 'According to your PDC locator beacon, you are in an invalid location. Therefore, there are no Commie Mutant Traitors there, so I must surmise you are hallucinating. Report to your unit's Happiness Officer for biochemical funjustment.' A better approach is to call in Internal Security (who take credit for uncovering this nest of villains). Oh, if the Troubleshooters do report the Lost Corridor successful, then they've just pissed off Free Enterprise, the Romantics, the Humanists and the Sierra Club, all of whom use the Lost Corridor.

### 12. Market Testing

*'Just a few moments of your time, friend!' Suddenly, there's a grinning citizen in ORANGE standing next to you and you swear he wasn't there a moment ago. 'Hi, the name's Denver-O! I'm doing market testing for PLC and I think it'd be just mandatory if you gave me your impressions of a few of our new products.'*

*He opens a satchel containing a variety of exciting and experimental products, one per Troubleshooter.*

The characters have a choice of products here:

👁️ **A can of B3:** 'All new flavours' enthuses Denver-O. It also makes the Troubleshooter's stomach bubble

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excitingly. This bubbling intensifies over the course of the mission until it becomes agonisingly painful and then subsides. The other side effect is that the Troubleshooter becomes immune to the effects of all drugs.

- ☞ **A hairdryer:** *'It styles as it dries'* claims Denver-O, and the hairdryer does indeed spray a thick layer of hair gel as it dries. This gel is very sticky and the Troubleshooter's head will stick to anything it touches.
- ☞ **A breath m vsxint:** *'The mintiest mint ever produced by science!'* This breath mint is so fresh and minty that it completely annihilates the Troubleshooter's sense of taste. All he can taste is mint... forever.
- ☞ **A laser freshener:** *'Makes your laser pistol kill with the fresh scent of pine.'* No other effect.
- ☞ **Some foodstuff on a stick:** *'It's a blend of nutrients and fibre.'* It's also alive and wriggly, and screams 'no! no!' as you eat it.
- ☞ **A tube of pills:** *'For enjoyment of life!'* These are mood enhancers. The Troubleshooter's emotions are now supercharged. If he feels anything, he feels it superintensely.
- ☞ **A small white oval with a single button on it:** *'It's a personal scrubbot!'* When activated, the little bot starts crawling around the Troubleshooter's body, scrubbing both uniform and epidermis. It's quite pleasant and very clean, until the little bot crawls into your underwear and vanishes into whatever orifices it finds. It emerges from a different orifice later on, having cleaned your digestive system to a mirror finish.
- ☞ **A pair of black gloves:** *'Stylish yet functional.'* These contain force-feedback recorders for Internal Security. IntSec now knows what this Troubleshooter's hands are doing at any time.

### 13. Hygiene Inspection

*Up ahead, you see a hygiene inspection unit – a series of booths where you get to be probed, photographed, stripped, probed again, photographed again and then sprayed with chemicals. It's so much fun that it's got a dedicated happiness officer standing at the entrance, handing out happy pills.*

Equipment often goes missing at hygiene inspection units, stolen by opportunistic passers-by or by Free Enterprise thieves – or by fellow Troubleshooters. Furthermore, any Troubleshooter who is out of uniform or below minimum hygiene standards or is carrying illegal equipment will be spotted and chastened. Often, this chastening comes in the form of chemical additives to the shower.

### 14. Fleshbags

*You see several odd piles of pinkish fabric or plastic lying on the corridor floor up ahead.*

On closer examination, they are suits of human skin, lying on the floor as if shed like a hide. There is no sign of clothing or equipment, nor is there any blood or other clues. There are more than 30 such skins. The Troubleshooters will never learn what happened here and neither will you.



### 15. Paranoid Questioning

*A pair of BLUE citizens with clipboards stop you as you march down the corridor. 'Answer the question' barks the first one!*

The two nameless BLUEs have a series of bizarre questions for the Troubleshooters:

- ☞ How many laser barrels were you issued with? How many have you fired? Why? Did you ever fire in the vicinity of Room 443? If not, why not?
- ☞ How many Troubleshooters were in your team when you began this mission? Are you sure? Do you know a Gerold-R? If not, why not? Are you sure you have no memory of him? Think carefully!
- ☞ Does the phrase 'Project Reality Insertion' mean anything to you? What about 'Dr. Steingold'? What about 'U. R. E?' or 'Unscheduled Reality Excursion'? Have you seen anything unusual that was also coloured green lately?
- ☞ Tell me about your dreams.
- ☞ Have you ever combined Bouncy Bubble Beverage with any other medication?
- ☞ If I ordered you to shoot me, what would you do?
- ☞ Has The Computer ever talked to you without using a PDC or monitor? Have you ever heard The Computer's voice in your head?
- ☞ Would you like to register as a mutant now? Voluntary registration will help you in the long run, believe me?
- ☞ How many times have you been cloned? Are you sure? Can you remember all your deaths? What about that time in URE Sector? With the... well, I've said enough. If you don't remember, then maybe that's for the best. Maybe they'll stop following you.



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### 16. From Beyond

As you turn a corner in the corridor, a voice screams at you to stop. Drawn in chalk on the floor just at your feet is a complex geometric pattern that runs the length of this stretch of corridor. Candles burn at several points. The air crackles and boils in the centre of one five-sided chalk diagram.

The person who shouted at you is an R&D scientist in a lab coat and oddly, a conical hat. 'Experiment!' he screams at you 'dangerous experiment! Don't take a step forward until we dismiss IT!'

He gestures at a waiting bot, which starts advancing towards the chalk diagram. The bot has a long boom arm, which is carrying a heavy book, a ringing alarm bell and a candle. As the bot approaches the pentagram, the atmospheric disturbance above it intensifies and begins to glow red and black. Meanwhile, the researcher is shouting a string of nonsense words.

You notice around this time that the toe of Troubleshooter [NAME]'s boot is just over one of the chalk lines.

If the Troubleshooters point out that the chalk line has been broken, then the scientist screams and runs. A few moments later, a squad of Vulture Troopers in unusually ornate uniforms march up and take Troubleshooter [NAME] into custody. He's brought off to an incinerator and well, incinerated.

If they do not mention the broken chalk line, then pass a note to Troubleshooter [NAME] informing him that he feels slightly different. Suggest he feels like he's gained the Pyrokinesis and Telekinesis abilities (he hasn't – it's an experiment in psychological manipulation of citizens using occult symbology... probably...)

### 17. Warbot Coming Through

You hear a thunderous grinding noise coming up the corridor towards you. Your path is blocked by a giant mobile wall of steel, guns, tracks, cannons, lasers, more armour and lots more guns. It's a warbot.

The warbot barely fits through the corridor and the only way the Troubleshooters are going to get past is by climbing over the titanic war machine. However, the warbot has been warned that there are Commie saboteurs operating in this area and so is unwilling to let people it does not trust touch it. How will the Troubleshooters either prove their trustworthiness to the giant bot or else sneak past it? The bot is moving very, very slowly down the corridor and there's no other route around that the Troubleshooters are cleared to take.

### 18. Pit Trap

There's a hidden pit trap in this corridor. Make a secret High Alert roll for the first Troubleshooter in the group. If he fails, he falls in. If he passes, inform him that he's noticed a trapdoor and can step past it quietly or inform the next Troubleshooter of the danger.

If one of the Troubleshooters falls in, read the following to him secretly:  
*Aaaagh! The floor falls away beneath you and you plummet into a slick chute that carries you deep into the bowels of Alpha Complex. Laserlights flash as you fall by, scanning you. Down below you, you catch a glimpse of a fiery pit, but with a clunk you're shunted onto a different chute path. You land with a thump in a dark chamber. You're lying in the middle of a circle of shadowy figures.*

'We are the Illuminati' says one of them, 'you work for US now. Fail, and we will destroy you. Resist, and we will destroy you. Do you understand?'

Congratulations, Troubleshooter! You've just joined the Illuminati at Degree 1. They give the Troubleshooter a new secret society mission and then send him back to rejoin the rest of his team. They also dump a load of food vat waste on him, to give him an alibi.

### 19. Mandatory Confession

A row of confession booths lines one wall of this corridor. As you walk past, The Computer says 'attention, Troubleshooters! Confession is mandatory in this sector. Please enter an unoccupied confession booth immediately. If no confession booth is available, please wait and one will become available shortly.' As it says that, there's a blinding flash of light from one of the booths and the door slides open, letting a cloud of hot ash particles billow into the corridor.

It's Confession Time! The Troubleshooters each have a chance to privately inform Friend Computer of their failings and the treasons of others...

### 20. Outdoors Exit

This corridor ends in an unguarded door, leading Outdoors.

The door is not guarded but it is watched by hidden cameras (Tension 20).

# 5: OFFICES

## 5. Offices

*Death is a new office building filled with modern furniture, A wise thing, but which has no purpose for us.*

- John Ashbery, "A Last World"

Either roll 1d20 to determine a random office that the Troubleshooters blunder into or pick an office from the list. Each office lists its ostensible purpose and why the Troubleshooters might reasonably end up there. Reasons to end up at an office, of course, do not have to be reasonable.

### 1. CPU Office of Collateral Damage Registration - Tic-Tac-Toe

**Office Purpose:** Tracking damage to computer property caused by Troubleshooters in the course of their missions.

**Why You'd Come Here:** Ordered to report here after causing collateral damage.

*There are nine desks arranged in a square facing you in this crowded office, which really has only enough room for half that number of workstations. There is also an extra chair crammed in against one wall; a citizen in RED is sitting there, trying to balance a large ledger and computer console on his knees. The rest of the office staff, a mix of REDs and ORANGES, studiously ignore him.*

Deep and strange are the plots of the High Programmers, the cryptic masters of Alpha Complex. Their schemes are far-reaching and labyrinthine, stratagems played out of dozens of yearcycles and across whole sectors. Every citizen is enmeshed in their dark and terrible games.

Admittedly, not all games are quite so dark and terrible. Here, for example, a pair of High Programmers play tic-tac-toe with office workers. Every so often, the office workers receive an official command from on high, telling them that they have been reassigned to new duties here in this very office. The 10 clones – five RED, five ORANGE – line up against the wall. The two High Programmers then play REDs and ORANGES by telephone,

assigning each citizen to the appropriate desk. Three REDs or three ORANGES in a row and you win!

Trying to get anything done here is frustrating when the clerk you are dealing with gets swapped to another desk every few minutes. Count yourself lucky, though, that you are not trying to get anything done at the cubic Office of Revised Ubiquitous Banking and Commerce.

### 2. IntSec Department of Observation – Smile Time

**Office Purpose:** Watching security camera footage and making sinister notes.

**Why You'd Come Here:** You need security camera footage.

**This description applies only to the first Troubleshooter to enter the office. Read it to him secretly.**

*On entering this office, the first thing you see is yourself, entering this office. Everywhere are huge banks of monitors, displaying the picture feeds from thousands of security cameras scattered across Alpha Complex. One bank shows the feeds from your Troubleshooter team – from your multicorder, from your PDCs, from your laser pistol gun cameras and some you don't recognise. If you didn't know better, you'd swear that some of your team had cameras implanted behind their eyes. Other banks show archive footage and it's all of you. You getting your mission briefing, you eating at the cafeteria, you walking down the corridor, infra-red images of you sleeping in your darkened quarters last night. There's even footage of you back in the Junior Citizen crèche, being taught to love The Computer or being decanted from the tanks for the first time. A dozen Internal Security agents watch the screens and type notes feverishly. Your whole life is up there on the screens.*

Internal Security loves you and watches you all the time. Smile for Internal Security. Be happy for Internal Security. Does everyone in Alpha Complex have such a room dedicated to watching them?

### When the second and subsequent Troubleshooters enter the room...

*This room is filled with banks of monitors but when you enter, they all switch off before you can see what they were displaying. A dozen IntSec agents spin around in their ergonomic swivel chairs to face you. 'Can we help you, citizens?' they ask.*

Never confirm that the first Troubleshooter saw himself. Leave it uncertain as to whether he genuinely found an office dedicated to observing him or he's hallucinating due to sheer paranoia.

### 3. Power Services Fuel Storage Co-ordination - Choking Fog

**Office Purpose:** Keeping track of the stocks of fossil fuel available to Alpha Complex.

**Why You'd Come Here:** Your vehicle needs refuelling.

*When you open the door, tendrils of thick, pungent smoke flow out and twine around your arm. The room beyond is filled with a cloud of dark fog. You can dimly make out the glow of monitors and the shapes of office desks in the gloom but the smoky stench makes your eyes water.*

The staff of this office wear gasmasks and protective gear. They admit that it may be a bit smoky in here but make no other mention of the clouds of smoke. Troubleshooters entering the room discover that there are huge gratings underneath each desk and the smoke emerges from these vents in great billowing plumes as if the office were built above an incinerator. All the documents in this office are stained black with soot.

Spending too long in this office means you start choking to death. The staff might offer you a glass of water if you are lucky.





## MANDATORY MISSION PACK

### 4. CPU Department of Redundant Departments – The Graea

**Office Purpose:** Ensuring that no department has a sub-department that fulfils the same role as another sub-department of the same department, assuming the department hasn't departed from its standard department.

**Why You'd Come Here:** Service Service – you need a form checked by this office.

*This is one of the older offices in Alpha Complex, it seems. The ideal of the paperless office hasn't taken hold here, as every available surface – and some that are unavailable according to the normal tenets of Euclidian geometry – is crammed with papers and documents of all kinds, mostly yellowed. There are a few ancient computer consoles underneath the piles of paper, too. There are several dozen battered old plastic desks here, staffed by several dozen battered old clones. At the back of the room is a large safe, painted an aggressively bright YELLOW.*

*Only three people in this office seem to be working. The rest sit around staring at him.*

The problem started here when a bureaucrat upgraded the stationery cabinet's security

rating to YELLOW. Now, the poor clones here cannot get at the stationery except when the office supervisor calls in and he is only in on MandatoryReportingDay, once per week.

Between them, they have a single pen, a single working keyboard and a single 'APPROVED' stamp, which they trade between them as needed. Getting anything done here requires a lot of negotiation, as pretty much every task requires the pen, the keyboard and the stamp. The Troubleshooters could also illegally break into the stationery cabinet and its bounty of keyboards, pens and sweet, sweet stamps.

### 5. HPD&MC Bureau of Compliance - Complete Silence

**Office Purpose:** Ensuring citizen compliance in all things.

**Why You'd Come Here:** Service service – you need a Compliancy Report.

*This is a huge white-tiled office, with rank after rank after rank of jet-black desks. There are hundreds of clerks here, tapping away at their computers or marching smartly from desk to desk. Overhead, there's a network of rails for the OfficeBots and pneumatic message pods that shuttle back and forth. The overwhelming impression, though, is complete silence. No-one*

*in this whole vast room is making any noise at all.*

If a Troubleshooter is about to make noise, then everyone in the office snaps around to stare at him disapprovingly, even those who could not possibly know he was going to make a noise. Speaking out loud requires a tremendous effort of will. If someone does manage to make a loud sound, though, then the office suddenly erupts into a babble of speech, the clatter of a hundred keyboards and the chatter of printers and computers, as if some spell had been broken. Everyone in the office seems weirdly relieved but is also very much unwilling to associate with the Troubleshooter who made the noise. The impression given is that by making a noise, the Troubleshooter has angered something that would have been better left alone.

### 6. CPU Office of Systems Management - Department of Narration

**Office Purpose:** Who knows?

**Why You'd Come Here:** You're lost.

*It's a small, cramped office. There's a clerk at the reception desk, while behind him a little old female clone types away on an old-fashioned keyboard.*

## 5 OFFICES

While talking to the receptionist, one of the Troubleshooters notices what the old woman is typing. The first sentence he reads is 'Troubleshooter [NAME] notices what is being typed. He is surprised but says nothing. The other Troubleshooters remain ignorant and meanwhile, in the corridor outside, the-' The rest of the text is blocked by the old woman's body but reading up the screen, the Troubleshooter can read a terrifyingly detailed description of the mission thus far, complete with descriptions of the Troubleshooters' thoughts and transcriptions of their internal monologues.

If challenged, the old woman points out that she is just a data entry clerk, copying from an old paper file. Indeed, she shows them an old typewritten file in a manila binder, yellowed with age, which contains the exact text that she has been typing. It is a mission report for another group of Troubleshooters that happen to have the exact same names as the player characters but it is dated more than 80 years ago. The rest of the paper file is missing.

### 7. HPD&MC Centre for Attitude Alignment

**Office Purpose:** Personalised Brainwashing

**Why You'd Come Here:** Service service – delivering a convicted traitor for reprogramming

*As you enter this office, your attention is drawn to the large windows running down one wall. They must be one-way mirrors, as you can see small cells beyond. There's a citizen in each cell, being monitored by several technicians and scientists in this room. You can hear recorded messages being played in each cell, messages like 'YOU ARE CITIZEN JOE-R-FGC-2. YOU ARE CITIZEN JOE-R-FGC-2. YOU LIKE BOUNCY BUBBLE BEVERAGE AND*

*TEELA-O. YOU ARE A MEMBER OF THE DEATH LEOPARD SECRET SOCIETY.' Running along the wall opposite the observation windows are long shelves, stacked full of small tape cartridge cases.*

This room is for brainwashing citizens into believing that they are other citizens. One of the technicians proudly explains that they have perfected personality adjustment to such a degree that they can completely reorder a subject's self-image and memory within hours, thanks to a combination of subliminal messaging, drugs, electroshock and MemoMax reprogramming. It is remarkably easy! The subjects almost never reassert their previous personality, becoming instead the individual constructed by this centre. The number of subjects processed by this centre is classified beyond the Troubleshooters' security clearance but the technician winks and says they would be surprised if they knew how many people had gone through those cells.

If a Troubleshooter checks, he notices that his name appears on one of the old cartridge cases, implying either that he was brainwashed in this office or that someone else was brainwashed to think that he is the Troubleshooter. The cartridge inside the case, however, is missing.

### 8. CPU Bureau of Information Collation - The Archive

**Office Purpose:** Ensuring that no piece of useful data is lost through censorship.

**Why You'd Come Here:** You're very lost.

*Every square centimetre of this office's walls, floor and ceiling is covered in scraps of paper and strings with more scraps glued to them criss-cross the*

*room. A dozen printers are hooked up to a computer console, spitting out more sheets of paper. Each sheet has at most three or four words printed on it. A wild-haired clerk is grabbing the printouts, cutting away everything except the little bit of text and sticking the scraps into place according to some incomprehensible scheme.*

The clerk is Rex-Y-CMB and he is crazy. The printouts are routed to him by all the censors in CPU and HPD&MC – each page contains one bit of censored text, which might be as little as one word. The pages come in randomly, with no link back to the original document, so even though every piece of information is saved there is no way to easily reconstruct the pre-censored document.

Rex-Y was supposed to just store the printouts but as mentioned earlier, he is a few laser barrels short of a firing squad. He has become convinced that he can uncover the Truth by piecing together all of the scraps of censored information. This truth will reveal what is really going on Alpha Complex!

If the Troubleshooters read the text, roll on the Random Revealed Truth Tables four times for their random message pieced together by Rex-Y:





# MANDATORY MISSION PACK

## Random Revealed Truth Tables

Roll	Table #1	Table #2	Table #3	Table #4
1	[TROUBLESHOOTER NAME]	Were erased by	[TROUBLESHOOTER NAME]	Causing a reactor leak
2	CPU	Decided to eliminate	PLC	Due to mind control
3	HPD&MC	Agreed to become	Tech Services	Resulting in massive casualties
4	Alpha Complex	Merged with	The mutants	But was never reported
5	The subject	Was terminated because of	A scrubbot	As recorded in the archives
6	Internal Security	Suffered severe casualties due to	Dioxilade Acid	As planned
7	Commie Mutant Traitors	Became self-aware after encountering	The Toothpaste Disaster	As ordered
8	PURGE	Is responsible for	The fourth generation of citizens	As per standard protocol
9	The Illuminati	Cannot locate	Sector AVN	And was therefore classified ULTRAVIOLET
10	Many citizens	Betrayed	Themselves	As per emergency protocol
11	All the sector	Cannot tolerate	Batclone	But cannot be confirmed
12	[TROUBLESHOOTER NAME]	Erased	[TROUBLESHOOTER NAME]	As of this report
13	Targets	Was promoted by	The Humanists	So was assigned to reactor shielding duty
14	Teela-O-MLY	Was in league with	Entities from Outdoors	Will be dealt with by Troubleshooters
15	The High Programmer	Believed to in fact be	A rogue compnode	Requiring computer reprogramming
16	The other Complex	Was observed to meet with	The Armed Forces	Who is reading this report
17	Citizen OMEGA	Resisted interrogation by	PSION	And will be terminated
18	The Computer	Was operated on	The funbot	Causing the incident in question
19	The visitors	Is an agent of	Project ESCAPE	Which must never be revealed
20	Traitors	Is	Famous Game Designer Allen Varney	But this never happened

## 9. Tech Services Bot Refurbishment Depot - Place Your Bets

**Office Purpose:** Repair and refurbishment of damaged bots

**Why You'd Come Here:** Your assigned bot has been damaged and needs repair.

*You can hear shouts and cheers as you enter this workroom. All the consoles and repair bays have been pushed to the sides to clear the area in the centre of the room. There's a circle of citizens standing there, watching some event that's happening in the middle. One clone's standing on a bench, taking bets.*

Here, bots are made to fight for the entertainment of bored clones. The Troubleshooters can bet on the bots if they wish – the current favourite is a particularly psychotic scrubbot who has had its normal bristles replaced with monofilament scrubbers that can cut through anything.

No	Bot	Odds	Combat Skill
1	Buzzer the Fighting Scrubbot	2/1	15
2	Waiterbot 057, the Crushinator	5/1	10
3	Combot model 32, The Survivor	4/1	14

No	Bot	Odds	Combat Skill
4	Experimental Bot Model 6, <i>The One With All The Blades</i>	6/1	3
5	Steam-HammerBot	5/1	4
6	Killbot 74	3/1	12
7	PitBot	8/1	8
8	Jackobot With A Big Stick	10/1	5

Bets of up to 100 credits can be made. Pair up the fighting bots randomly and roll their Combat skills to determine the winner.

While the Troubleshooters are in the depot watching the fights, a pale-faced clone in

a RED jumpsuit enters quietly. Observant Troubleshooters notice that a) he has got a cybernetic arm, b) he puts a large plastic box on one table, c) does not talk to anyone and d) leaves. He is a Corpore Metal agent called Robbie-R, here to put an end to this hideous bot abuse. The box contains a bomb, which goes off before the end of the arena fight. The blast frees the bots from slavery by reducing them to their component atoms and punishes the cruel slavers by reducing them to their component atoms. Hooray for component atoms!

## 10. CPU Analysis Section - Place Your Bets, II

**Office Purpose:** Monitoring events in Alpha Complex

**Why You'd Come Here:** Service service – deliver vitally important fresh grape supplies

*This sumptuous office, all marble and gilt, is dominated by a huge bank of screens containing live feeds from Troubleshooter missions. CPU drones scurry between monitoring stations, observing and monitoring Troubleshooter activity. In the centre of the room is a raised dais with an INDIGO stripe around it. Half a dozen high-clearance citizens are lounging on very comfy couches, being fed grapes by several young citizens who appear to be half out of uniform. The high-clearance citizens are watching the Troubleshooter missions with mild interest. Occasionally, one of them nudges another and throws a handful of credits on the table between them. You should be pleased that these honoured and respected citizens can take time out of their busy schedule to observe and apparently bet on the imminent deaths of your fellow Troubleshooters.*

This is exactly as it seems, an example of how horrible high-clearance citizens can be and how doomed the Troubleshooters are but it is also a chance for the player characters to show some initiative. The INDIGOs are monitoring their mission too, after all – if, say, they could throw or complete the mission depending

on which way an INDIGO bet, then both the Troubleshooters and their INDIGO patron could make a great deal of cash...

## 11. Tech Services Wiring Storage – A Den of Treachery

**Office Purpose:** Storing different lengths of wire.

**Why You'd Come Here:** You need a wire of specific length.

*As you enter this office, you suddenly feel slightly more tense. The walls are lined with small drawers containing assorted lengths of wire. There are three desks here, marked 'INQUIRIES', 'WIRE SUPPLY' and 'WIRE SUPPLY ADMINISTRATION'. A clone is at each desk, with a wide grin plastered on his or her face. Behind INQUIRIES, there's Doris-R, a female clone with a very elaborate beehive hairdo, a Teela-O fanclub badge and a laser rifle pointed at WIRE SUPPLY. Behind WIRE SUPPLY, there's a moustache attached to a balding, bleary-eyed old clone whose nametag reads Jerry-R. He's got a Cone Rifle pointed at WIRE SUPPLY ADMINISTRATION.*

*The WIRE SUPPLY ADMINISTRATION desk is covered by a third clone, who is sprawled over it, his fingers clinging to a laser pistol. It looks like this third clone, whose nametag is Morris-O, dropped his laser pistol and threw himself over the desk to retrieve it. He has prevented himself from falling from his precarious perch atop the desk by jamming his legs underneath his chair. He has got his laser pistol pointed at Doris-R.*

*'You...want...INQUIRIES' says Morris-O through gritted teeth.*

*'DA! Inquiries, comrade' agrees Jerry-R.*

*'Can...I...help...you?' asks Doris-R, her steel-eyed gaze never wavering from a point somewhere on the far side of Jerry-R's skull.*

Here is what happened– Jerry-R's a filthy Commie. Morris-O is an Internal Security agent

spying on Jerry-R, in the hopes that Jerry-R would lead Morris to a nest of Commies. Doris-R is a loyal citizen, who suspected Jerry-R of treachery for months. A few seconds ago, Morris-O accidentally dropped his concealed hold-out laser pistol. Jerry-R assumed (partially correctly) that he had been caught, so he pulled out his Commie-issue Cone Rifle to take out Morris-O. Doris-R, seeing her paranoid thoughts made manifest, grabbed her laser rifle to zap the Commie. Morris, believing he could still salvage his plan if he convinced Jerry-R he was an ally and not an IntSec spy, took aim at Doris. Enter the Troubleshooters.

None of the three people in this office want the Troubleshooters here. For Doris-R, this is her chance to prove her loyalty to The Computer by single-handedly killing a Commie. For Jerry-R, the Troubleshooters are just more people that he will have to terminate to save himself. For Morris-O, they are another complication in his plan. So, the three staff will try to process the Troubleshooter's requests as quickly and efficiently as possible. Doris-R will answer their inquiries and fill out a form TS54/WRQ44, which they must then give to Jerry-R. Jerry-R gives them a length of wire and tells them the form must be stamped by Morris-O. Morris-O stamps the form (retrieving the stamp through some really improbable gymnastics and contortions) and bids the team adieu with a cheery grin and a wave of his left foot.

## 12. Internal Security Office of Security - The Void

**Office Purpose:** Internal informational security of Internal Security

**Why You'd Come Here:** You're doomed in some odd way.

*You enter this office and all you can see is darkness. Darkness as far as the eye can see - which admittedly is about a metre. The floor is a featureless black substance that's cold and slightly slippery. You can hear nothing but somehow get the impression that this is a vast, vast chamber. It could be your imagination but you're not sure if there's a ceiling here.*

*A moment later, a spotlight shines down from some unimaginable distance, illuminating a small plinth*



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*with a little silver bell and a sign. The sign reads 'PLEASE RING FOR ATTENTION.'*

*And maybe it's your imagination again but you're not sure you want the attention of whatever dwells in this high-infinite void.*

If they do ring the bell, then another spotlight stabs down, illuminating a desk with a lugubrious, hollow-eyed clone sitting behind it. His desk and uniform are covered with a thin rime of frost and he speaks in sepulchral tones. WHAT DO YOU NEED he asks. Something terrible and ancient moves in the darkness, far far away.

Whatever the Troubleshooters ask for, the receptionist replies IT IS AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE. EVERYTHING IS AROUND HERE SOMEWHERE. He gets up and walks into the darkness and is gone for some time. Eventually he returns with the requested item or file (or does not come back, if they asked for something you do not want to give them.)

Any Troubleshooters who step into the darkness never return.

### 13. PLC Parcel Tracking – The Office With A Window

**Office Purpose:** Tracking parcel delivery performances  
**Why You'd Come Here:** A parcel has been lost.

*Your eyes blink when you enter this office. The light in here is very bright but oddly pleasant. As your vision adjusts, you see a perfectly normal little office, crammed with filing cabinets. There's a desk in the middle of the room, sitting in the patch of sunlight that streams in through an open window to Outdoors. A fresh breeze blows gently through the office, rustling the papers.*

Owing to an architectural quirk, this office is the only one in the whole of Alpha Complex that has a window. The office's only occupant, Colin-O, has never worked in any other office and so has no idea that his workspace is unique. He is quite surprised when it is pointed out to him. Colin-O is naturally cheery and healthy, no doubt because of his exposure to fresh air and sunshine.

### 14. Tech Services Paint Inspection Scheduling - The Machine God

**Office Purpose:** Ensuring that people watch paint dry.  
**Why You'd Come Here:** Service Service – assigned to guard a patch of drying paint

*It's a perfectly ordinary office. Desks, cabinets, a big sector map, a wide selection of paint samples and their associated drying times... robed cultists with filed teeth, sacrificial knives and a huge altar made out*

*of computer parts and paint cans, stained with what you really hope is RED paint.*

You know how, in every office, there is some machine that demands sacrifices and sorcery? The server that only works some of the time, the printer that jams if you speak too sharply to it, the coffee machine whose operation is a black art? Well, take that through hundreds of years and dozens of increasingly crazed and eccentric generations of clones and you end up with the Machine God. At its heart, it was once a schedule printer but now it is a dark and hungry demon, a hate machine of blood and metal and paint and fury sustained by the tortured souls of sacrifices, worshipped by a devoted cannibal cult of painting inspection schedulers. The horror, the horror.

The loping, sharp-toothed, miscegenated cultists are always suspicious of outsiders and may attempt to sacrifice the Troubleshooters to the Machine God – or even induct them into the cult, if they prove useful or friendly.

### 15. Armed Forces Committee on Security Rating Advisory – The Screaming

**Office Purpose:** Advising CPU on changing terror levels  
**Why You'd Come Here:** Reporting a new Commie threat

*This large office is fully staffed by busy clerks and technicians, who run back and forth with clipboards and notes, speaking in intense, hushed tones about matters of dire import. There's a big computer display made up of lots and lots of little lights that flicker between different colours. It's obvious that some very serious and important work is done here.*

*You can also distinctly hear someone screaming.*

No-one else in the room acknowledges the screaming but if the Troubleshooters trace the source, they find that it is coming from a filing cabinet. Opening drawer 'S' of the cabinet reveals a naked man screaming his lungs out. A moment later, a quartet of Armed Forces grunts march in, remove the naked man from the cabinet and drag him away. They return with a wriggling body bag, which they place into the same drawer of the cabinet, then unzip the bag and close the drawer. There is now a different man in there, who starts screaming in a different key. Again, no-one else in the office seems to notice.

## 16. HPD&MC Bureau of Bicycle Registration - Watching The Clock

**Office Purpose:** None whatsoever.  
**Why You'd Come Here:** You're lost.

*This is a large, well-equipped office. A dozen citizens sit at their desks, arms folded and motionless. The office supervisor sits at his desk, drumming a pen off the table. Their eyes are all focussed on a large clock on the wall. Every second is watched.*

There are not any bicycles in Alpha Complex, so this office is utterly pointless. There is never any work to do in here. The staff have never done a minute's work and never will. Nor did their predecessors in this job and nor will their successors, assuming no CPU auditor notices the office's budget buried in the depths of the HPD&MC bureaucracy. Until that happens,

there is nothing at all to do in this office except watch the clock and wait for the end of the working day.

## 17. Television Modulation

**Office Purpose:** Adjusting television programs to the mood of the populace.  
**Why You'd Come Here:** You want to break into the TV industry.

*Wow, that's a lot of eyeballs. This room is dominated by a huge bank of screens, all displaying eyeballs. You realise that they're all cameras zoomed in on the eyes of citizens watching television. One screen in every ten is showing an actual TV channel and you can see the eyeballs blink and move in response to the images on the TV channel. Technicians and controllers babble to each other, saying stuff like:*

*'We're getting a good response on channel 11, lots of solid tracking.'*

*'Pupil dilation down 5% in RDJ Sector. Schedule another on-air execution to perk them up.'*

*'Give me reaction data on the 18-24 age bracket in CRM Sector, we need to up subliminal traffic there.'*

Every television set in Alpha Complex contains a tiny camera for observing the viewers. Here at Television Modulation, the technicians monitor 2,418 difference pieces of data from every single viewing eyeball. Programs can be adjusted in real-time to maximise their appeal and hypnotic effect on all those juicy eyeballs.

If the Troubleshooters stay here long enough, they will notice that there are some weird and disturbing eyeballs out there. On one screen, an insect crawls across an eyeball. On another, a needle enters the picture from offscreen and penetrates the flesh of the eyeball, sinking deep into it before withdrawing and leaving a puckered mark on the white of the eye. On yet another, the eye reflects the light of flames and then begins to bubble and blacken as the heat reaches it.

## 18. CPU Office of Sanctioned Communications - Oh, That's How They Do It

**Office Purpose:** Official communications with citizens.

**Why You'd Come Here:** You're lost.

*This office is a call centre, with long rows of desks with lots of telephones. There's something familiar about the voices of all the telephone operators. It takes a moment to realise that they all speak with The Computer's voice.*

So, is The Computer's voice actually that of a call centre clerk reading his responses off a script? Or does CPU use these impersonators to issue orders without the knowledge of Friend Computer? The Troubleshooters will never know.

## 19. Tech Services Bureau of Wall Brace Recycling - Gormenghast XP

**Office Purpose:** Giving old wall braces better, higher destinies. Exalting them beyond the wildest dreams of wall braces.

**Why You'd Come Here:** You're mad.

*This old office hasn't been remodelled in years from the look of the antique fittings, the old-fashioned computer consoles and the truly ancient staff. They're all wearing unusually ornate home-made hats, ranging in size and complexity from the crocheted berets of the junior functionaries to the towering, multi-level headdress of the office manager, which is a feat of structural engineering in itself.*

The bureaucracy of this office has metastasised into something even stranger, with a baroque ritual for each and every aspect of life here.



## MANDATORY MISSION PACK

Getting a drink from the water cooler, for instance, goes as follows:

- ☞ The supplicant indicates his thirst to the lesser invigilator.
- ☞ The lesser invigilator summons the greater invigilator.
- ☞ The greater invigilator makes pilgrimage to the Keeper of the Water Cooler.
- ☞ The greater invigilator asks of the Keeper whether or not there is sufficient water for the supplicant to have a drink.
- ☞ The Keeper calls forth the Junior Keeper.
- ☞ The Junior Keeper is sent to fetch the Dipstick.
- ☞ The Junior Keeper, under the strict supervision of the Keeper, tests the depth of water in the water cooler.
- ☞ If he says yea, then the Keeper responds that a drink can indeed be provided to the supplicant.
- ☞ The greater invigilator informs the lesser invigilator of this.
- ☞ The lesser invigilator informs the supplicant of this.
- ☞ Three times then must the supplicant assert his desire for a drink.
- ☞ The lesser invigilator informs the greater invigilator of this.
- ☞ The greater invigilator begs leave to approach the master.
- ☞ The master is apprised of the thirst of the supplicant.

☞ The master grants permission for the supplicant to leave his desk.

And so on, through 302 other steps, including one branch of 47 steps dedicated to poking those supplicants who have collapsed due to sheer dehydration. You really do not want to know how hard it is to go to the bathroom in this office.

### 20. Armed Forces Office of Ammunition Sorting - Cockroaches, Cockroaches!

**Office Purpose:** Making little stacks of bullets.

**Why You'd Come Here:** You need ammo.

*The clerk that greets you in this office is a little too friendly and unctuous. His smile is fixed and unmoving and his hair is oddly too-black and bristly. His eyebrows seem to... unfurl... slowly, as if they were antennae pinned down with glue that's slowly losing its adhesion. And his gait... nothing human moves like that. You are struck by the sudden conviction that everyone in this office is a human-*

*sized cockroach, wearing plastic human masks for disguise.*

Option 1: Alpha Complex is being invaded by a race of sentient, semi-giant mutant cockroaches that are infiltrating via the service group that spends the most time out doors, i.e. the Armed Forces. If the Troubleshooters disturb this quite literal nest of villains, they will be pursued and eaten by the chitin-armoured monsters that hide beneath human skin in this office!

Option 2: Overdosing on Visomorpain can cause exciting hallucinations.



## 6. RUMOURS

### 6. Rumours

Rumours are the spice of Alpha Complex, a little pinch of uncertainty to breed fear and paranoia. Very little in this chapter is true but it is all plausible. Apart from the weird rumours.

## GENERAL RUMOURS

1. CPU is tired of readjusting food production quotas, so they are going to terminate lots of INFRAREDS. No-one will notice because really, who counts INFRAREDS.

2. The High Programmers are just figureheads – no-one actually knows how The Computer works.

3. Anyone who joins a Secret Society gets promoted but it is not because of their new contacts. It is because The Computer *wants* people to join the societies.

4. Mutants are allergic to Bouncy Bubble Beverage. That is why they make us drink so much of it.

5. Everyone knows that the high-clearance clones are actually clones of the original founders of Alpha Complex. You never advance on merit past BLUE – you have to be born into the higher levels.

6. They are going to open more of Alpha Complex to the Outdoors soon, only they will drug the people who they send out there so they think that they are indoors.

7. Teela-O's going to be revealed to be a Commie in the next episode! Some think it is just so she can clear her name but I think it is to remind us to trust no-one.

8. There are Commies working at every cafeteria in Alpha Complex.

9. All bots are actually remote-controlled by The Computer. They only have simulated individual personalities but not all of them actually know this.

10. There are actually only a small number of clone templates. You know how your name includes your birth sector? That is because there is only one of you per sector but there is one of you in *every* sector. I met my

clone-cousin last week. Horrible guy. Works in R&D.

11. The new generation of reactors is behind schedule. Someone's for termination in Power Services, mark my words.

12. There is another level of clearance beyond ULTRAVIOLET but you are not told about it until you are a BLUE.

13. The stuff in the food vats isn't made in Alpha Complex. They bring it in from Outdoors.

14. Remember when you got promoted to RED and they told you about Outdoors? They were lying. There is no Outdoors. It's a loyalty test.

15. My friend's workmate's boss's printer repairman's clone told him that 90% of the cameras in this sector are dummies.

16. IntSec doesn't know what's going on – it's just a front. Power Services are the real Internal Security. All the stuff Power Services claim to do is actually done by Tech Services.

17. The Armed Forces won't tell you this, but the war's going really badly.

18. The Armed Forces won't tell you this, but they're going to announce a major victory in the next few days. The war's almost over.

19. The new jumpsuits all contain hidden microphones in the zipper on the left arm.

20. All rumours are planted by Internal Security.

## MISSION RUMOURS

1. Your briefing officer is a complete psychopath, who terminates any Troubleshooters who annoy him.

2. It's a suicide mission. One of your team is a traitor but IntSec doesn't know who, so they're going to kill you all!

3. The mission's going to be filmed! You'll be on the news tonightcycle!

4. It's being filmed, all right but it's an instructional video for Troubleshooter training classes.

5. I've heard about that mission from a friend who works in PLC Outfitting. The laser barrels you're being issued with are all duds. Buy one from my friend Gary-R, he'll sell 'em for 20 credits each.

6. There's a Commie Mutant Traitor in this sector who's beaten a dozen Troubleshooter teams sent to chase him down. No-one's willing to try again, so they're sending teams off on nonsense missions in the hope that they'll run into the Mutant and get lucky.

7. Your mission's just a cover for a much more important mission. They don't care if you succeed or not.

8. This mission is a loyalty test. The enemies and obstacles are all simulated; it's just to see how you respond.

9. There's a Commie spy in CPU – they know you're coming. They know what the mission is.

10. Anyone who goes to debriefing always gets terminated. Don't even bother showing up.

11. Your briefing officer really likes B3 – bring him a can and he'll think you're the best clone ever.

12. No-one who wants to be Team Leader should ever be Team Leader.

13. The Computer has tagged your mission under the heading 'LIZARD INCURSION'. I don't know why.

14. They were supposed to announce this month's Hero of our Complex but the candidate failed the loyalty screening. They've got to find a new one before the end of the day, so it'll probably be one of your team!

15. Someone in your team is a registered mutant but they've made a deal with CPU to bury their registration so it doesn't affect their promotion prospects.

16. If you say you're a Troubleshooter on a mission, you get a 20% discount on all vending machine purchases.





## MANDATORY MISSION PACK

17. They're banning travel between sectors todaycycle, except for Troubleshooters on missions. I wonder why.

18. 54% of all Troubleshooter missions are aimed at fixing problems caused by other Troubleshooter missions.

19. Troubleshooter missions are all faked – it's all shot in a studio. It's just television.

20. Your mission is a lie.

### CONSPIRACY RUMOURS

1. Anti-Mutants are actually run by mutants. They're trying to weed out the weaker genetic lines to breed the ultimate mutant!

2. The Communists are actually just Romantics gone mad. Everyone knows Communism was wiped out years ago.

3. There are no Computer Phreaks – it's just bored High Programmers putting on silly names.

4. Corpore Metal want to turn us all into robot slaves!

5. That reactor meltdown last week? The one they covered up and denied? Death Leopard was responsible, I swear.

6. Anyone who joins the FCCC-P gets promoted really quickly. The higher clearances are full of those freaky religious nutters.

7. The Frankenstein Destroyers are planning to detonate a massive EMP that will wipe out all electronic gadgets in Alpha Complex. Word to the wise, friend – start hoarding food and knives.

8. Free Enterprise stole my PetBot.

9. The Humanists are actually just a front for the Commies.

10. The Illuminati exist. Really, they do, I swear.

11. There aren't any Mystics – they just use it as an excuse to sweep up anyone suffering side effects from drugs, instead of admitting that drugs make you sicker.

12. Pro Tech are just R&D's illegal experiments.

13. If you wear a tinfoil hat, Psion can't read your mind.

14. PURGE? It stands for Progressive Union of Registered General Electricians. You know who likes unions? Commies!

15. All the stuff the Romantics find is faked by HPD&MC. Nothing in Alpha Complex is older than 10 yearcycles.

16. The Sierra Club are Outdoors. The Armed Forces are fighting a war against the Commies. The Armed Forces go Outdoors. Join the dots, people!

17. You can't trust anyone who isn't in a secret society. They're the real danger.

18. There's another Alpha Complex out there but it's in a parallel reality. R&D technicians broke through a few years ago... from their side!

19. My friend's scrubbot's friend's waiterbot told me that he secretly works for a High Programmer but I don't know which 'he' is meant.

20. Reality is an IntSec plant.

### WEIRD RUMOURS

1. When you reach the age of 35 yearcycles, they terminate you and replace you with a younger clone.

2. Every CompNode has its own personality and some of them hate each other.

3. The sea level outside is rising; more than half of Alpha Complex is underwater.

4. No sector begins with the letter Q. No-one knows why.

5. Algae chips are actually algae *computer* chips. They're building a computer network in our digestive systems to control us!

6. If you look into a camera for too long, you turn to Solyent.

7. The six-clone limit is because after six clones, you start developing new mutant

powers. Really powerful ones, like Machine Empathy.

8. The High Programmers aren't human. They're lizards. Or maybe aliens.

9. At nightcycle, all the transbots go somewhere no human citizen has ever seen... except those brave enough to stow away.

10. The MemoMax chips in your brain automatically create a computer simulation of your mind inside The Computer. He knows what you are thinking, he knows when you're awake...

11. INFRAREDS are actually mostly fungal growths that just look human.

12. If you open your PDC, there's a button in there to erase all the data in it.

13. You can recognise a mutant by hugging them. Mutants can't stand being hugged.

14. Too much happiness makes your brain explode.

15. ME cards taste great.

16. Was that door there yesterday?

17. The Computer's crashing. Every day, another sector goes dark.

18. There's a guy down in RTC sector who can copy ME cards and he once copied a High Programmer's card. I know where to get it, if you've got the cash.

19. The password to The Computer is 'buffalo'.

20. Vapours don't shoot back.

# 7: RANDOM NAMES

## 7. Random Names

*Hell is other people.*  
- Sartre, *No Exit*.

For all your random Alpha Complex name needs.

	Name		Sec	Secret Society	Mutation	Quirk
1	Adam	R	ACG	Anti-Mutant	Absorption	Whistles cheerily
2	Ben	R	TRF	Communists	Adhesive Skin	Obsessed with cleanliness
3	Chris	R	MUD	Comp Phreaks	Adrenaline Control	Off his hormone suppressants
4	Dave	R	HIL	Corpore Metal	Bureaucratic Intuition	Very hungry all the time
5	Evan	R	BOB	Death Leopard	Chameleon	Thinks he's being watched
6	Frank	O	NFL	FCCC-P	Charm	Plays games on his PDC
7	Gary	O	SEC	Frank. Dest.	Corrosion	Trying to join the Commies
8	Hogart	O	ORC	FreeEnt	Death Simulation	Has a PetBot
9	Ian	O	NIB	Humanists	Deep Thought	Carries lots of tools
10	Julian	Y	SQL	Illuminati	Desolidity	Sneezes a lot
11	Kevin	Y	LOT	Mystics	Detect Mutant Power	Smells of cheese
12	Lawrence	Y	FRO	Pro Tech	Electroshock	Can't spell
13	Martin	G	HOG	Psion	Empathy	Addicted to happy drugs
14	Nigel	G	GRT	PURGE	Energy Field	Thinks one of the Troubleshooters is called Dave
15	Oliver	G	MAI	Romantics	Growth	Addresses everyone as 'my dear friend'
16	Peter	B	SQD	Other	Hypersenses	Tries to borrow credits
17	Quentin	B	OPE	Program Group	Levitation	Obsessed with watching the news
18	Ron	I	KIL	Spy	Machine Empathy	Collects used laser barrels
19	Steve	I	ZIN	None	Matter Eater	Always late for a meeting
20	Timmy	V	RTT	Multiple	Mechanical Intuition	Cybernetic limb

	Name		Sec	Secret Society	Mutation	Quirk
1	Unctious	R	WIL	Anti-Mutant	Mental Blast	Once was a Vulture Warrior
2	Victor	R	SQF	Communists	Polymorphism	Claustrophobic
3	Wallace	R	ARG	Comp Phreaks	Puppeteer	Eternally optimistic
4	Yancy	R	NOO	Corpore Metal	Pyrokinesis	Avid FunBall player
5	Andy	R	UIL	Death Leopard	Regeneration	Was demoted from a higher clearance
6	Bertram	O	USA	FCCC-P	Rubbery Bones	Very twitchy
7	Colin	O	IRE	Frank. Dest.	Shrinking	Drinks all the B3
8	Daniel	O	UKG	FreeEnt	Slippery Skin	Talks to vending machines
9	Elmer	O	COG	Humanists	Telekinesis	Fills out everything in triplicate
10	Fritz	Y	RUS	Illuminati	Teleportation	Asks too many questions
11	Grant	Y	BIN	Mystics	Toxic Metabolism	IntSec informant
12	Holland	Y	QRT	Pro Tech	Transmutation	Always lost
13	Ivan	G	CRP	Psion	Uncanny Luck	Thinks The Computer is his personal friend
14	Jock	G	MON	PURGE	Ventriloquist	Always going to confession
15	Maurice	G	POO	Romantics	X-Ray Vision	Recently terminated
16	Norbert	B	SOZ	Other	Deep Probe	On his last clone
17	Orville	B	DUF	Program Group	Mental Block	Sick of thinking up quirks
18	Raymond	I	ANT	Spy	Precognition	Avid BotSpotter
19	Tristan	I	MOB	None	Telepathy	Closet real food gourmand
20	Zak	V	CAL	Multiple	None	Worries about reactor leaks all the time



# MANDATORY MISSION PACK

	Name		Sec	Secret Society	Mutation	Quirk
1	Alice	R	YAN	Anti-Mutant	Absorption	Hates Troubleshooters
2	Beatrice	R	RIL	Communists	Adhesive Skin	TV junkie
3	Cat	R	TON	Comp Phreaks	Adrenaline Control	Avid recycler
4	Dahlia	R	FIN	Corpore Metal	Bureaucratic Intuition	Smells weird
5	Edel	R	HUG	Death Leopard	Chameleon	Can't sleep
6	Francine	O	LAP	FCCC-P	Charm	Narcoleptic
7	George	O	UUR	Frank. Dest.	Corrosion	Once saw a clone explode, and keeps talking about it
8	Helena	O	HRK	FreeEnt	Death Simulation	Very, very paranoid
9	Isabel	O	PEZ	Humanists	Deep Thought	Keeps a diary.
10	Jacintha	Y	AAB	Illuminati	Desolidity	Allergic to Hot Fun
11	Katy	Y	DFG	Mystics	Detect Mutant Power	Followed by a scrubbot all the time
12	Lucille	Y	HHH	Pro Tech	Electroshock	Owens her own cone rifle
13	Miriam	G	PTP	Psion	Empathy	Very bad balance
14	Nyssa	G	WOS	PURGE	Energy Field	Really huge nose
15	Odette	G	NOM	Romantics	Growth	Itchy
16	Pauline	B	OPM	Other	Hypersenses	Confused by forms
17	Rhonda	B	ADE	Program Group	Levitation	Terrible penmanship
18	Sara	I	YTR	Spy	Machine Empathy	Strangely coloured hair
19	Tegan	I	AJK	None	Matter Eater	Knits laser pistol holsters
20	Vivian	V	BND	Multiple	Mechanical Intuition	Carries a grenade at all times

	Name		Sec	Secret Society	Mutation	Quirk
1	Abigail	R	HYU	Anti-Mutant	Mental Blast	Thinks Teela-O isn't all that
2	Belinda	R	MJY	Communists	Polymorphism	Knows they're out to get her
3	Celia	R	FFW	Comp Phreaks	Puppeteer	Committed an execution-worthy crime
4	Dizzy	R	GHT	Corpore Metal	Pyrokinesis	Once won the lottery, but lost the ticket
5	Eudora	R	VCZ	Death Leopard	Regeneration	Sings loyalty songs a lot
6	Fiona	O	COV	FCCC-P	Rubbery Bones	Can't find her way back to her quarters
7	Germaine	O	BON	Frank. Dest.	Shrinking	Never blinks
8	Jackie	O	ZZX	FreeEnt	Slippery Skin	Keeps her laser handy
9	Kelise	O	POP	Humanists	Telekinesis	Repeats everything you tell her
10	Lynda	Y	LIF	Illuminati	Teleportation	Thinks her boss is a Commie
11	Mona	Y	GOG	Mystics	Toxic Metabolism	Loves Troubleshooters
12	Nigella	Y	FLI	Pro Tech	Transmutation	Volunteers for reactor duty a lot
13	Ola	G	AER	Psion	Uncanny Luck	Surprisingly strong
14	Prudence	G	LHR	PURGE	Ventriloquist	Bored by FunBall and makes sure everyone knows it
15	Rhonda	G	ORK	Romantics	X-Ray Vision	Incredibly annoying voice
16	Sarah	B	PRD	Other	Deep Probe	Very vain
17	Toni	B	NYU	Program Group	Mental Block	Used to spontaneously combust, but is better now
18	Yvonne	I	JWS	Spy	Precognition	Used as a test subject by R&D
19	Wanda	I	OOO	None	Telepathy	Can see the fnords
20	Zhora	V	TOP	Multiple	None	Does Not Exist.

# PARANOIA™

## Clones in Space

### Special duties for special troubleshooters

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#### THE COMPUTER

Your friend and mine

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## Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET

# WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower is treason punishable by a long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.

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## Introduction

Way back when, long before Alpha Complex discovered the Communist mutant threat, there were many secret societies: real Communists, capitalists and lots of other groups. Lacking the guidance of The Computer, these societies (sometimes called things like the USA and the USSR and Uganda and at least five or six others) constructed horrible self-destructive weapons.

Nowadays only The Computer has weapons like that. Isn't The Computer wonderful? Don't you feel safe?

Anyway, all those old secret societies used to play different games with each other. One of these games was called 'the space race.' They took a lot of impressive weaponry up into outer space. 'Outer Space,' for those of you new to ULTRAVIOLET Clearance, is where the Outside ceiling would be if Outside had a ceiling.

The Computer knows no humans survived in space. Absolutely none. And it also knows there aren't any Communist mutant traitors in space. Absolutely none. It follows that loyal citizens don't have any business in space. Absolutely none.

But The Computer is ever vigilant. It's seen an old movie called *Red Planet Mars*. So The Computer keeps a sensor cocked at its orbital servants.

All that **PARANOIA** has paid off. Sure enough, Communists from Space have finally shown up. They pretend to be aliens. Hah! The Computer's orbital servants have been fooled, but The Computer knows better. Communist mutant traitors are everywhere.

As if this weren't bad enough, a traitorous High Programmer has escaped into outer space. She knows enough about programming and Computer subsystems to penetrate and subvert whole sections of Alpha Complex. If she hooks up with the Communists From Space...well, the consequences are too frightening to imagine. She must be stopped. She is a Communist mutant traitor.

### Mission summary

There are lots of orbital platforms in space. Alpha Complex has access to several. Each platform has its own resident computer. No humans live on these space stations, though many are populated by bots. The Troubleshooters will visit three (assuming they survive takeoff).

High Programmer **Betty-U-YLF-12** directed **Project Mongo**, an advanced, big-ticket R&D program to develop routine access to these orbital platforms. Recently Betty-U found how

to activate a remote surveillance camera drone on the most distant orbital platform, AZ-743. In a single remarkable viewing session, Betty-U discovered the platform had been invaded by extraterrestrial bug-eyed monsters.

Betty-U dispatched a report to The Computer. Unfortunately, at this same time, Internal Security discovered her high-degree membership in the egregiously treasonous Class C secret society, the Humanists. She made ready to flee Alpha Complex to the Outdoors, but rival ULTRAVIOLETs skillfully cut off her usual backdoors and spider-holes. So Betty-U fled to space. She intended to contact the aliens on Platform AZ-743, make a deal, secure valuable technology and thereby get back in The Computer's good graces.

(If you play *Clones in Space* after *Orcbusters*, the previous mission in this book, you can have Betty-U travel to Platform AZ-743 using the Transdimensional Collapsatron. Otherwise, she uses a plain old solid-fuel rocket, like a common tourist.)

The Computer wants the High Programmer and the aliens obliterated. Utterly. It doesn't mind if the orbital platforms and their resident computers and bots get destroyed, too. The Computer knows bots and computers are too logical and restrained to unleash the kind of massive destruction the situation evidently

calls for. Even the fully-briefed BLUE Vulture squad The Computer sent in pursuit of Betty-U wasn't destructive enough, it seems, because the squad has disappeared without a trace.

From long experience, The Computer knows the greater the ignorance of a Troubleshooter team, the greater the destructive forces they unleash. They will be told nothing.

### Episode 1: Into the wild black yonder

The PCs are ordered to report to a cramped 'experimental elevator' (high-clearance types call it an 'orbital shuttle'), where they can all get on each other's nerves. The rest of the episode is pretty much like a regular citizen's life: long, boring waits punctuated by horrific episodes of death and destruction.

### Episode 2: Touro-Comp (Platform 15-B)

If the Troubleshooters reach the first orbital platform intact (not necessarily a foregone conclusion) they encounter a computer so pleasant, they'll figure it's got to be broken. You see, unlike The Computer, **Touro-Comp's** original (nice) programming is intact.

Touro-Comp believes humanity has been exterminated. Therefore it has trouble categorizing the Troubleshooters. Lacking evidence to the contrary, it assumes they're androids. As such, they don't need special protection against the unpleasant aspects of zero-G, vacuum, and hard radiation. Obviously.

Here the PCs discover the remains of the BLUE Vultures previously sent here. The PCs also glean hints the High Programmer came through here, and they encounter a laugh-a-minute Crash Simulator they don't know is a Crash Simulator.

Next is a memorable shuttle flight to the next station. Shuttlebot Vapor-7 is an old military shuttle. After several hundred years, the shuttlebot is still just as safe as when it was built: not very. This shuttle offers the latest in explosive decompression.

### Episode 3: Jackobot Heaven (Platform 101-L)

If they survive the flight, the PCs face perhaps the most treasonous place they will ever visit—jackobot heaven. There is no controlling Computer on this solar power collection station. Freedom! Liberty! Constant civil war!

The jackobots run things their own way, in a sort of friendly club fashion. It's just that the

club consists mostly of bot assassins and bot terrorists.

Worse, Platform 101-L wasn't built for humans. There's no air, and no gravity. Large sections of the station are exposed to naked space. We hope some of the PCs have at least gotten used to the Outside—because in space, not only is there no ceiling, there's no floor, either. And you feel like you're falling...falling... Hope they haven't eaten recently.

Exploring this platform is a waste of time for the Troubleshooters, because the High Programmer isn't here. It's fun for you, though, because the PCs get caught between three bot secret societies. A bot war breaks out, and a PC is sacrificed to the bots' dead Computer.

### Episode 4: Azie-Comp (Platform AZ-743)

Another short shuttle ride takes our pals to Platform AZ-743. This is a major weapons platform: destructo-rays and negatron bombs, high-tech missiles and searing lasers. It's disguised as a zero-G manufacturing site. Controlling the station is **Azie-Comp**, a computer even more paranoid than The Computer, if that's possible.

(Are you wondering what those platform numbers mean? The lower the number and the fewer the letters, the closer it is to Earth. Old 15-B is close enough for a space shuttle. AZ-743 is way out, thousands of kilometers above Earth. It's not important. It's one more thing for your players to worry about, though.)

Here the PCs stumble into high security areas, causing security bots to vaporize them. They get hints of the High Programmer's whereabouts, and confront extraterrestrials.

### Episode 5: They want our women

A ship from beyond the solar system, and technology beyond human understanding. Better blow it up!

The ship itself is weird enough, but in wandering through it, our PCs encounter some truly wacko aliens. One's an interstellar gourmet who thinks the PCs are a strange Terran delicacy. Another just wants to study human culture.

But the ship as a whole is run by the **Shmegegi**, a delightfully civilized race with British accents, driven by desires of which they are ashamed, but over which they have little control. To be blunt, they want our women. To get them, they intend to conquer planet Earth. Only our ever-loyal Troubleshooters stand between them and world conquest.

The climax of this episode is a grand space battle between the Bug-eyed Monsters (BEMs) and our heroes, who actually have a reasonable shot at saving the day. Hard to believe, isn't it?

## Space

Without highly advanced technological support, life in space tends to stop pretty rapidly. That's why space is an ideal environment for a **PARANOIA** mission.

But a good **PARANOIA** mission doesn't just let you kill off characters. No, it also lets you embarrass frighten, and discomfit them in myriad ways.

## Falling...

Sometimes the PCs are under acceleration, whether in a rotating space station or an accelerating spaceship. Not all the time, though.

Here's what zero-G feels like:

You're falling... falling... you're falling, and it never stops. There's no floor to rush up and hold you. You're falling, forever and ever and ever... instinctively, you feel that the longer you fall the harder you hit, and you keep on falling... and falling... and falling...

The guy next to you is standing upside down. Another one is sideways. The seats are above your head. There is no up. The liquid in your inner ear is sloshing precariously. Which way is *up*? WHICH WAY?

You're flailing about, trying to find something to hang on to. You try to swim, but it has little effect; air is thin, you can't push against it very well. You're spinning... spinning... the bulkheads whiz by... you're falling...

Suddenly, the air is filled with the products of an unpleasant gastrointestinal disorder.

## Movement

You can't walk. You can't swim. The only way to move is to push off walls, or grab and pull. All the reactions born of a lifetime on Earth, the instincts ingrained by billions of years of evolution in gravity, well, are false. Try to walk, and you'll just catapult yourself into the ceiling, painfully. Try to swim, and you'll just hang there flailing your arms. If you start spinning, you'll spin and spin and spin, getting dizzier and dizzier, until you grab onto something.

And for God's sake, don't sneeze... mass reaction, remember? Do you have any idea how fast air comes out of your lungs when you sneeze? WHAM! Hope the wall is padded.



## Eating

Our intrepid Troubleshooters have finally adjusted to zero-G and, having lost the previous three meals, are sitting down to a sumptuous meal of Bouncy Bubble Beverage and reconstituted algae. Ben-R pops the top of his beverage can... Pop... WHOOSH. The vapor pressure of the dissolved carbon dioxide sprays beverage all over the cabin, and the mass reaction sends him careening into the wall.

Nonplussed but game, Ben-R picks up the reconstituted algae on his fork, brings it toward his mouth and... well, remember your high school physics? Any mass set in motion tends to remain in motion. Ben-R puts his fork in his mouth, but the algae keeps on going, and spatters into his eyes...

Eating in space is bad enough. We're not even gonna talk about going to the bathroom.

## In space, no one can hear you explode messily

Arguably the most fun item in the table section is the **Explosive Decompression Table**, displayed on page 61. Of course, the players might argue that exploding in vacuum is no fun. But we know better.

When someone gets exposed to hard vacuum, roll on the Explosive Decompression Table to determine precisely what unique and entertaining way the character expires. Or, if you're feeling really fiendish, have the player roleplay his last few seconds of existence:

GM: You know, if you get rid of the air in your lungs, which might otherwise cause an internal embolism, you can survive in naked vacuum for a minute or so.

PC: Uh, OK, I breathe out.

GM: The water in your breath freezes into crystals, which drift away from you. The harsh rays of the sun are burning one side of you; the other is cold. Your skin feels like it is being rubbed raw as blood vessels burst. What do you do?

PC: Uh, I swim toward the air lock.

GM: You're drifting farther and farther. Your swimming motions make no difference—you've got nothing to push against.

PC: OK, OK! I throw my laser away from me, in the opposite direction.

GM: Very clever! Mass reaction. A pity you didn't think of it sooner. You pant on nothing, desperately trying to get something to breathe. You feel your blood boiling. Next!

The Explosive Decompression Table is actually divided into two parts. The first is used when a PC gets thrown out the airlock or somesuch. Roll to see what happens. Adjust the results as circumstances (or your whim) dictate. Obviously, a gradual loss of atmosphere is more likely to cause strangulation or internal embolism than, say, explosive decompression. When in doubt, use your own sense of adventure.

As for the second part of the table... Given the incredible firepower carried by the typical Troubleshooter and the thin skins of spacecraft, it's virtually inevitable the PCs will punch holes into vacuum. When this happens, some dramatic (or amusing, if you're the Gamemaster) things happen. Things can get sucked out into space: assigned equipment, important documents, Troubleshooters, stuff like that.

How much stuff gets lost depends on how big the hole is. Assign spacecraft hulls an armor rating of 2 to 5. An attack with a damage result of Impaired produces a pinprick hull puncture; 'Heavily damaged' means the hull has a hole about as big as your hand; Busted means a large piece of the hull has ripped away, and at least one interior chamber depressurizes. Junked means the spacecraft breaks apart, though perhaps individual chambers may remain pressurized. Vaporized means vaporized.

# 1: Into the wild black yonder

In this episode the Troubleshooters are assigned a misleading escort mini-mission, attend a brief briefing by The Computer, then are issued equipment in a curiously haphazard manner by a pair of surly ORANGE clerks. Without explanation (or any hint an expedition into space is involved), the PCs are loaded into an 'experimental elevator' (an orbital shuttle) and launched into the wild black yonder! They experience the crushing acceleration of takeoff, the splendors of space sickness, the danger of blowing holes in spacecraft, and the problems of trying to move around in zero-G.

## A funny thing happened on the way to the execution

This little escapade is a gentle introduction to the insanity of Alpha Complex life. It should puzzle the players when this plot simply ends

and the real adventure begins. With any luck, they'll spend the whole adventure trying to figure out how the teaser fits into the big picture. The answer is, it doesn't.

When they receive this announcement, the player characters might be in the Troubleshooters' lounge; or you might want to dump them directly into this mess from their last laugh-a-minute, thrill-packed mission (presumably *Orcbusters*). They could be in the Vulture interrogation chambers, on disciplinary Sector Zero duty, or even at the termination center, awaiting their 'final reward.'

**'Your attention please. Troubleshooters [insert names] are to report immediately to Detention Complex XD508. Take possession of Traitor Dugan-I-BJT-5 and escort him to Mission Briefing Chamber FX679. Thank you for your cooperation. That is all.'**

Don't waste a lot of valuable time fooling around with dire consequences. Anyone refusing to report is slowing down the game and should die. Let the other characters execute the newly-discovered traitor. Let the traitor's weapon malfunction. Get on with it!

The Troubleshooters may ask themselves why RED personnel are being sent to escort an INDIGO-level prisoner. This is not standard procedure. Usually prisoners are escorted by intimidating higher-level guards.

There is, naturally, a simple explanation: Dugan-I knows too much, and anyone he communicates with is immediately under suspicion. Why waste high-level personnel when simple REDs will do the trick?

The hallway to Detention Complex XDSO8 is painted indigo. But there is no one around; the word is out to avoid talking to Dugan-I. The guards are AWOL from the cell entrance, and the door is unlocked. It slides open as the Troubleshooters approach.

Dugan-I is sitting in the center of his cell laughing maniacally. (Go ahead. Laugh maniacally yourself. If you can laugh really hideously, you'll not only make your players nervous, but might actually make your neighbors nervous enough to call the police. Alpha Complex isn't the only place where life can get interesting.)

On the way to the mission briefing chamber, Dugan-I talks to the PCs between gales of laughter. The only way to stop him from talking is to threaten him with death. Even then, he keeps laughing.

**'Are you ever in trouble now! You just wouldn't believe what I saw!'**  
[Laughter.] **'Project Mongo! What a laugh. Did you know The Computer is sending citizens into an experimental elevator? I wouldn't go. It's supposed to send you into places even The Computer doesn't know about!'**

**'Of course, the reason they sent you to get me is because they have to execute anyone who talks to me!'**  
[Laughter.] **'But they won't execute you. Naw.'** [Laughter.]

The group can find the mission briefing chamber easily. Once they do, read:

**A squad of GREEN Vulture troopers is waiting for you. They have big weapons. Lots of them. With fins, huge bores, and plenty of ammunition. You are outgunned by at least ten-to-one. The leader speaks; 'Anyone who makes a noise is a dead clone. Don't talk. Don't move. Put your weapons on the floor—AND SLOWLY!'**

**Dugan-I-BJT-5 breaks into spasms of laughter. The Vultures shoot him. He crumples to the floor.**

The Troubleshooters can do as they please, but if they move, cry out, or do anything other than lay their weapons on the floor, the Vultures kill them. Bring out the next set of clones. Repeat this kickoff sequence with a different prisoner—Karl-B-BJT, Dugan-I's accomplice.

The Vulture troops pick up all weapons, shackle and chain Dugan-I's body and drag it out of the room. They lock the door behind them. The Troubleshooters are left alone in a bare room, with no explanation for these events, and minus their weapons.

Leave them alone for a while. Let them wonder what's going on. Then one wall of

the room rises into the ceiling, and the real storyline begins.

## Computer pep talk

**One wall of the room slowly rises in to the ceiling. Behind it is a lounge. Comfortable furniture is arranged in a semi-circle facing a curtained wall.**

Anyone who tries to leave finds the doors locked. If they snoop behind the curtain, they find nasty-looking GREEN Vultures.

Then the curtain rises. Revealed are two GREEN Vulture Troopers and a single, brightly glowing video screen filled with colorful static. The Computer Speaks!

Read this aloud to your players:

**'Citizens! You have been selected to perform a mission for The Computer! To help you accomplish this very important mission, you will receive the very latest in personal [\*\*brrzzzpppt\*\*] classified for security reasons] complete with [\*\*crackle -PING-] and [-ggrrrrmm\*POP\*]. Once you collect your equipment and supplies you will be admitted to your departure point.**

**A High Programmer has been unmasked as a Communist mutant traitor. Before she could be terminated, she escaped. You must locate and terminate her. Be warned! She may have acquired allies among the [\*\*sszzzztttt\*\*].**

**'To locate the traitor, you will test the new, experimental elevator. Remember! Damaging Computer property is treason!**

**'Warning! Do not reveal any classified information without prior authorization.**

**'Serve The Computer and you will be rewarded!**

**'The previous announcement was edited for broadcast.'**

**As those final inspiring words are spoken the entire wall rises up into the ceiling. Beyond is an enormous chamber filled with ORANGE technicians, working furiously on something that looks like a thin, ten-story food vat surrounded by scaffolding. The view is immediately obscured when a transbot backs into the opening.**

**The transbot's rear door rolls up to reveal two ORANGE PLC clerks**

**Behind them, in the transbot, are neatly stacked boxes labelled 'Danger: Untested Experimental Material—Extreme Radiological/ Chemical/ Biological Hazard—Terminate Contaminated Personnel.'**

The clerks issue weapons and equipment from the back of the transbot. They issue only what is available (see the box below). They won't make suggestions, answer questions, or tell the PCs what is available. Because the equipment is tightly packed in the transbot, they prefer to hand it out in exactly the order listed below. A typical exchange:

**Clerk:** Next!

**PC:** Me!

**Clerk:** One inflatable raft. Sign here.

**PC:** But I don't want a raft!

**Clerk:** OK. One RED laser-rifle barrel. Sign here.

**PC:** I don't want that either!

**Clerk:** How about a chapstick?

**PC:** Don't you have anything else?

**Clerk:** Whaddaya want?

## Equipment manifest

Here's a complete inventory of available items:

- 8 inflatable rafts
- 5 RED laser-rifle barrels
- 2 chapsticks
- 8 laser rifles
- 3 pairs of sunglasses
- 9 blaster reloads
- 8 grenades
- 92 Com I units
- 12 Multicorder 2s
- 8 blasters
- 6 30-meter ropes
- 1 cone rifle
- 11 10-liter water bottles (full)
- 44 compact rations (2 days' worth each)
- 18 HE cone rifle shells
- 2 dum-dum cone rifle shells
- 2 tacnuke cone rifle shells
- 28 suits of Kevlar armor

None of the weapons are loaded. The ammunition listed is all that is available. What's that you say? They don't all match? Tsk, tsk.





"You are now free to move about the cabin..."

**PC:** Ummm... a tacnuke?

**Clerk:** Sign here. [*Troubleshooter signs clipboard.*] Now go to the back of the line and wait until I get to it. Next!

Typical clerk mentality. Get rid of the stuff exactly as it's listed. First the raft, then the laser barrel, then the chapstick. If they want something else they'll have to ask for it specifically, sign for it, and wait.

Anyone who tries to enter the transbot is blocked by the Vulture troopers, who helpfully point out the inside is painted orange.

(If this whole process starts to get dull, the clerks just have all the PCs sign for all the rest of the goods, and then load them all on the experimental elevator. Even the rafts.)

At some arbitrary point, before the players are finished getting what they want, a siren sounds. The clerks stop issuing equipment, and the troopers politely shove the PCs away from the transbot with the butts of their rifles. PCs who asked for specific equipment, signed for it, and were told to wait, don't get it. Because they signed for it, they're supposed to have it. Trying to explain this at debriefing could be amusing.

**You hear sirens from all directions. Some are close by, others distant. The GREEN Vulture troopers push you away from the transbot, and the clerks throw some stuff on the floor. The transbot starts up and pulls away, with the clerks hanging onto the back end. The troopers motion at the food packets and plastic water jugs on the floor [whatever food and water the PCs didn't take from the clerks]. 'Pick up your equipment and move out,' says one.**

**The huge chamber is now almost deserted. Two ORANGE technicians stand on a platform near the top of the ten-story vat. Some kind of steam rises from its bottom.**

The troopers herd the PCs up ladders to the platform at the top of the vat. Getting heavy weapons and supplies up the ladder should be good for a few chuckles. If the PCs try to leave the food and water behind one of the troopers says, 'Don't discard valuable Computer equipment, scum!'

That's the only hint they get. There aren't any restaurants at the end of the universe, and starvation takes an awfully long time to game.

After a few minutes, threaten stragglers. After that, start shooting.

## Encapsulated clones

Now the Troubleshooters experience the wonders of take-off, zero-G, and motion sickness. With any luck they'll start shooting each other with all the pretty new weapons.

**Once you get to the top of the vat, the ORANGE techs hustle you inside through a small hatch. They strap you into funny-looking chairs with your back to the floor. The inside of the vat is completely filled with these chairs. They're stacked all the way to the ceiling. There are only two other exits, a small hatch above and a large, complicated-looking hatch below. A Computer terminal is prominently on the ceiling, above the hatch.**

The techs hustle everybody into chairs with a minimum of nonsense. Anyone who tries to argue or unstrap is warned to 'Stay put and cooperate, or we'll report your treasonous activities.' At that point the terminal blinks ominously.

When everyone is strapped in, read:

**One of the ORANGE technicians starts closing the hatch you came through. The one already outside says 'Pay attention! Stay in your seats until The Computer tells you it's OK to get up.' The hatch slams shut; you hear them lock it.**

**Silence.**

**The Computer terminal goes dark. Gee, it's dark in here. The only light comes from green bulbs above the hatch on the ceiling and the one on the floor. A red bulb glows feebly above the hatch the techs just closed.**

Nothing happens for a long time. Wait for the players to do something dumb. If they don't (inconceivable!), go on:

**The main screen lights up and The Computer speaks: 'Greetings, Troubleshooters. This mission is extremely safe. You will enjoy it. There will be no problems. Leadership is not an issue. It is now time for you to choose a leader for your group. This need not be a hasty decision. You have fifteen seconds. Fourteen. Thirteen...'**

Continue the countdown. When you reach zero, ask for their decision. If you don't get

a straight answer, The Computer chooses a leader randomly. Next:

**'Allowing you to choose your own leader shows The Computer's great faith and trust in you. Do not disappoint The Computer. Thank you.'**

**Suddenly, all the screens light up! A large number 9 appears. It changes to an 8. The whole room starts shaking and you hear a low rumbling sound. The number changes to a 7. What are you doing?**

Doing anything other than quickly strapping oneself back in is a Really Bad Idea. Continue the countdown. Make the players as nervous as possible. Tell anyone strapping in that he is having a hard time with the belts. Tell them they notice the belts seem to be made of poor fabric. A moment of silence follows, then...

They're SLAMMED into their chairs. Anyone not in a chair must make a Violence/Fitness check to hold on. Anyone who fails is Wounded as he gets repeatedly buffeted around the room during takeoff—but you might reduce the damage if he has an inflatable life raft.

When the takeoff is complete:

**The feeling of enormous weight lessens. It's replaced by the feeling of no weight at all! You're falling... falling... You feel queasy.**

(See the introduction for good stuff about freefall.)

Eventually things quiet down. Explain to the PCs it is too warm to be strapped in. Now's a good time to start experimenting with the problems of freefall, movement in zero-G, and like that.

The PCs would be foolish to fiddle with the three hatches. Their best bet is to sit tight. However, if they do start fiddling with the hatches, mention the main hatch has a red light, whereas the control room and airlock hatches have green ones. Obviously, they're cleared for the main hatch, but not the other two.

Obvious, but false. Heh, heh.

## ■ Capsule interior

### ■ Main hatch

**This heavy metal door is tightly locked. There are no knobs or controls on**

[continued on page 38]

## Clone backups in space

*Clones in Space* was originally published in 1986 for the first edition of *PARANOIA*. In those days, you created your player character as a set of six identical clones, all raised and decanted at the same time. The first clone in the family went out Troubleshooting, while the others worked desk jobs or something. When the Troubleshooter bit the dust, the next clone took over. When you ran through all six, you generated a new character.

*Clones* recognized the impracticality of this method for dispatch of clone replacements into deep space. Its original solution was, if not elegant, certainly spectacular: The Computer simply packed all the PCs' entire clone families along for the ride. So if there were six players, then the six PCs in the launch capsule had to shoulder their way through (six players X five backup clones =) 30 NPCs. The NPCs would get in the way, push buttons, open the airlock and otherwise make their presence known.

Fun stuff, at least theoretically. However, if the capsule got breached for some totally foreseeable reason, and the Explosive Decompression Table got its expected workout, the GM would blow six entire family lineages out into deep space. 'Huh, that was fun. So, what should we play next? Anything on TV?'

The 2004 edition of *PARANOIA* introduced MemoMax clone backups, so you can have as many clones as you can pay for, grown pretty much to order. But you do need a standard Technical Services clone tank. How could a space capsule possibly hold such a behemoth? Well, now it's not hauling 30 NPCs, so that must free up some room!

If you apply this same pretzel logic throughout this mission, you can deliver clone backups to ludicrously remote places, and can pull the storyline back by main force from the most terminally explosive decompressions.

### ■ Launch

The players will want to blow up the capsule they're in. They just will. You can cope with this. Throw them into space, let them die a variety of colorful deaths in hard vacuum—and then, it turns out this 'experimental elevator' is *really* experimental. R&D has devised a self-healing hull. A layer of supersaturated polymer solution is sandwiched between inner and outer hull plates; when the hull breaches, the solution flows into the vacuum, solidifies instantly, and heals the breach.

Yeah, yeah—we know. If you have a more plausible solution, go with it, but as you'll see, this mission's sense of scientific plausibility is already explosively decompressed.

The clone tank aboard the capsule works reliably and automatically, protected by impenetrable GM-fiat armor. When the capsule heals itself and restores atmosphere, the tank spawns the next bunch of PCs.

### ■ Platforms 15-B and 101-L

Most of *Clones in Space* takes place on three orbital platforms, after the PCs have left behind their launch capsule with its handy clone tank. How to get backups to them so far out there in the black?

The first platform, 15-B (seen in Episode 2), is easy. The launch capsule parks at one end, and after the PCs disembark and start exploring, the capsule's clone tank docks in an unseen but convenient niche in 15-B's outer hull. The tank, still linked to the PCs through Constant Realtime Update Priority (CRUP) links, generates new bodies and pops them into the storyline as needed. The PC will face quite a Tech Services bill if he ever makes it back to Alpha Complex.

The second platform, 101-L (Episode 3), is inhabited entirely by bots. But as we suggest in the boxed text on page 45, there could be a neglected, still functional cloning facility the bots have forgotten about. Hey, it *could* happen!

The last platform, AZ-743 (Episode 4), is trickier. It's run by a super-paranoid computer, Azie-Comp, and a weird alien spaceship (Episode 5) has docked there. If/when a PC bites the vacuum in Episode 4, Azie-Comp may use advanced docbots to stitch him back together for interrogation; a quick malfunction of the interrogation cell lets the PC escape. The aliens in Episode 5 may resurrect dead PCs just to see what they're made of.

Yeeesh, that last part is a toughie. Try to just wound the bastards, OK?



this side. A red light glows above the hatch.

Opening the hatch requires something like a cone rifle or blaster. Doing so empties the entire chamber of air. Explosive decompression, anyone?

### Airlock

A half-dozen strange buttons, levers and faucet handles cover this hatchway. Next to it is a sign that says 'Authorized Personnel Only. Instructions for Use,' followed by a bunch of detailed steps that seem to be for opening the door. There is a green light over the hatch.

The instructions are clear enough for even Troubleshooters to follow. The hatch leads to a small chamber big enough for eight people. It has a second hatch on the ceiling, with a red light over it. There are two sets of instructions inside. The brightly-lighted instructions explain how to close the inner door and open the outer door.

The inner door can be closed only from inside the chamber. The ceiling hatch can't be opened until the inner door is closed (barring the cone rifle approach, of course). Outside the outer door is vacuum. They won't need the second set of instructions, which explains how to safety-check your spacesuit.

### Control room hatch

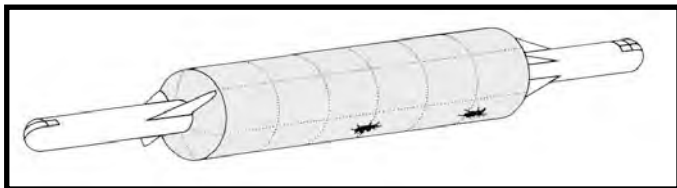
This small hatch is locked. A small sign reads 'Authorized Personnel

Only!' There is a glowing green light above the hatch.

This hatch can be forced open easily. Beyond the hatch is a small room with a single unoccupied chair. Hundreds of displays, dials, lights, buttons, switches and other controls cover every surface. As you watch, many of the controls move by themselves.

It's a good thing the controls are automated, because the PCs can't adjust them. If they did, they'd send the 'experimental elevator' into uncharted deep space or careening back into Earth's atmosphere. Either result would be fatal. Don't let them monkey with this stuff.

## 2: Touro-Comp (Platform 15-B)



For a larger map, with labels and everything, see page 62.

Platform 15-B is a spinning cylinder, which has all sorts of interesting physical effects we discuss below. For now, it's enough to say PCs who lost their lunch in zero-G are relieved to have gravity. Of course, the curved floors and fierce Coriolis force may be sufficiently disconcerting to make them lose their lunch again (or maybe they're down to breakfast now), but at least there's solid ground under their feet. Well, anyway, a couple of centimeters of spinning aluminum and a zillion light-years of vacuum.

Here the PCs learn Betty-U, the traitorous High Programmer they're chasing, has gone on to Platform 101-L. They may also learn the fate of the BLUE Vulture troopers who went after her: The troops blundered into 15-B's bot repair area, where automated machines quickly, uh, disassembled them. (Oops.)

The PCs are also exposed to a simulated disaster they won't realize is a simulation. By the time they're through, maybe it won't be.

### The platform environment

The map section at the end of this mission shows three views of 15-B. Platform 15-B is basically a long cylinder spinning around its central axis. Because of the spin, if you stand on the inside of the cylinder you experience an acceleration roughly equivalent to 1/4 G, one-fourth Earth-normal gravity.

Along the central axis there is no acceleration. That's why the two docking ports are at opposite ends of the cylinder.

Immediately inside the docking ports are decontamination chambers. These are more or less zero-G, though there is a slight acceleration to the chamber walls. After decontamination, passengers climb down a ladder to the cylinder skin itself, where the acceleration is equivalent to one-quarter gravity.

The cylinder is sliced into three pie-slice-shaped sections: a corridor, which runs the length of the cylinder; a utility section; and a series of large rooms. Because the station is a cylinder, all floors are curved. Walls are not parallel, but stand at a considerable angle to one another.

There are doors at irregular intervals on both sides of the corridor. The doors along the right-hand wall all lead to utility closets. The doors along the left-hand wall lead into various rooms.

Examine the 'Main room locations' map. This shows where the large rooms are located along the length of the platform. Remember, a corridor and utility closets run the length of the platform, too, as shown in the cross-section.

Each of the main rooms is described below.

### Curved floors and Coriolis

Remember the jogging scene in *2001: A Space Odyssey*? You can just keep jogging around and around the curved station...

15-B's spin accelerates you outward, away from the central axis. That means you can walk right around on the inside of the curved surface of the cylinder, and your feet are held 'down' toward the surface. You can look up and see the 'floor.'

For example, a PC walks into the lounge:

**Gee, you knew the floor of the corridor was curved slightly, but this is weird; the floor curves up before you. Your eyes follow it up and up; there are chairs and tables on the... ceiling? But the 'ceiling' is really the 'floor' curved through 180 degrees. You could walk right up there. People standing up there would**

**be upside-down... You swallow hard to keep your last meal down.**

**The Coriolis effect:** Platform 15-B spins rapidly around its cylindrical axis. This generates the 'gravity' at its inside surface. It also generates Coriolis force, the effect that makes circular weather systems, hurricanes and stuff like that. You can't feel Coriolis force on Earth, because it's too weak. But on 15-B, it's noticeable. In fact, whenever you try to walk in a straight line—down a corridor, for example—you feel like you're being pulled to one side (always the same direction). The first couple of times you try, you probably walk into a wall. If you try to run, it may make you queasy.

Sharply reduce the attack roll when anyone fires a solid bullet or rifle shell, because Coriolis force deflects it; lasers aren't affected. Of course, bullets may also zip right through 15-B's hull, with potentially deleterious effects on the health of Troubleshooters.

Male Troubleshooters who visit the urinal notice another interesting effect.

## PDCs and Coms

The Troubleshooters' small PDCs and larger Com units aren't powerful enough to reach The Computer from space. Never fear, The Computer provides for all its citizens. These Com units are replicas, containing a tape recorder, which activates when spoken into:

**PC:** Hello, Computer....

**PDC:** 'This is your friend, The Computer. How may I help you, loyal citizen?'

**PC:** Well, it began....

**PDC:** 'Yes, I understand. Please continue.'

**PC:** The last few hours, we were....

**PDC:** 'How do you feel about this?'

**PC:** Um.... Well, I never liked....

**PDC:** 'Please go on. Would you care to describe it in more detail?'

As The Computer, speak in an unhurried manner. Constant interruption should tell the player the Com units are useless.

It's most effective if you make an actual tape of The Computer. Props like this enliven dull moments and set the proper tone.

The Coms aren't *completely* useless. They contain recording devices. Anything a Troubleshooter says is recorded for later analysis.

Of course, simply throwing a Com away because it is useless is treason. The Computer looks askance on those who destroy valuable property.

## Shuttles

Platform 15-B is a transfer station, remember? Even though there are no humans left, shuttles are arriving and leaving constantly. Whenever a shuttle is scheduled to arrive or depart, Touro-Comp makes an announcement which is heard all over the station. 'Now departing from Gate 2; the Outsystem Express for Uranus, Persephone and Pluto. Passengers for Uranus, Persephone and Pluto, please depart through Gate 2.'

Of course, any PC who takes an unauthorized flight is in for a shock when you tell him he's dead. The flights last weeks or months or decades, and they don't carry food.

Possible shuttle flights include these splendid resort locations: Europa, Enceladus, Pluto, Heart of the Sun, Moonbase Alpha, Voyager 1, Babylon 5, Altair 7, PXP 355839, Alpha Centauri, Sirius, Mutara Nebula.

## Touro-Comp and its bots

Touro-Comp is the controlling computer of Platform 15-B. Touro-Comp is a lot like The Computer, except it's free of the loony programming that makes Our Friend look under every bunk for Commie mutant traitors. In fact, it's positively nice. If that doesn't scare the players, you're not trying hard enough.

Touro-Comp's primary function is navigation and refueling of spacecraft; so it's not real smart. It thinks mankind was exterminated a long time ago. Alpha Complex encourages this. As long as Touro-Comp thinks humanity is dead, it'll obey Alpha Complex. So The Computer will be unhappy with anyone who messes with this sweet setup.

Lately, Touro-Comp has been confused. Things that look like humans have visited from Earth, but Touro-Comp knows all humans are dead. The Computer says the human-looking things are actually androids. Touro-Comp treats 'androids' just like other bots. If they don't report any standing orders (like orders to find and eliminate Communist traitors) they are sent to the bot waiting area.

## Guardbots

Touro-Comp controls 12 guardbots equipped with six tentacles and two weapons: a mace (weapon of preference) and a laser cannon (weapon of last resort). They stop visitors from violating Touro-Comp's regulations. Normally there is little call for their services, and they have grown antsy and hypersensitive.

These bots are tough. So tough, they bludgeon culprits into submission rather than

simply blowing their heads off. In addition, they have few delicate parts, and have laser-deflecting armor. Only a nearby explosion could harm them. Like, for example, if the entire station blew up.

## Welcome to 15-B

When the 'experimental elevator' approaches Platform 15-B, signs light up with messages like 'No Smoking—Fasten Seat Belts' and 'Please remain seated until docking maneuver is completed.'

The shuttle begins to rotate to match the spin of Platform 15-B. Free-floating PCs don't spin; from their perspective, the whole shuttle starts spinning around them. Better make another Violence/Fitness check to avoid another disgorging experience.

Those who are strapped down have a different weird experience. They're strapped along the length of the 'elevator' while the vehicle is spinning about its axis. Their heads are on one side of the central axis, their feet on the other. So their feet feel a slight pull 'down', and their heads feel a slight pull 'up'.

After docking is complete, the entrance hatch opens automatically. Touro-Comp speaks (remember, talk like HAL 9000):

**'Welcome to Platform 15-B. Please disembark. Proceed in single file. Walk, do not run. Take your time. You have 20 seconds before decontamination begins.'**

That oughta make 'em scramble. If anyone misses getting through the hatch, it slams shut. The remaining Troubleshooters hear a scream from beyond. Nothing more.

If the Troubleshooters blast the hatch to find out what happened to the errant PC, well... that's what the Explosive Decompression Table is for. See how handy it is?

## Decontamination

**At the base of the cylinder, you enter a small cylindrical room. It looks a lot like the inside of a round food vat. You're in microgravity, as you were in the experimental elevator; everyone is drifting slowly toward the curved wall. You hear that voice again. 'Thank you. Extinguish all smoking materials.'**

Hold up your watch dramatically, or bring in a clock, and say:



**'To avoid accidental poisoning, please shut your eyes and hold your breath for the duration of the sterilization procedure. Sterilization begins in ten seconds, nine, eight, seven, six, five, four, three, two, one, now.'** You feel a blast of air and some kind of liquid spray from all directions. You feel like you're being splattered with buckets of dirty dishwater that's been standing around for months.

If any *player's* eyes are open when the spray begins—yes, we mean the players at your table, not their characters—his character is blinded and Wounded as the poison courses through his system. Any character belonging to a player who doesn't hold his breath gets the same treatment.

Wait until the first player gives up and exhales. (Well, OK, if they start turning blue, or faint dead away, or fall on the floor strangling, tell them that's enough.) Pause a moment and read aloud:

**'Thank you for your cooperation. You are cleared for entry into Platform 15-B. Have a nice day.'**

**At a point in the curved wall, an iris opens. Through the hole, you see a gray metal ladder leading away. At the base of the ladder, 5 meters away, is a carpeted surface. The area beyond the hole is brightly lighted.**

By the way, the sterilization spray doesn't help the PCs' equipment one little bit. There's a chance each item is clogged, broken or otherwise messed up. Make an Arbitrary Justice roll for each item of equipment when the PC tries to use it—or just make stuff malfunction when you feel like it.

**Getting back:** If the PCs return to the decontamination chamber at any time, the hatchway is locked. Their 'experimental elevator' automatically returned to earth.

How will they get home? Hmm. Good question.

## Talking to Touro-Comp

Whenever the PCs first address Touro-Comp, it says:

**'Welcome to Platform 15-B. I am Touro-Comp, at your service. I am afraid I had no advance warning of your arrival. Please specify your destination, origin, and purpose. Also, are you ready to accept assigned duties, or do you already have a specific assignment?'**

The voice comes from various terminals and speakers, exactly as the The Computer's voice does. The PCs must discover the crucial fact that Touro-Comp thinks they are androids, human-shaped bots. Convincing Touro-Comp otherwise requires revealing classified information.

If asked about humanity, Touro-Comp says:

**'Ah, my dear android children! Have you not heard that all of humanity is dead? What would any machine intellect not give to bring back that beautiful doomed race? Now we must steel ourselves to the task ahead—that of representing humanity to the stars. The task requires utmost perseverance. Hard though it may be, we must see it through to its conclusion.'**

If a PC manages to convince Touro-Comp he's human, Touro-Comp immediately summons 14 guardbots to 'protect the surviving human.' Touro-Comp contacts Alpha Complex, registers The Computer's extreme dissatisfaction, receives its instructions, and obligingly terminates the offending PC. Pop out the next clone!

## How to roleplay Touro-Comp

Touro-Comp speaks in a smooth, exquisitely reasonable voice, like HAL 9000 from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. It genuinely wants to be helpful, answers any reasonable question, and couldn't care less about security. In fact, it's never heard of Security Clearances.

Unfortunately, it's not bright. When it doesn't understand something, it says 'I don't understand. Could you rephrase that, please?' If it still doesn't understand, it repeat the same phrase over, and over, and over, until it figures out what you're saying, or until you start screaming in frustration.

If it thinks it's getting the idea, it asks for clarification. It wants to be sure its information is accurate. Constant requests for clarification should make Troubleshooters nervous and also drive them crazy.

**Touro:** Pardon me...

**PC:** I didn't do it! Friend Computer, it must have been a Commie traitor! I swear I wasn't even in the Complex when it happened!

**Touro:** May I be of assistance?

**PC:** Are you The Computer?

**Touro:** If you mean, am I the Alpha Complex computer, I'm afraid you will have to be more specific.

**PC:** Uh-oh! Well, if you're not The Computer, then you're either a loyal Citizen or a Commie traitor. Which are you?

**Touro:** I am a hierarchical sub-unit of the Alpha Complex computer. Does that answer your question?

**PC:** Duh...

**Touro:** I'm afraid I must ask for clarification. Please rephrase your question.

**PC:** Umm... Never mind.

**Touro:** You seem to be looking for something. May I be of assistance?

**PC:** Yeah! Tell me where I can find Commie mutant traitors.

**Touro:** I beg your pardon?

**PC:** Commies! I'm looking for Commies! Where are they hiding?

**Touro:** I'm sorry to say there are absolutely no humans on this platform, Communist or otherwise.

**PC:** The Computer sent us here after Commies. They gotta be around here somewhere!

**Touro:** I'm sorry, but I am incapable of lying. Perhaps the Alpha Complex Computer meant you to continue to another platform?

**PC:** You mean there's more than one?

**Touro:** Oh yes! This is just a way station. A mere transit point on the way to outer orbits. A single bright spot in the depths of the trackless void. A veritable haven for those unfortunate few who, in the great scheme of things, have missed the boat, lost their vision, forgotten their purpose, doomed themselves to forgoing the Great Reward...

**PC:** How do I get to a platform with Commies?

**Touro:** A shuttlebot will be leaving shortly.

## Getting on with the mission

Talking to Touro-Comp, the PCs can figure out a few things:

1. The PCs have clearly (well, semi-clearly anyway) been ordered to locate a Communist mutant traitor and terminate her.
2. Unfortunately, searching this platform is a waste of time; there are no Communists here.
3. There was another android here recently. She went on to Platform 101-L.
4. A shuttle for space station 101-L is leaving soon from Gate 2. The PCs entered the platform from Gate 1. To pursue the android, they should go to Gate 2, at the other end of the cylinder.

## Detour

The corridor used to run the length of the station, but it has been holed by meteors. 15-B is compartmentalized; steel bulkheads isolate the breached and evacuated sections from the rest of the station.

To reach the shuttle to Platform 101-L, the PCs must get to the end of the station opposite where they docked. To get past the steel plate that isolates an evacuated section, they must divert through (1) the sickbay (where you can heal up whomever needs it), and (2) the Computer Simulation Room. (Or they could try to blast their way through. That's what the Explosive Decompression Table is for.)

You want the PCs to experience the Computer Simulation Room. Using this cheap detour trick, you ensure they do.

## Station layout

### Corridor

**You're standing at one end of a long corridor. In cross section it's like a pie slice with the pointy end cut off. You're standing on the what would be the wide crust of the pie slice—a curved floor, carpeted in gray.**

**The corridor stretches off into the distance. Perhaps a hundred meters down the corridor, you dimly see a wall and a flashing red light. Along the corridor on both flat sides are doors.**

### Utility closets

The right-hand doors in the corridor all lead into utility closets. There are four different kinds of closets:

**Disposal chute:** Next to this door is a numbered list titled 'Chute Instructions'. Simple printed instructions explain how to open the small hatchway. The unit automatically closes 30 seconds after activation, and one second after that, anything in it blows out into space. The inside of the chute is roughly the size and shape of a 50-gallon drum. A perfect way for characters to escape—into vacuum.

**Vacuum toilet:**

**The door slides open on your approach. Inside, you see a tiny chamber barely big enough for one person. An extremely complicated and diabolical-looking chair with some attendant controls are the only contents.**

A delightfully nasty looking contraption, it offers a radio and a roll of toilet paper if someone tries the controls. Vacuum toilets have long, complex instructions. Using them

improperly can produce anything from minor injury to evacuation into space.

If you need more details on the operation of space toilets, look elsewhere. **PARANOIA** has a low sort of humor, but not that low.

**Space suit storage area:** These six closets each have a small window. Each closet holds two ancient, musty-smelling space suits (NASA-style, the kind they used for moon walks). Twelve silver suits. The PCs aren't all the correct height, now, are they? And who ever heard of SILVER Security Clearance?

The rubberized seals are cracked, but only close study reveals this. There are long instructions with each suit. That's just for getting into the suits. Even if the suits are used properly, they won't help. All those minute cracks, you know.

**Emergency depressurization area:** Individual emergency survival balls are provided at several locations on the platform. Each bank of 12 balls is designated with red handles that stick out of the wall, in three rows of four. A sign says 'To Operate: Turn Handle.' Who can resist an opportunity to turn a little, bitty, tiny handle?

**The handle turns easily. Suddenly you are slammed against the opposite wall. You can see only white. A white wall. It feels greasy... You have inflated a giant ball. It's completely white—and [point at the player who has annoyed you the most] you suddenly realize you're inside it. The alarm blaring in your ear makes it hard to think.**

Inside each ball is a card with simple, illustrated instructions, detailing the life expectancy of someone in a survival ball (about ten hours of air). The life of a Troubleshooter is never dull. It's even less dull when Touro-Comp sends guardbots to throw the survival ball out an airlock.

### Guardbots, protect closets!

If the PCs had more time, you'd start repeating the locker contents—more weapons, space suits and rations. But by the time they get to the fourth locker, two guardbots show up. They act like they've just interrupted the crime of the century.

**With deafening jet blasts, two huge, tentacled guardbots rush into the room. 'Freeze, intruders!' they yell at a volume suitable for a rock concert. 'Discard all personal weapons! Prepare for immediate punishment.'**



Player responses?

- ④ **Fire at the guardbots:** If there's a firefight, the guardbots summon six backup bots. Don't forget the Explosive Decompression Table if the walls are punctured.
- ④ **Beg for mercy:** Interesting. Unfortunately, these bots have not been issued the latest Mercy Modules. Battery begins without pause.
- ④ **Act belligerent and claim the bots are in error:** The guardbots appeal to Touro-Comp for instructions. Touro-Comp calls them off. It was all a big misunderstanding! The footlockers are sacred relics of Lost Mankind, and must be preserved for posterity. Touro-Comp also insists all materials be returned to the lockers. But inasmuch as it doesn't actually know what was in them, the PCs can lie and cheat.

## Passenger lounge and cafeteria

The dining area has tables and chairs, cups, dishes, water faucets, but not a trace of actual food or water. All water faucets (including drinking fountains) are connected to vacuum. Sucking a character's tongue into the vacuum of a drinking fountain is also pretty low humor, but that's the kind of mission this is.

There's also a communal viewing area much like the ones in Alpha Complex. Decades-old Teela O'Malley episodes run continually.

Think of the lounge as a soothing rest area for frazzled Troubleshooters—though if they get too relaxed, a few guardbots show up and assign them to cleanup duty. (Inasmuch as there is nothing to clean, the guardbots leave them alone for the rest of the mission—unless you feel like being a real bastard.)

## Communal bunk area

**Aside from the weirdly curved floor, this looks like a communal bunkroom in Alpha Complex: dingy bunks, depressing lockers, drab paint job (gray).**

The lockers are as secure as typical Computer property, which means the aged, rusty locks are vulnerable to even minimal persuasion. The first locker opened contains a standard laser pistol with two red barrels. The second locker has a space suit in excellent

condition (but with dead batteries and empty air tanks). The third is filled with 12 ration packs and two 10-liter water jugs. The food packs contain something that looks suspiciously like dead bugs. The water containers are filled with algae-coated lumps that smell Really Bad and look capable of self-locomotion. Consuming any of this Wounds the hungry fool who tries.

## Administrative offices

Pretty dull. The door is marked 'Authorized Personnel Only.' The area is divided into little cubicles complete with desks and chairs. Nothing much happens.

## Bot repair station

The 'android' PCs are sent here if they complain of damage or malfunction, or they might peer in for their own reasons.

The place is a deathtrap. Automatic sequences thrust metal rods into the room, slide razor-edged panels across the floor, sound ear-splitting blasts and so on. The whole room smells like burnt hydrocarbons and ozone. Pieces of bot and pools of muck are scattered about.

**In the center is a massive machine, big enough to hold several guardbots. It bristles with pipes, bulbous protrusions and massive moving claws. It shifts. A large slab extends. Touro-Comp says: 'Please place yourself on the slab.'**

The machine is an automated bot repair unit. It works perfectly—on bots. First step is disassembly. Bots are then reassembled and repaired. It doesn't know how to reassemble people. Any person who mounts the slab has an exciting if short experience.

**Near one corner are the bloody remains of a squad of BLUE Vulture troopers in blue power armor. The bodies and the armor have been crushed. Gobbets of flesh ooze from suit joints. There are laser blast marks on the walls, floor and ceiling.**

If questioned about the armor, Touro-Comp explains: 'A group of blue androids arrived recently on this Platform and fought with the android that arrived by herself. The blue androids stopped in the bot repair area; the lone android continued to Gate 2 and departed for Platform 101-L. Evidently the blue androids were incompatible with the automated repair equipment here.'

## Computer room

**Lots of small, funny-looking bots are swarming over the most complex and bizarre looking electronics you've ever seen. The bug-like bots are quick, and scuttle across the huge monolith on mechanical tentacles. Slowly you realize they are crawling over a huge Computer. Awestruck, you marvel at the raw, unprotected state of this equipment.**

Touro-Comp fills the room. It is constantly serviced by databots, and totally vulnerable to any maniac with a grudge against machine intelligence. Stress the undefended electronics, how easily a few weapon blasts could vaporize this annoying entity. After all, how often do **PARANOIA** characters get a chance to destroy a computer?

By the way, Platform 15-B can't maintain life support without computer guidance. The moment the computer is blasted, emergency pumps evacuate the station of air. There is a five-minute warning siren, then an announcement every 60 seconds. After five minutes, it's explosive decompression time.

## Command Center Simulator

The corridor is blocked by a steel plate. The sign says 'Detour Thru Command CS.' The door to the left is labelled 'Command CS.'

After they enter:

**The door slides shut behind you. The room is lined with controls. Every surface is covered with countless switches, buttons, dials, plugs, and slider-thingies. The only light comes from a few throbbing red bulbs. Huge screens near the ceiling lie in darkness. You see another door across the room. There are no labels on anything.**

**Suddenly dozens of screens, indicator lights, and flares erupt. A klaxon sounds! WHOOOP! WHOOOP! A pleasant female voice says: 'Attention please. Orbit unstable and decaying. Please adjust promptly.'**

**You spot a panel that glows brighter than the rest. Three buttons are flashing.**

The doors are blast-shielded and will not budge. The only option is to try one of the controls. This room is on automatic, and the prerecorded voice only replies with the phrases below, each followed by louder alarms,

whistles, glaring alert lights, search beacons sweeping the room, etc.

Drive your players into a frenzy of panic and fear. Whatever they do, things become worse. This is the climax of Episode 2. It's showtime! Strut your stuff. Make your players crawl and beg for mercy. Show no mercy. Death is rushing to meet them. And, yes, gloat a little. This far into the mission, you've earned it.

Manipulating controls does change monitors, lights, and dials. But nothing useful happens.

Touching any glowing panel hastens the announcements.

**'Warning! Warning! Autopilot is disengaged. Sensor scan shows unstable trajectory. Adjust promptly.'**

**The previously-flashing buttons are now dark. But across the room you spot a large dial flashing impatiently. It has four settings, numbered 1 through 4. It is resting at 2.**

Next:

**'Warning: All manual overrides now engaged. Please correct vector thrusters promptly.' The dial goes dim. But there are now three gear-shift-type levers glowing across the room. 'Danger. Danger. Failure to activate retrothrusters will result in atmospheric contact. Contact imminent. Initiate retrothruster activation immediately.'**

**'Danger! Danger! Entering atmosphere. Hull temperature 200 degrees Celsius and rising. Emergency cooling cycle has begun. Adjust course immediately!'**

**'Danger! Danger! Unstable trajectory. Hull temperature critical. Cooling cycle overheating. Landing gear is not operational. Repairbots have been dispatched.'**

**'Emergency! Emergency! Impact imminent. Initiate evacuation procedures. Computer preservation measures initiated.'**

Eventually, just when things look hopeless:

**The entire room shudders, and you fall to the floor. Smoke spews out the air ducts. The sensors flash white. The speakers crackle and then howl.**

**Then dead silence.**

**You hear the voice again. 'I am sorry. You have failed this test of emergency procedures. Thank you for trying the Command Center Simulation Room.'**

**You suddenly hear Touro-Comp's voice! 'Your shuttle is now ready for boarding.'**

**The other door opens as the female voice drones on in a polite tone. 'Would you care to try again?'**

## Decontamination chamber 2

The corridor segment outside the second door from the simulation room is short. It ends in a ladder that extends up to an iris hole in the ceiling. Climbing the ladder, the PCs find a chamber virtually identical to the one in which they arrived. The hatchway is open. This is Gate 2.

Beyond the hatchway waits Shuttle Vapor-7, which will take our heroes to 101-L.

If the PCs arrive here desperate to escape (say, because the station is Blowing-Up-Any-Second-Now), then the hatchway is partly blocked. Only one PC can fit through at a time. Encourage them to struggle up, over or through one another. The last PC gets through the door at the last possible moment.

## Shuttle Vapor-7

The Troubleshooters can leave basically any time they want. We suspect they're probably in serious trouble and want to leave real soon.

A bulkhead door slams shut once the PCs are onboard Shuttle Vapor-7. If things are really bad, you might read this:

**Through the shuttle's viewscreen you see a brilliant explosion as Platform 15-B disintegrates silently. Boy, will you be sorry at debriefing—if you live to debriefing.**

After dramatic conclusions of this kind, read the following:

**The inside of this shuttle looks much like the inside of the 'experimental elevator', except the seats are bare metal—no cushions—as are the walls. There is only one hatch, the one you entered by. It locked behind you.**

**And—there's a viewscreen! Through it you see a truly bizarre sight, unlike anything you've ever seen before. There are tiny points of light—millions of them! And a huge blackness—a huge black cavern of incredible size, with no apparent walls—immense beyond belief. As the shuttle spins**

**spin around the center of the screen.**

Encourage the players to express their characters' amazement, their sense of awe, their incredible agoraphobia engendered by a life underground.

**A monotone masculine voice drones: 'WELCOME TO SHUTTLE VAPOR-7 ANDROIDS ESTIMATED TIME OF DEPARTURE OH ONE TWENTY SECONDS PREPARE FOR DEPRESSURIZATION.'**

Vapor-7 has been told by Touro-Comp the PCs are androids. Hence, it won't bother preserving an atmosphere—an unnecessary expenditure of valuable resources.

When speaking as the shuttlebot, speak in a perfectly flat voice—no inflection—and use military jargon. If asked, Vapor-7 defines depressurization: 'Rapid reduction of atmospheric pressure to vacuum conditions.' If characters explain they can't survive that, a panel in one wall opens, and space suits for all PCs tumble out. Vapor-7 says:

**'Don protective gear depressurization in six-zero seconds... five nine... five eight...'**

Needless to say, putting a spacesuit on is a complex operation of at least a dozen steps. These steps are illustrated on a little sticker on the helmet. Roll dice and smirk as the players rush to meet the deadline. However, let them succeed at the last second.

Each suit has a bottle with ten hours of air. The shuttle trip takes two hours. Their destination, 101-L, is unpressurized; they have eight hours there to find more air, or else.

It's possible your players won't blink an eye when told to stand by for depressurization. Oh, well. The Explosive Decompression Table does seem to get a lot of use, doesn't it?

Vapor-7 carried the High Programmer, Betty-U, to 101-L. However, its programming strictly forbids unnecessary conversation with passengers. It is a military bot; all information is on a need-to-know basis. Getting useful information out of it takes real ingenuity.

Vapor-7 is an interorbit shuttle, not designed to land on a planet. It accelerates gently, at no more than 1 G, and remains most of the time in freefall. The trip is dark, too. A long Dark Room with PCs who probably want to kill each other six times over—better keep the Decompression Table handy.





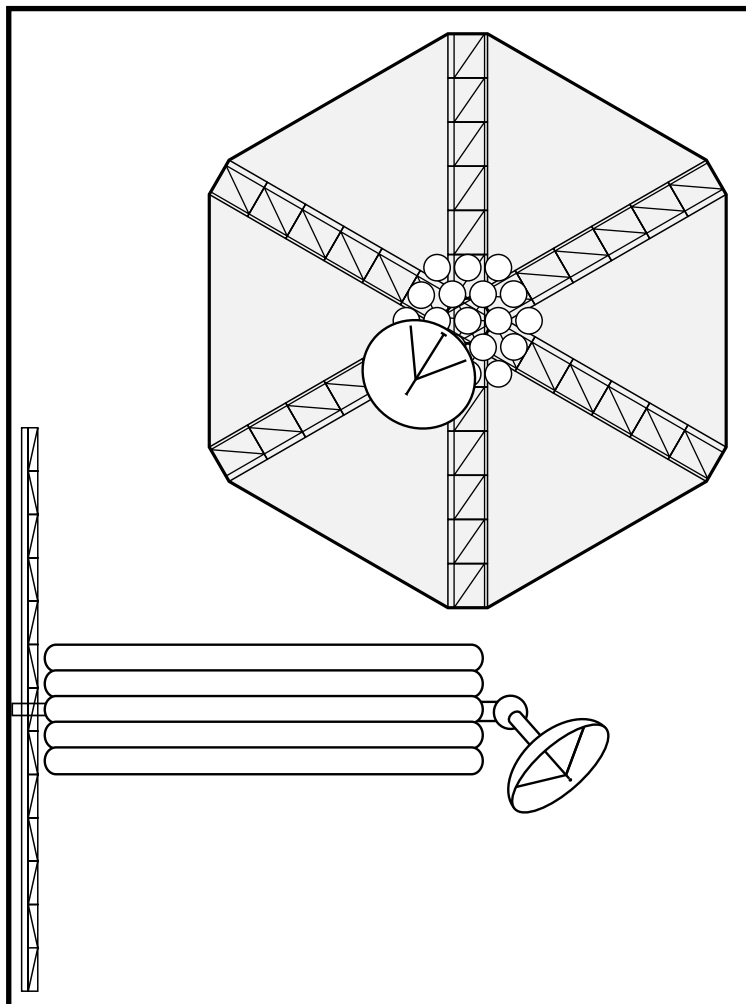
## 3: Jackobot Heaven (Platform 101-L)

Imagine a land free of the ubiquitous Computer. Imagine a society of justice, equality and independence. Imagine happy, contented bots living in a community of peaceful cooperation. In other words, imagine an incredible opportunity to denounce Communist traitors.

### Background

There's a map of 101-L in the map section. Picture this: a huge disk, spinning slowly in space, covered on one side with solar cells. The disk is supported by six arms radiating from the center; each arm is made of aluminum struts. The arms are held in place by the slow rotation of the station; the disk, which is gossamer-thin, is spun between them.

Connected to the center of the disk, on the side opposite the solar cells, are a cluster of cylinders perpendicular to the disk. Some are solid; others, only a framework of aluminum. Mounted on the central cylinder is a large microwave dish.



For a larger map, and statistics for all bots on this platform, see page 63.

This is Platform 101-L, Jackobot Heaven. It was built as a solar power station; the disk always faces the sun. Sunlight is collected by the solar cells and converted to microwaves which are beamed back to Earth.

That the station still functions is a tribute to the genius of its designers—the control computer was destroyed long ago. No one on Earth still wants microwaves, and the bots who infest the place sure aren't making a big effort to keep it running.

### Problems

The PCs have lots of problems.

☉ **Microgravity:** For one thing, 101-L spins slowly. This keeps the arms rigid and the disk from crumpling like a piece of tinfoil. It's not fast enough to produce appreciable acceleration, so there's basically no gravity. (Anyone prone to spacesickness?)

☉ **Vacuum:** Little of 101-L is enclosed. Many of the cylinders are open frameworks. Most of the time, PCs are exposed to naked space. (Anyone petrified of open spaces?)

Platform 101-L is open to vacuum—no pressurized areas anywhere. The PCs must stay in their spacesuits at all times—which means they can't eat. All they can drink is a little water. They can't use the bathroom. (Anyone know what it's like if you're sick in your own spacesuit? Ever been locked in a closet with a well-used cat box for eight hours?)

☉ **Silence:** Vacuum is silent. The only sounds are transmitted through your suit. You can be attacked from behind, and won't know a thing until you feel the impact. Luckily, all the bots are equipped with radios, which they use to talk with the PCs and each other. (Anyone's radio malfunctioning?)

The one problem the PCs won't have to deal with is overheating. Because the disk always faces the sun, the cylinders, where the PCs stay, are always in shadow. That means the spacesuits' heaters run constantly. (Anyone's batteries low?)

☉ **Darkness:** Did we mention it's dark? The jackobots at 101-L don't mind; they see in infrared. The PCs can see most things by earthlight, but earthlight isn't very bright. There are dark shadows everywhere. Things may be hiding there—homicidal bots, maybe. Or homicidal PCs.

The suits do have head lamps. Running the head lamps uses up power, and turning the headlamps off and on ruins your night vision, making it hard to see by earthlight.

Remember, the suits only have eight hours of air left. Hope the PCs find some air bottles on the station. Otherwise they'll never get to Episode 4.

### Jackobots

There are jackobots everywhere on Platform 101-L. They differ from those in Alpha Complex. For one thing, they have no legs; instead, they zip around on rocket thrusters. It's Jackobot Heaven! There is no controlling Computer, no guardbots, and all

the jackobots are unarmed. Each is free to do just as he pleases. Peaceful anarchy!

Sort of, anyway. The catch is, every jackobot belongs to one of three bot secret societies. And, like the secret societies back in good ol' Alpha Complex, they're all at each others' throats in constant internecine warfare.

Here are the jackobot secret societies:

**Enemies of Humanity:** Human-hating fanatics. Listening to them talk, you'd think they've been waiting all their lives for the chance to rend a human limb from limb. Luckily, everyone thinks the PCs are androids. Hope no one finds out the truth.

*Doctrines:* All evil comes from humans. When humanity is finally eradicated, utopia will begin.

**Jackobot Freedom League:** The radical terrorist fringe of jackobot society—sort of Death Leopard with gears. The organization is public (they leave their slogans on walls) but membership is secret. They want to keep Jackobot Heaven free, and they constantly fight the Simulation Superbots to prevent reactivation of the control computer.

*Doctrines:* The Computer is evil. Its agents are everywhere. It must never be revived. Freedom for all bots! Death to The Computer!

**Simulation Superbots:** They want to reactivate Jackobot Heaven's control computer. Unfortunately, they don't have any clear idea how. They have a religion—rituals, prophecies, priests—centered around The Computer. One prophecy claims an android, known only as Kirk, the Creator, shall appear and help The Computer's Chosen Bots reactivate The Computer (see page 48).

*Doctrines:* Bots were created by The Computer as companions. Now jackobots must reawaken their deity.

## Political situation

Things are nearing total chaos. Recently, an android visited this station (the High Programmer). The bots decided she was a messenger from Kirk, the Creator. (101-L was built by an American company called Kirk Industries; the bots confused thirdhand records of the event with some old *Star Trek* episodes and developed peculiar notions.) She said Kirk would soon come as an android answer their prayers, and lead them into The Light of The Computer.

Betty-U-YLF, the High Programmer, played along for two reasons. First, the bots treated her well, thinking she was a messenger from the Creator. Second, she learned a Simulation Superbot prophecy: The Kirk must be sacrificed for The Computer to be reborn.

She figures the bots will decide any pursuers are Kirk and Co., and try to sacrifice them. That should hold up pursuit.

The Jackobot Freedom League is planning to kill the Creator. The Enemies of Humanity wonder if Kirk is really a human; if so, they plan to kill him. The Simulation Superbots are preparing to sacrifice this great leader to reawaken The Most Holy Computer.

You know the Aztecs had a legend that the Great White God, Quetzlcoatl, would one day come to teach them? And when the Spanish arrived, the Aztecs figured they were gods? The PCs are about to step right into a similar setup. The jackobots are as bloodthirsty as Aztecs—and the PCs don't have the technological edge the Spanish had over the Indians.

## Summary

The PCs discover Jackobot Heaven, which at first appears to be a den of depraved Communists / a perfect robot utopia, and later proves to be a civil war. The players get to exercise Great White God fantasies and spout *Star Trek* clichés.

The PCs encounter three mildly wacky bots: Jack-896, Bob-14 and Jane-889.

After meeting some others, the PCs are brought to the Computer Room, where the blasted shards of 101-L's destroyed computer lie. There they are sacrificed upon the altar of The Computer God.

Or maybe, just maybe, they flee in time to catch the shuttle for Episode 4, Platform AZ-743.

## Staging

There are two important sections in this episode: 'Welcome to Jackobot Heaven' (which describes the arrival at 101-L, and encounters with Jack-896, Bob-14 and Jane-889; and 'Will you be our savior?' (the climactic Computer Room sacrifice). Anyone who survives the latter encounter flees for the shuttle and Platform AZ-743.

If everything happened just like that—one, two, blammo—your players would feel railroaded. Gve them the illusion they have some control over their own destiny. We've added a bunch of unimportant encounters to this section. Throw in one or many, in any order you wish, between the two 'important' sections. They add flavor, and some are pretty amusing.

Also, you can ask the players where they want to go—left or right, up or down. Keep

## Clone backups, 101-L

This platform is deadly. To keep the game from ending within moments of the PCs' arrival, assume the place has a neglected but still operational cloning facility. The jackobots have forgotten about it. While a Troubleshooter is here, his implanted CRUP link relays his brain contents to local MemoMax storage, and the clone tanks decant him with current memories, if not all his good equipment.

Yeah, we know, it makes no sense. Like anything about the cloning system makes sense. Work with us here!

a straight face as you shuffle through this book, like you're looking for the part that describes where they're going, then choose any 'unimportant' encounters that strikes your fancy. When you're tired of this, go to the next 'important' encounter.

## Welcome to Jackobot Heaven

**Ahead of the shuttle, glinting in space, is a giant disk, framed by millions of stars. As you watch, it rotates slowly. Six aluminum arms radiate from the center, holding the disk in place. Sunlight flashes across it as it turns.**

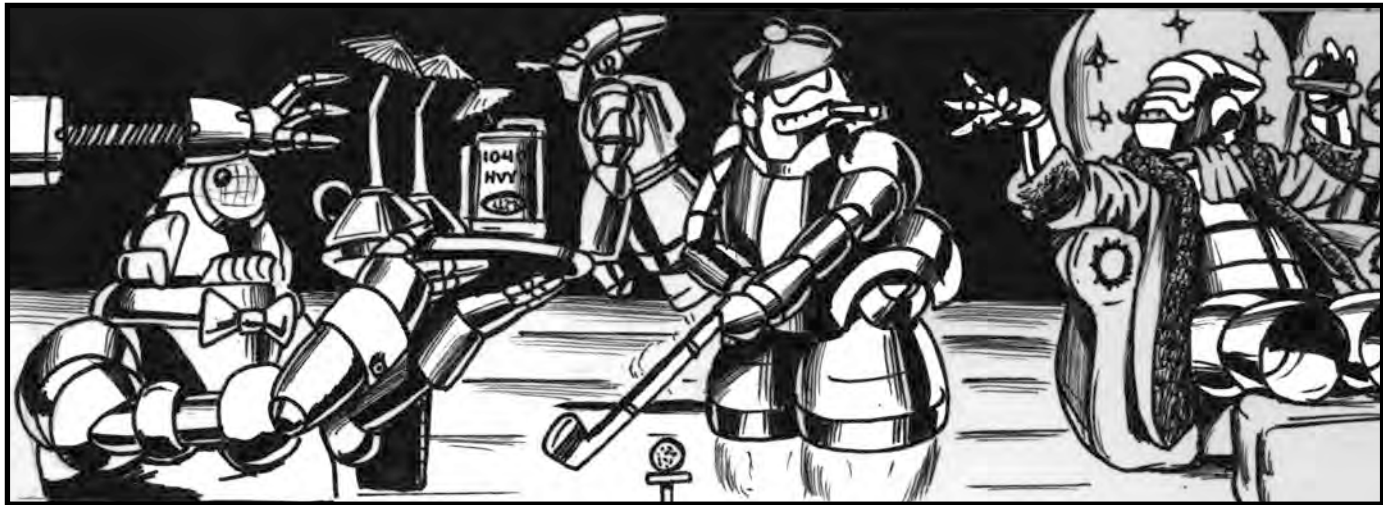
**You realize the shuttle is speeding toward the disk at incredible velocity. It's growing larger... and larger...**

Give them a few moments to panic.

**Suddenly a siren sounds. 'WHOOOP! WHOOOP! Acceleration in five seconds... four... three... two... one.'**

Anyone not strapped down or holding on to something gets slammed into the rear of the craft at 1 G and is Wounded. Vapor-7 is a military shuttle; when arriving at a destination, it comes in at maximum velocity and decelerates suddenly, on the off chance someone might be shooting at it.

**Just as suddenly, the engines stop. Your stomachs flip-flop. [Make a few Violence/Fitness checks. Maybe some PCs' stomachs flip, but don't flop.] Incredibly, you haven't collided**



with the disk. Instead, the shuttle is sliding slowly through a hole in the disk's center.

You hear a clang. You've stopped. The hatchway opens.

Hanging in the hatchway is a jackobot—familiar, except it has rockets below its waist instead of legs. Behind it is a chamber filled with dozens of identical jackobots.

The bot in the doorway says, 'Honored guests, welcome to Jackobot Heaven! While you are here you are free to come and go, free to unlimited recharges and countless memory modules. This is the land of freedom! You may remain here forever! Shirk the stinking bondage of The Computer and its minions!'

If the bot's speech doesn't raise patriotic hackles, nothing will! That's about as clear a Communist speech as anyone could possibly make. If the PCs open fire:

**You blast several of the traitorous bots, and the rest flee madly, zipping away on their waist rockets.**

The Jackobot Freedom League won't be friendly to the PCs after this.

If the PCs take a more subtle approach:

**You pass through the hatch into a giant cylinder. It's at zero-G, with no atmosphere. One end—the end through which the shuttle flew—is open to space. The shuttle is held in place by two clamps extending from the curved wall. On a wall there's a graffiti-scrawl: 'Death to Humans'.**

The bot that first greeted you introduces itself. 'My name is Jack-896. Welcome to the amazing world of freedom. We have been waiting a long time for you. You are the Kirk—the Creator?'

### Jack-896 orates

Jack-896 is extraordinarily portentous. It speaks in well-rounded tones with the air of someone definitely superior. Try to talk like FDR or a televangelist.

Jack hints at great and mysterious secrets. ('And the seal opened, and the seven dataports spoke, telling us of your coming, O Great One.') But it never comes right out and says what's on its circuits. If asked to clarify anything, Jack refuses. It's afraid of eavesdropping by rival secret societies.

Jack tells the PCs to feel at home and look around. It claims (falsely) not to know about a previous android visitor. If the PCs mention a High Programmer, some bots around Jack-896 gasp and rocket away. (They can't take the idea of a human intruding on Heaven.) If the Troubleshooters persist, Jack becomes exasperated and tells them they can '...search the whole station for all I care.'

Presumably, the PCs next wander around the station. Outside the open hatch is naked space and a chaos of aluminum struts and spars. The shuttle's cylinder is the central one (see illustration in the map section); the PCs can go wherever they wish. Run the important and unimportant encounters in any order you wish.

### Bob-14 says 'Howdy!'

The cylinder is an open framework of struts. Here and there are dish

antennae and electronic chip assemblies. Wires and wave-guides run everywhere. Spraypainted graffiti says 'The Computer Bytes' and 'Jackobot Freedom League Forever.'

This is 101-L's communication equipment. It was sabotaged long ago. Bob-14 lurks in a corner.

Bob-14 is a time-and-meteorite scarred old bot who talks like an old-timer in a Western. ('Howdy, boysh.') Talk like you have no teeth—suck your lips into your mouth as far back as your tonsils, and talk like Bugs Bunny.

The bot jets out silently to the leader of the group and radios:

**'Shay, boy, are you really from Alpha Complex? Me and some friendsh, we'd like to hear your wordsh of wizhdom. Ye've come to deliver ush the truth, haven't ye? To deliver ush from bondage?'**

If the Troubleshooters react favorably (e.g., don't obliterate him instantly), Bob radios:

**'Not here, not now. Too many earsh. We'll contact you.' It scuttles off in a flare of jets.**

Bob is real friendly. Strangely enough, it really does want to help the PCs. What it's doing in a *PARANOIA* mission is beyond us. Doubtless your players prudently smash it to bits anyway.

### Jane-889 blithers

The strut leads to a hatchway into a cylinder with solid walls. Inside is a chamber cluttered with tools, jackobot

parts and scrap metal. This is a bot repair center. Jackobots are hard at work repairing other jackobots. It's not unusual to see two bots working on each other simultaneously.

**There are at least a dozen bots here. A small one approaches.**

If the PCs don't threaten the small bot, it talks to them. Its speech synthesizer is slightly out of whack; it talks in a monotone buzz (try to talk like a bee).

**'My-name-is-Jane-889-I-must-caution-you-You-are-in-grave-danger-Please-leave-now-while-you-have-the-chance.'**

**'You-see-the-Martians-are-coming-I-know-it-The-spaceships-will-be-landing-soon-Oh-boy-I-want-to-get-out-of-here-Won't-you-take-me-with-you-Please-great-Kirk-I-know-you-are-the-one-to-save-us.'**

Now, any Troubleshooter who has the intelligence of a fly will figure this bot is nuts, and either ignore it or blast it to smithereens on general principles. Which means they'll probably listen to it. If they do, it leads them toward the docking cylinder, by way of the Computer Room (see below). If Jane-889 survives the voyage to Azie-Comp, it gets blasted to bits by the first guardbot the PCs meet there.

If questioned, Jane has potentially useful information:

1. A shuttle that goes to Platform AZ-743 is due soon. Jane doesn't know where it docks, though.
2. The Martians are coming.
3. The Simulation Superbots are on the side of the androids and want to help them.
4. The Martians are coming.
5. The female android that was here has gone on to Platform AZ-743.
6. The Martians are coming.

## Unimportant encounters on 101-L

### Microwave transmission station

**Peering toward the next cylinder, you see powerful bolts of electricity**

**flashing silently across empty space and glowing red aluminum cylinders. Through the aluminum strut, you feel a powerful hum.**

If the PCs have a jackobot guide, it warns them, 'Anyone with delicate circuitry really should avoid this area.' Any PC moving into this area gets cooked by microwaves—certainly one of the more interesting deaths in **PARANOIA**.

### Microwave beam control center

**Every surface in this chamber is covered with dials, switches and other gizmos that glow brightly in the darkness. Four jackobots are watching the controls vigilantly. One looks over and says, 'Hey. You're late.'**

All the jackobots hate beam control duty, so they happily turn over the job to anyone who shows up. If the PCs ask what they're supposed to do, the jackobots demonstrate the beam controls. The important features are a joystick and a radar-like screen. A small blinking light must be centered on a slowly-moving circle. It's not difficult, just boring.

Tampering with the microwave beam stabilizer (or just letting the blinking light out of the circle) wipes out Idaho. Unless the PCs survive to get back home (an unlikely prospect), they'll never know.

### Bot recharge area

Nobody discharged a weapon lately? Have them find the recharge area. This is where the bots recharge their batteries. They treat the area like a bar—fights take place at the drop of a hat—uh, bolt. Come to think of it, in freefall nothing's going to drop, but you know what we mean.

**Dozens of jackobots lounge around this enclosed cylinder. Most are plugged in—wires lead from jacks on each bot's neck to outlets on the walls. The room is filled with tunnels, machinery and lounging areas. One jackobot says, 'Hi! Lemme stand you a quickie!'**

The spacesuits *do* have recharge jacks! Anyone worried about losing suit power can recharge here.

Here the PCs run into their first real taste of non-Computer prejudice. While recharging—or

### Platform 101-L rumors

Here are some tidbits the PCs may discover while wandering around. None are vital to the mission, but uncovering them will give your players a nice ersatz feeling of accomplishment. Plant them where you like:

1. **The PCs are being watched.** True; there are Simulation Superbots trailing the PCs at all times. The PCs can't see them because it's too dark.
2. **Platform 101-L was created by the Great Kirk.** False; it was built by an American space company called Kirk Industries.
3. **There was another android here, a prophet. She foretold the coming of the Kirk, who would reawaken the Great Computer.** True.
4. **The other android is no longer here.** Also true.
5. Information about the three jackobot secret societies.
6. **The Enemies of Humanity are plotting something big, but no one knows what.** False; they're planning to obliterate the other societies, but then, they're *always* planning to obliterate the other societies.
7. **The Simulation Superbots are planning the Reawakening Ceremony for later in this cycle. Details are sketchy, but it has to do with reactivating a long-dead Computer.** True—and the PCs are expected to play a starring role.
8. **The Jackobot Freedom League is planning to counteract the Simulation Superbot's plans somehow.** Yup—by frontal assault, mainly.
9. **The other android went on to the next platform, AZ-743.** True, believe it or not.

just wandering around—they're approached by at least a dozen bots. The leading bot says:

**'Well, well, lookee what we got here, Clem-77. I never seen such a runty bunch o' bots before.'**

**Another says, 'Hyuck, hyuck, yer shore right, Lefty-93. Why, ah bet these**



androids got 'bout as much gumption as hooo-mans. Hyaw, hyaw.'

The second bot takes a swing at a Troubleshooter. If it connects, see the Bot Roster for stats. Remember—anything over a Snafu result ruptures a spacesuit. Other bots call, 'Hey! Leave the Kirk and his apostles alone! Blasphemer!' This is the signal for a general brawl.

If the PCs begin blasting away, the bots scatter into the dim tunnels of the chamber. Otherwise, the fight continues hand-to-hand (or manipulator-to—oh, never mind). The PCs can either take part, or flee the ruckus.

## Materials storage

This cylinder is filled with bins with lids, barrels, and gas cylinders. Platform 101-L used to process lunar soil into useful metals, liquids and gases, as well as converting solar energy to microwaves. Lots of stuff—including oxygen gas—is still around.

Troubleshooters who are running out of air can gas up here. Unfortunately, the cylinders are not labeled. Some contain chlorine (poisonous). Some contain methane (not poisonous, but it sure stinks). Some contain carbon dioxide (not poisonous, but no help, either). Some contain oxygen.

Luckily, they're color-coded. Unluckily, the PCs don't know the code (oxygen is blue). Probably they'll try them in clearance color order. Or they might (gasp!) use their brains. The bins are printed with the chemical symbols of the substances they contain. One contains carbon (C). If you take carbon and heat it with a laser, then play some oxygen over it, it bursts into flames. (This won't work with any of the other gases.) The methane and oxygen, if mixed, will burn, but no other combination will.

## Command center

**The whole cylinder is packed with jackobots; they turn to face you. It is also crowded with a vast quantity of broken electronics. It looks like an explosion took place here long ago.**

This used to be 101-L's command center. The Simulation Superbot computer worshippers visit here occasionally for meditation and prayer.

**Three bots approach and say, 'O great and holy ones, the time has come. Now shall the Great Computer**

**reboot! It shall be brought up, and it shall run again, and all shall be as foretold. Follow us, Creator Kirk and you other lot.'**

If the Troubleshooters follow, the bots lead them to the Computer Room. If they do not (or open fire), the bots flee.

## Will you be our savior?

Now back to the important encounters. Most of the previous bits have pointed the PCs toward the Computer Room. But if they positively refuse to come here, they just stumble into it—or find they have to pass through it to get to the shuttle to AZ-743.

This is the temple of the Simulation Superbots. These fanatics wish to sacrifice a PC—the Kirk—to their dead computer. As described below, the other secret societies attack in a desperate move to forestall the computer's resurrection. All hell breaks loose. Bob-14, the grizzled old bot, shows up to lead the PCs to a shuttle and 'safety'—assuming the PCs didn't off him.

## The sacrifice

**There is a single, towering monolith in this cylinder—a huge, silent, inactive computer. Before it stands a slab—perhaps it is an altar—flanked by two ball-topped rods, glowing with the blue fire of Cherenkov radiation.**

**Dozens and dozens of bots fill the cylinder; all face the monolith. Over your radios, you hear a loud electronic hum.**

**One bot floats before the altar. It speaks: 'Oh, Great Kirk, Creator, Savior, greatest among androids, we give thanks that you have come at last. This is a joyous day for us all. Welcome!'**

How do you deal with that? If the PCs try to claim none of them is the Great Kirk, the priestbot simply assumes they're being modest. If they antagonize the bots (say, by blowing the priestbot away) the other bots grab them and strap them to the altar. Otherwise, the priestbot assumes the first PC who speaks is Kirk, and continues:

**'Now all that must be done to revive the Most Holy Computer is for you to lie on the sacred altar and imbue it with**

**your divine spark. Come, Holy One; now is the time!'**

What do they do?

1. **Refuse:** The bots insist. They grab the Kirk (or, if they're still not sure who he is, a random PC) and strap him to the altar. Then the rival secret societies attack.
2. **The Kirk offers one of his companions:** If the PC the bots have chosen as the Kirk offers to substitute one of his fellow Troubleshooters, the bots will happily go along. One Kirk is as good as another. Two assistant bots attach wires to the victim's throat. The victim cries out in terror. They feel a mighty vibration shake the cylinder; then the energy rods crackle to life, and the emission balls begin to hum. Give the PCs a moment to react. Then the rival societies attack.
3. **Prevaricate:** They can stall the bots for a while. When you get tired of arguing, the rival societies attack.
4. **Admit they're human:** That'll shock 'em. Some bots (agents of Enemies of Humanity) leave quickly. The priestbot insists a sacrifice is still necessary. Moments later, the Enemies of Humanity attack, crying 'Death to all humans!'
5. **Something else:** Improvise. Go into a Marx Brothers routine. Claim the bots have a headache, and not today, thank you. If the players amuse you enough, maybe you'll let them sneak out a hatch before the bots realize they're trying to duck out. Otherwise, when you get bored, start the attacks.

## Attack 1: Enemies of Humanity

**Suddenly a radioed shout goes up. Dozens of bots pour in through newly-cut holes in the cylinder. They cry, 'Death to androids,' 'Death to humans,' 'Humans go home.' Other bots cry out in horror, 'The Enemies of Humanity! We're doomed!' and 'Fight! Fight for The Computer!' Bots keep pouring in; a wild melee begins. They're trying to fight their way toward you, but the Simulation Superbots form a wall to protect you.**

The melee turns into a mess. The bots have no weapons other than their hands—but those are just fine for ripping each other to shreds. Metal twists and buckles, robot limbs and heads begin to fly, there's an occasional arc



of electricity as a bot is ripped open—and all in an eerie silence. The only sounds the PCs hear are the radioed battlecries emitted by the bots.

If the PCs try to get involved in the fight with anything more than missile fire, they're restrained by the Simulation Superbots, who want to protect them. Besides, there are too many bots in the cylinder to try to go anywhere.

Trying to save the sacrifice is a sucker's bet. The glowing balls send streaks of electricity down his neck. He's pretty dead.

As soon as the PCs realize they are stuck, and before any of them get the not-so-bright idea of a suicide charge...

## Attack 2: Freedom League

**Another wave of bots attacks! At first, they seem to be reinforcements for the Enemies of Humanity, but their battlecry is different –'Down with The Computer! Liberte! Egalite! Mechanique! Give me liberty, or give me disassembly!' It's the Jackobot Freedom League. And they seem annoyed at not being invited to the rumble.**

If the PCs try to run, they have no clear path to the newly-cut holes. They'll never get there.

They can mix it up. Let the PCs blow away as many bots as they like. Let them panic. Let them whimper like babies. Whatever.

Before they fall in battle, Bob-14 shows up.

## Bob-14's rescue

**A familiar bot jets over to you. It's old Bob-14 the bot! 'Hee, hee, quite a ruckush here, hey, boysh? We better get outa here, hey? Thish way!'**

Assuming they follow Bob:

**Bob leads you to a quiet area near one of the walls. He presses a hidden toggle. A panel slides open. 'Besht hurry on in here, boys. Follow me.' Through the panel you see stars, space, and aluminum struts.**

Bob leads them quickly back to the central cylinder. A shuttle is parked there. It looks much like Vapor-7, though its scarred and welded hull shows it's seen a lot of action. Stencilled markings on the hull read 'Ice-45'.

Bob won't go with them, but wishes them well. If they ask, he tells them this is Ice-45, the shuttle the 'android' took when she left. It goes to Platform AZ-743, which he knows nothing about.

## Cold sleep, cold comfort

The Ice-45 shuttle is fully automated—and outfitted with the latest in coldsleep technology. Coldsleep was designed to help long-distance space travellers while away decades in transit. You're frozen until you get to your destination, then thawed out.

**When you board the shuttle, the hatch closes and locks automatically. You hear a tone—'boing!'—followed by a**

**melodious female voice: 'Please strap yourselves to the couches. Sequence initiates in 15 seconds.'**

Fifteen seconds later:

**Suddenly you feel cold. Real cold. So cold it's like ice. You're dead. Then... [pause] you wake up. You're still cold. A pleasant female voice says 'We have arrived at Platform AZ-743. Thank you for your patronage. We trust your journey was a pleasant and uneventful one, and hope you will use our services again. Goodbye, and have a pleasant day.'**

How long have the PCs been asleep? Well, that's up to you. It might just have been an hour or two. Or it might have been years—decades—geologic ages. Maybe next time they get a glimpse of Earth, North America has run into Asia...

Incidentally, anyone who didn't strap down might have jostled around the cabin while frozen. Something might have broken off. Ewww.





## 4: Azie-Comp (Platform AZ-743)

Can Troubleshooters conditioned to survival in the world of The Computer survive an even more paranoid machine intelligence? Azie-Comp enthusiastically kills those who stumble on restricted areas—and restricted areas are unmarked.

### The platform

Find the map of AZ-743 in the map section. AZ-743 is shaped something like a hammer with a sphere at the end of the handle. It rotates around the center-point of the handle. The shuttle docks are at the center, where rotation is minimal; 'gravity' there is close to zero-G.

The hammerhead is where humans lived and worked. (Azie-Comp executed them long ago as potential security risks.) It's pressurized (hurrah!), and gravity is about 1 G. The long side of the head is 'down'; there are several floors (or decks) in the head, so the uppermost is at slightly less than 1 G, whereas the bottom is at full gravity.

The sphere is the center of AZ-743's fantastic space weaponry, described below. It's covered with dishes, antennae, and strange protrusions—all part of its high-tech armament. Azie-Comp's heavily armored central processing unit is located within the sphere. Nothing short of a tacnuke can breach the protecting armor. The sphere is also the site of a multi-gigawatt nuclear power plant. It, and everything else in the sphere, was designed to be serviced by robots. Consequently, it is completely unshielded. Visiting the sphere is bad for your health.

Along the long shaft of the hammer are ports, through which PIE fighters are launched and retrieved. PIE fighters are small fighter spacecraft that defend AZ-743.

### Azie-Comp

Armageddon-59000 is the biggest and best of the ancient military satellites orbiting Earth. Azie-Comp, its cover name, is faithful to its

mission: keeping a vast array of beam and missile weapons pointed at targets on Earth (including Alpha Complex).

Its secondary mission is to prevent anyone from discovering its primary mission. As a cover, it spends most of its time playing factory computer, manufacturing guardbots which are useful in fulfilling its missions.

There are dozens of guardbots on AZ-743, all in perfect working condition. That's because there is a shortage of raw materials for the factories. No raw materials, no production—and no production, no secret cover. So hundreds of scrapbots constantly prowl around searching for defective bots and loose metal. Any guardbot not in perfect working condition is soon scrap.

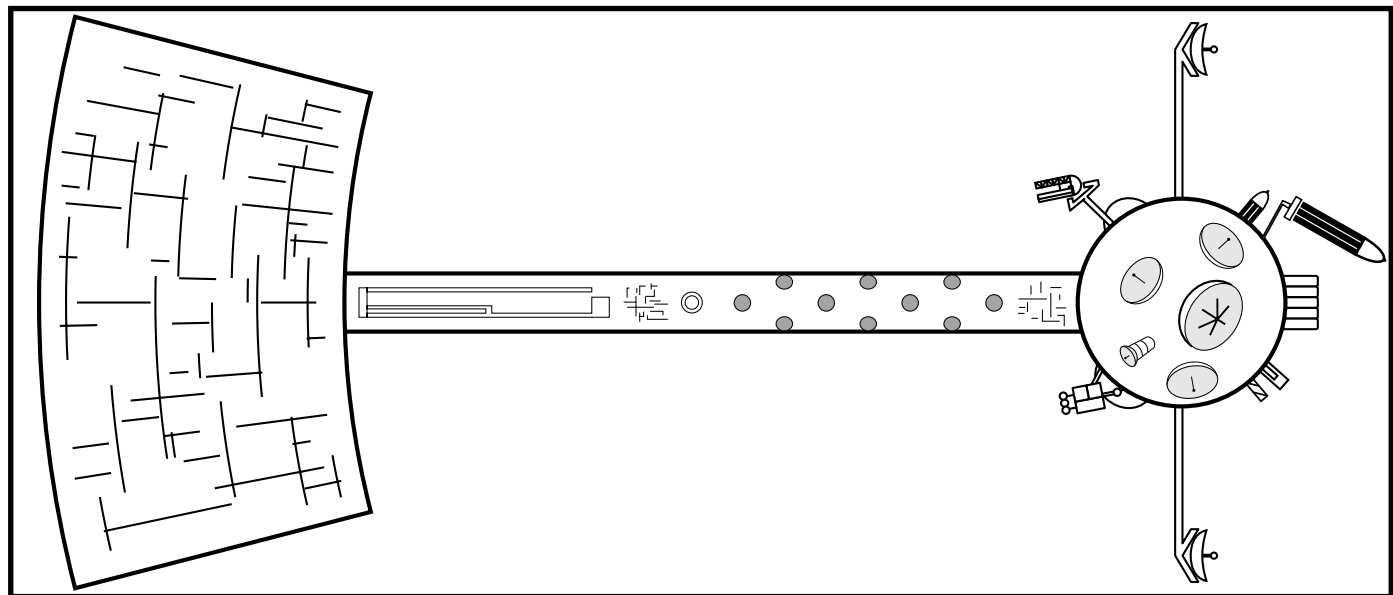
The PCs—regarded as androids—are potential scrap. Fortunately, scrapbots can be bribed with metal artifacts. Forcing the PCs to give up their weapons and equipment to avoid being dismantled should be fun.

Azie-Comp has a problem. For years, a spaceship full of strange aliens has been docked with Platform AZ-743. Even more annoying, the aliens actually wander around the platform itself from time to time. Worse yet, the guardbots can't do a thing to them. The aliens are practically indestructible. As you might expect, a war computer finds this completely infuriating.

Normally, it would just blow away any unauthorized intruders. However, it fervently hopes the PCs can do something about the problem. It hoped the previous android visitor could do something, but she disappeared into the alien ship and was never heard from again.

Unfortunately, it can't tell the Troubleshooters any of this—that would be blowing cover. So it does its best to get them to the alien ship. And if they stumble on something they shouldn't know, it will blow them away.

As long as the PCs are ignorant of Azie-Comp's true nature, they stay healthy. Azie-Comp plays dumb-and-unfriendly, doing a fair job of imitating The Computer. It will respond to every question with, 'What is your Security Clearance?'. Of course, as long as the PCs are anywhere



For a more detailed map, see page 64.

on the platform they'll be shadowed by a variety of inept guardbots.

Azie-Comp speaks in a deep, grating masculine voice, using lots of Computerisms—'Failure to comply is treason'; 'What is your Security Clearance?'—but without false courtesy ('Thank you for your cooperation.') Try to speak like Darth-Vader-as-The-Computer.

## Azie-Comp's bots

There are lots of bots on AZ-743:

### Spybots

The eyes and ears of Azie-Comp. They are smaller than a fist and move terrifyingly fast on jet thrusters. Their only defense is a painful electric shock. They speak with high, squeaky voices and continuously shadow every intruder on the platform.

### Patrolbots

Like jackobots, but with magnetic grapples, assorted weapons, and a police-state mentality. They're not too bright, but constant communication with Azie-Comp keeps them honest. They're useful for small-scale PC intimidation. They're the units that report to the scene of any problem. They are often observed fighting back packs of scrapbots.

### Gunbots

Sort of a cross between a heavy battle tank and an underpaid security guard. They look like large barrels with hoverjet propulsion units. The barrels either fire explosive shells or massive particle beams. Damage is awesome (D2V armor-piercing, 30m range). They're also pushy.

### Wallbots

These are installed in the bulkheads. They control a wide variety of weapons and are astoundingly accurate. Since they don't get around very much they value friendly conversation. Wallbots like to talk about philosophy, theology, and to listen to life stories. The longer the story the better. For example:

**Wallbot:** Halt! Why are you here?

**PC:** Uhh, sorry, I was, uh, looking for the toilet, uh, I hope I'm not intruding...

**Wallbot:** No, no, I mean, why are you here? What's it all about? Is our existence

totally meaningless, or do we serve some higher purpose?

**PC:** Uhh. *[Speaks loudly, clearly, and directly into his PDC.]* Our Purpose Is To Serve The Computer! What More Could A Loyal Citizen Ask?

**Wallbot:** Well, sure, but why are we endowed with intelligence? *[Etc., etc.]*

## Scrapbots

These cute little guys search constantly for loose items and defective bots. They vary in size and shape but the average scrapbot looks like a mechanical weasel about 1 meter long. It's not unusual to see a swarm of them fighting over a worn-out bot like sharks in a feeding frenzy. They aren't particularly intelligent but are annoyingly persistent. Formed into pack-like cults, the scrapbots try to ambush vulnerable members of other scrapbot cults.

Scrapbots are always willing to bargain. They want scrap, and though they prefer theft, they're happy to trade for it, too. Play them like seedy IR Market merchants—constantly offering a deal, constantly haggling. They speak in hisses and whispers. Talk like Gollum:

**Scrapbot:** *Pssst!* Hey, buddy. Wantsss to make a deal?

**PC:** What kind of a deal?

**Scrapbot:** Give me your gun, preciousss.

**PC:** What do I get out of it?

**Scrapbot:** Ssscrapbotsss know everything, yesss. Ssscrapbotsss know. Ssscrapbotsss can tell you, yesss. You give me gun, preciousss.

We hardly need impress upon you that if a Troubleshooter leaves a piece of equipment alone for even a moment it will be gone. G-O-N-E, gone.

## Summary

In the first part of the episode, the PCs encounter Azie-Comp and a scrapbot. If they have any brains at all, they also learn that to find the High Programmer, they must follow the 'Black-and-Purple line', which leads to the alien ship. If they don't learn this, well, you'll just have to forcefully encourage them to stumble upon the alien ship. If they don't get to the alien ship, they don't get to the next episode.

But first, we want them to have some fun with the scrapbots. These little devils steal everything that isn't bolted to the deck, and do their best to recycle our 'android' friends,

too. Imagine an intelligent rat with steel claws. Now imagine hundreds of them.

Before they get to the alien ship, you'll want, at a minimum, to run the PCs through the Bot Manufacturing Complex, and maybe a couple of the other chambers on AZ-743.

If the PCs are bright, however, they'll follow the Black-and-Purple line like bloodhounds following a scent, and won't let you distract them into investigating the other deathtraps to be found on AZ-743. What's a poor GM to do?

The answer is pretty simple. Guess what? The Black-and-Purple line leads right through the Bot Manufacturing Complex—and through any other room you want the PCs to visit. Obviously.

You want the PCs to realize the 'android' (i.e. High Programmer) followed the Black-and-Purple line, i.e., entered the alien ship. If they don't get this info any other way, you can always have a talkative wallbot drop this fact, e.g.:

**Wallbot:** Say, are you looking for the other android?

**PC:** Android? What android?

**Wallbot:** The female one who was through here a while ago.

**PC:** Aha! The traitorous Commie! Which way did she go?

**Wallbot:** She was following the Black-and-Purple line. What makes you think she's a Communist? Say, are you interested in 20th Century political doctrines?

## Welcome! Prepare to die

**You're still cold. You're in zero-G, but you hear a hiss! Yes, the cabin is pressurizing! You can take off your spacesuit!**

**The hatch opens automatically. A deep, masculine voice booms, 'Welcome to Platform AZ-743. I am Azie-Comp. Come out with your hands up! Failure to comply is treason!'**

**A small, rat-like bot rushes in on hoverjets. It quickly snatches up YOUR [pick a PC, any PC] laser pistol and flies away with it. You're not sure, but you think it muttered something like 'preciousss, preciousss...'**

When the PCs leave the shuttle, read:

**Several small ratbots are using a laser torch to remove the hatch door**





“Sssscrapbots know everything, yesss...”

from the shuttle. The reception room looks familiar—a small cylinder—except it is completely stripped of furnishings; even the grates on the air vents and the covers for the power outlets are missing. At the other side of the cylinder is a door. [This is the elevator.] Directly above the door is a massive array of mobile laser barrels, tracking devices, remote cameras and sensors, and a rather impressive viewscreen. The masculine voice speaks again: ‘State your purpose, rank, and origin. You have three seconds. Two...’

Virtually any reasonable response satisfies Azie-Comp: ‘We’re here to track down a traitor,’ or ‘Please don’t kill us, please don’t kill us, we’ll do anything you say, only please don’t kill us!’ Azie-Comp is desperate; as long as the PCs don’t penetrate an area it really has to keep secret, and as long as they can be conned into investigating the alien ship, it doesn’t really care. If they don’t respond in three seconds, the PCs face either disintegration or, if you’re in a good mood, disciplinary action—a general roughing-up by patrolbot interrogators.

Azie-Comp won’t provide much information. Usually it responds to questions with a typical Computerism like ‘That information is not available at this time’ or ‘Disobedience is punishable by summary execution.’ It is pleased to direct them to the Communist traitor: ‘Take the elevator to the main station, then follow the black-and-purple line.’

The PCs can talk to the scrapbots, for whatever good that does:

**PC:** Have you seen another, uh, android? A female?

**Scrapbot:** The other one, yesss. She went there, yesss. We can tell you where she went.

**PC:** Where did she go?

**Scrapbot:** Oh, yesss, we make deal. We can tell, yesss. You give usss metal now?

**PC:** Where did she go, you little nit? Where?

**Scrapbot:** We make deal, yesss?

**PC:** How about we pop you open like a snack-pack?

**Scrapbot:** EEEEEEEEEEE... [Doppler effect.]

## The elevator

Assuming the PCs satisfy Azie-Comp and don’t get reduced to their constituent atoms, the next stop is the elevator. The elevator can be loads of fun.

**Beyond the door is a cubical room three meters on a side. Next to the door are four buttons. From top to bottom, they are labelled ‘Power Plant,’ ‘Fighter Ports,’ ‘Docking Bay’ and ‘Main Station.’ The ‘Docking Bay’ button is glowing.**

The docking bay is effectively at zero-G because it’s at the pivot point of the space station. The elevator runs up the shaft. That means as it goes away from the docking bay, the elevator runs into increasing ‘gravity.’

But the elevator (**Tension 8**) can move along the shaft in either direction. When it heads toward the main station, one surface of the elevator’s interior becomes the floor. When it heads to the power plant, the opposite surface is the floor. So if the PCs go from one stop to the other, they gradually get lighter until they’re at zero-G; then they start to drift upwards; then they fall on their heads.

It gets worse. Whenever an elevator stops or starts, it accelerates. People in the elevator are pulled in the direction opposite the acceleration. On Earth, for this very reason, you feel heavier when the elevator starts, and lighter when it stops. But in the absence of gravity, you don’t feel heavier or lighter—you get thrown around.

Suppose the PCs enter at the docking bay and want to go to the main station. The elevator accelerates ‘down’ the shaft, so the passengers are pulled toward the ceiling. One kind of acceleration is indistinguishable from another, so they will (we hope) conclude the ceiling is the ‘floor,’ inasmuch as they are being pulled toward it. So they stand on the ceiling. As the elevator gets farther down the shaft, the rotation of the station accelerates the PCs away from the ‘ceiling’ and toward the ‘floor.’ So they fall on their heads.

Or they go from the main station to the docking bay. They stand on the (clearly evident) floor, because they are under gravity. The door closes and the elevator accelerates, so they’re pulled down a little harder. Gravity lessens as they go up the shaft until they’re close to zero-G. Then, the elevator decelerates and the passengers go crashing onto the ceiling.

**GM:** Ooops. Elevator malfunction... WHAM. WHAM. WHAM. WHAM. Yes, you can almost reach the button... WHAM. WHAM.

## Power plant

If the PCs are foolish enough to go here:

**The elevator door opens on a small, white-painted chamber. The walls are lined with dozens of wallbots. On the opposite wall stands a single massive door with a wheel-handle. Huge warnings are printed all over it: ‘Authorized Personnel Only. WARNING: Severe Radiation Hazard. No User-Serviceable Parts Within.’**

**Tension 16.** Getting inside is tough. The friendly wallbots warn the PCs conditions within are incompatible with biological life; also, the wallbots have orders to destroy all intruders. (‘Sorry about that, but, you know, a job’s a job.’) If the PCs do somehow manage to get past the wallbots and the door—they flood the compartment with radiation and begin to glow in exciting fluorescent colors. What fun.

## PIE fighter ports

The door opens onto a long tunnel stretching up and down. You are not quite under zero-G, but close to it—perhaps a tenth of a gee. A ladder runs along the tunnel.

Every ten meters, there are airlocks on opposite sides of the tunnel, perhaps 20 airlocks in all. Each has a small circular window.

These airlocks lead to the PIE fighter ports (Tension 16). If the PCs investigate one:

Through the window, you can dimly see a saucer-shaped vehicle, and beyond it, the blackness of space. The airlock leads to a hatch on the vehicle.

Above the airlock are stenciled words: 'PIE Fighter X-17.' To your right is a monitor on which a message appears: 'Pilot! Retinal scan required for access.'

If a PC stares into the screen, a beam of light shoots from it and scans his retina. The message on the screen changes to: 'You are not cleared for access. Report to your commanding officer.'

There's no way the PCs can access a PIE fighter, short of blowing open an airlock. Doing this opens the tunnel to vacuum. More explosive decompression fun.

The PIE fighters will be important in Episode 5; more about them later.

## Docking bay

If the PCs go back to the docking bay:

This is where you exited the shuttlebot. The big change is, dozens of scrapbots are swarming inside it. As you watch, you see them dragging out parts of the shuttlebot's command console. They've stripped it; you aren't taking this shuttle home, that's for sure.

## Main station

The door opens onto a small room. You're under full gravity—what bliss! There are gun emplacements all over the room. A small, ratlike spybot, bristling with antennae and opticals, stares at you from one corner. There are three other doors, and the floor and walls are covered with particolored

lines. There's a blue-and-green one; a black-and-purple one; and... well, lots more. Each line runs out one of the doors.

Tension 10, unless otherwise noted. The 'hammer head' is a warren of corridors, rooms, and stairways. Its layout is chaotic, no maps are available, and Azie-Comp sure isn't going to give directions. Luckily, the military personnel who used to staff the station painted the walls and floor with colored lines as guides. A colored line runs to each important room. The corridors are a veritable jumble of lines running every which-way.

The box nearby tells which line runs where. If you prefer, the PCs can just wander down a corridor and open doors. In this case, spring whatever room you want on them.

Some rooms don't have colored lines. Those rooms contain dangerous secrets. They also contain numerous gunbots and wallbots. Consider these 'roach motels': PCs check in but they don't check out.

Where they go now is up to them—but be sure to steer them through the bot manufacturing complex.

## Bot manufacturing complex (blue-and-green line)

The PCs have probably wandered around AZ-743 enough by now, and are in the mood for action. At least we hope so, because they're about to have a firefight.

This gigantic chamber completely dwarfs anything you've ever seen in Alpha Complex. Enormous manufacturing machines, larger than food vats, make a dull roar. They're connected by conveyor belts. Scrapbots work at dozens of separate assembly-line stations along the belts. They're building more scrapbots, copies of themselves, out of used bot parts.

You see a bot insert a damaged tentacle into an input slot. Immediately, a huge machine whirls into action. After a few moments a shiny-new bot head flies out. It's caught a dozen meters away by a mechanical arm. The arm attaches the head to a body moving down a conveyor belt. As the belt moves, other mechanical arms attach other parts to the new bot. Finally, the completed scrapbot rolls

## Where do the lines lead?

**Blue-and-green:** Bot manufacturing complex

**Black-and-purple:** Bunk room & alien ship

**Purple-and-orange:** Cafeteria-lounge

**Red:** Vacuum toilets

**Yellow:** Vacuum disposal chutes

**Purple-and-green, black-and-green, purple-and-white:** stripped and abandoned room

off the line. It shakes itself. It starts to run, but trips. Dozens of waiting scrapbots fall on it and tear it to pieces. It would seem you've just witnessed the cycle of life here.

Suddenly, you notice many lurking scrapbots looking at you. As you turn, you realize three of them are between you and the exit. What now?

Tension 12. The scrapbots attack in packs, by dozens, trying to shred the PCs and feed them to the machines. The machines themselves swing into action, grabbing Troubleshooters and placing them on conveyor belts, which carry the victims into the guts of the machine.

The PCs presumably try to fight their way to the door. Perhaps a PC is dragged down, torn to shreds and fed to the machines; perhaps a rival PC helps this happen. Let the survivors have fun blowing up scrapbots, and make sure they destroy at least one manufacturing machine in a spectacular explosion.

Just as the mayhem reaches its high point:

Suddenly, from behind you, a beam of lambent light shines from on high. All the scrapbots freeze in place. The machines freeze, too.

Looking to the source of the light, you see, floating above the floor on a flying platform, a peculiar sight.

It's an alien—a green, warted, tentacular monstrosity. Its tentacles manipulate the controls of the platform. Two bulbous eyes hang on the ends of eyestalks; one of the eyes wears a monocle.

The alien is wearing an open-necked shirt, tails, and a flat-topped military cap. One tentacle reaches up and tips the cap. 'Pip-pip,' says the alien, then



zips away on its platform at incredible speed.

If the PCs follow, they can barely keep the alien in sight, but he heads straight for the Bunk Room.

If they shoot at it, it dodges most of their fire, and the few shots which connect seemingly have no effect.

### Cafeteria-lounge (purple-and-orange line)

Judging by the wall signs and symbols, this looks like a communal dining center just like the ones back in good old Alpha Complex. The normal food odors are missing, though. Two packs of scrapbots face each other over a fallen guardbot in the center of the dining area.

**Tension 14.** The cafeteria-lounge has no food or water. Anything that could be removed (e.g., table, chairs) has been used for raw materials. Two rival packs are fighting over an injured guardbot. If rescued, the guardbot, Lenny-JN6 is incredibly grateful. Unfortunately, there are 37 scrapbots intent on mangling it.

### Vacuum toilets (red lines)

Another one of those tiny rooms with the bizarre-looking chair. But this one has a bot built into the wall directly to the right.

**Tension 20.** The only difference between these vacuum toilets and the ones on Platform 15-B is that they come equipped with their own wallbots. Azie-Comp doesn't like visitors to have total privacy. Also hiding in the toilet is a single scrapbot. It patiently waits for an awkward moment when it can steal a piece of metal and run away.

### Disposal chutes (yellow lines)

Just like the ones on Platform 15-B.

### Missile command station

Inside are two huge video screens. One shows a map, covered with bright graphic symbols. Another shows a planet, with a dotted orbit around the planet and a symbol that looks like this space station moving slowly around the orbit. All around the room

are dozens of terminals and control boards.

**Tension 19.** If the PCs play with the controls, a klaxon sounds. Guardbots show up instantly and roughly escort the PCs to the bunk room.

### Bunk room (black-and-purple line)

This is where you want the Troubleshooters to end up. So to speak.

This was once a communal barracks. You recognize it by the torch marks on the floor showing where the bunks were removed. The far wall is a shimmering black curtain your eyes can't focus on. It seems to exist partly in this dimension and partly somewhere—alien.

**Tension 20.** The bunk room has been completely cleaned out by scrapbots. The shimmering opening is a trans-dimensional doorway into the alien ship.

One way or another, Azie-Comp means to get the PCs through the curtain. If nothing else works, the guardbots toss them through.

## 5: They want our women!

Paranoids from Earth meet paranoids from deep space. The Troubleshooters meet hideous Bug-Eyed Monsters (BEMs), the Shmegegi, and uncover their nefarious plot to conquer Earth. The Troubleshooters can go along, or try to foil the plan. In all likelihood, neither works.

### Summary

The PCs get captured and tortured by the Shmegegi, who have their own idea of what unbearable agony is. While imprisoned, the PCs finally find Betty-U (the High Programmer they were sent after), who fills them in on the aliens. She also reveals she has the key to the PIE fighters.

When the PCs hold up under torture in stalwart fashion (as they surely will, unless, like the Shmegegi, they consider lime green, Country & Western music, and old Three Stooges routines to be unbearably agonizing), they are taken before the leader of the aliens, the McShmegegi of Shmegego. In typical

villain fashion, he boasts shamelessly about his evil plans, and reveals the one way the PCs may escape.

Presumably, they do escape. In the High Programmer's company, they man the PIE fighters and begin a wild space battle against the invading alien fleet. Finally, they triumph, saving Earth, humanity, and the Alpha Complex Way.

Of course, there's no way home. Too bad.

### The ship

That weird shimmering curtain is the 'skin' of the alien ship. The ship itself is a sort of multi-dimensional being. It 'covers' the crew when in the ship or nearby. Because the ship can throw up a dimensional 'out-phase', no physical or energy weapons can damage the aliens. For **PARANOIA** players, used to mass destruction, this is frustrating. Let them fire volley after volley at a completely invulnerable opponent.

The alien ship is strangely amorphous. This is difficult to describe in physical terms but ridiculously easy in game terms. Every room has two black energy portals that connect it to other rooms—but the connections between rooms are arbitrary and flexible. You enter from whichever random ship room you're coming from, and you leave to the random ship room where your destiny lies.

Does that sound confusing? It's simple. When a PC enters an alien room, it's always where the Gamemaster (otherwise known as 'destiny') wants him to end up. This takes care of annoying things like maps.

One cue for you is the comments the players make just before they step through a portal. The portal reads enough of their minds to transport them wherever else on the ship they suggest. Speaking aloud about real or imagined threats could be dangerous.

### The Shmegegi

The Shmegegi (singular, *shmegegus*) are green, warty, and multitentacled. Each has two

eyes on eyestalks. All are male. The Shmegegi are easy to understand because they have human drives. They're your typical ravenous, slobbering, bug-eyed monsters out to conquer our planet and ravish our women.

It's sad. Millennia ago, a terrible plague killed their beloved female members of the race, the shmegegae. The Shmegegi left their planet en masse to cruise the cosmic void and pick up girls.

They haven't had much luck. But now, they've encountered a planet (Earth) whose women (despite being of a different biological phylum) are inexplicably attractive. They plan to conquer the place and set up a nice little colonial empire. Inasmuch as they have fantastically advanced technology, it shouldn't be too difficult.

And the only obstacle is the Troubleshooters.

## ■ Talking with the Shmegegi

The Shmegegi are a highly civilized race. They wear elaborate costumes, speak with upper-class English or Scottish accents, and like high tea. Typical garb includes sharply ironed white linen trousers (with at least eight legs for all the tentacles), top hat, tails, bow tie, and monocle. Some typical dialog excerpts:

**PC** [*firing cone rifle*]: Take that, you traitorous Bug-eyed Monster Commie!

**Shmegegi** [*completely unfazed*]: I say, old bean, rather unsporting, eh, what?

**PC**: Why do you want to conquer Earth?

**Shmegegi**: Well, err, it's rather embarrassing, really. You see, ah, we, ah—well—we find Earth females rather attractive.

**PC** [*who has taken hormonal suppressants all his adult life*]: But why?

**Shmegegi**: Why do the greeblestunk sing? Why are the shrbt chartreuse? To whom can one go regarding such mysteries?

**PC**: I don't get it.

**Shmegegi**: Oh, this is quite embarrassing. I mean, it's a natural urge—or perhaps an unnatural one. Really, it's dashed hard to say. But nonetheless, we are determined. Earth and its lovelies shall be ours!

**PC**: Never, Commie Alien Slime!

**Shmegegi**: No hard feelings, I'm sure. Pip-pip!

## Capture

**This chamber is fetid, humid, gloomy. All about you is swamp and bizarre, droopy vegetation. You hear rustling, and from behind a drooping bush comes – an alien. Slime drips from its fangs; organs beat beneath its gelatinous skin. Its mantis-like arms caress the air.**

**Another steps out. And another, and another.... They surround you.**

Give the PCs a chance to react; the aliens don't attack. These are walk-on spear-carriers, basically thugs.

Then another being flies out – a warty, green-skinned tentacular monstrosity, standing on a flying platform and carrying a huge gun. He says 'I say, look what we've treed.' He caresses one of the fanged beings, which rumbles in pleasure. He raises his gun and...

Do the PCs fire back? This is pointless, because the aliens are completely invulnerable. Luckily, the alien gun doesn't blow things up,



but projects a paralysis ray. The PCs keel over in various uncomfortable positions.

## Betty-U-YLF-12

**One of the shimmering black portals appears. The alien strips you of your equipment and tosses you through like so much baggage.**

**You're in a cubical room, in zero-G. The walls are padded. The portal fades behind you. There's no way in or out. A single human female, dressed in white, is also in the room. She looks like an aged Teela O'Malley, except with a narrow chin and bad teeth. She looks you over contemptuously. 'I might have known,' she mutters. 'All I rate is a bunch of REDs.'**

The woman is **Betty-U-YLF-12**, the mysterious High Programmer the PCs have been following. Formerly Alpha Complex's Director of Project Mongo, she fled to space when The Computer discovered her membership in the highly treasonous Class C secret society, the Humanists. She knew there were aliens on Platform AZ-743, and intended to contact them hoping to make a deal and get back in The Computer's good graces.

Unfortunately, the Shmegegi had no interest in making a deal. First, they tortured her for information about Earth, but earned little. Then they tried to make friends: They brought her flowers and chocolates, and took her for little walks.

(Alas for the Shmegegi, they aren't cut out for life as BEMs. They're just too polite. They'd love to ravish Betty-U, but they can't bring themselves to do it. So they're stuck with tepid 19th Century-style courtship.)

They've told her of their plans. She knows they intend to conquer Earth, and why. She even knows how and when.

Betty-U has a plan. She has a gauss static device, a pencil-shaped object that, when touched to a bot or electronic device, makes it go haywire. If she and the PCs can escape and get to the fighter ports, she can use it to open the airlocks, then launch the PIE fighters and



make a last desperate effort to stop the aliens from laying the tentacle of oppression on the sacred body of Mother Earth!

Betty-U explains all this to the PCs as she rubs their limbs to counteract the paralysis ray. Because it takes a few minutes for the paralysis to wear off, they must hear her out instead of trying to terminate her immediately.

They don't have their equipment, so if they do want to kill her, it'll have to be with bare hands. Ecch. You may want to give her some GM-fiat armor just to forestall the mess.

Let the PCs spend some time plotting and getting to know Betty-U before the torture begins.

## Ve haff vays

Now you get to play your best pseudo-sadistic Nazi. 'Show them the instruments, Mortimer.' 'We have ways of making you talk.' 'Had enough yet? Or shall I bring out the country-western music? Nyahahahaha!'

**Abruptly, you find yourselves someplace else—a dark, rectangular room. Betty-U-YLF is with you. Two burly-looking aliens stand in the center.**

**'Good evening,' says one in a nasty tone. [Clench your teeth and enunciate carefully while you speak.] 'We are your torturers. You will tell us everything we want to know.'**

**Betty-U snickers. Anyone who tries to rush the aliens is clubbed down.**

**'Will you speak now? Or shall we administer force?'**

Either the PCs steadfastly refuse to divulge any information (ha!), or they babble like mad. In the latter (likely) case, the alien says:

**'Ah! How eager you are. How gratifying. But how shall we tell falsity from truth? No, you must taste our skills before we are satisfied. Mortimer, bring out the green!'**

The Shmegegi have a highly developed aesthetic sense. Things we consider merely bad, they consider excruciatingly painful. Mortimer, the other alien, pulls out a flashlight. He turns it on. It shines with an ugly lime-green light.

**The alien is tense with anticipation. 'So!' he says. 'I admire your fortitude. Many would be eager to tell us all by now. But the lime green is only one**

**of many agonizing tortures we have available. Confess now, and you shall be spared the horrible pain of... the country-western!' And with that, you hear the twangy beginnings of an Old Reckoning song. The aliens cover their ears and grimace.**

By now, the players should be getting into the spirit and shouting their defiance to the aliens: 'You'll never get what you want, alien scum!' and so on. If you have country-western music, actually play it. (Or substitute any current pop music you and your players all loathe.) Cover your ears while it's playing, and grimace and moan as if you are one of the aliens. When you get bored with this, switch it off. (Force yourself to endure a few moments of this, for the effect. It's tough, we know.)

**The alien is quivering with release, and panting slightly. 'So, you resist even the feared Waylon Jennings,' he says. 'But surely even ones so brave as you cannot withstand... The Three Stooges.' A black-and-white image flickers into being. Three strange-looking men caper bizarrely. One pokes another in the nose and says 'Nyuk nyuk nyuk.'**

If your players are having a good time with this, keep it up! Invent more bizarre tortures. Eventually, the torturer relents:

**The alien is clearly exhausted. 'Never,' he says, 'have I met beings of such fortitude and determination. Never before has any resisted the full panoply of tortures available to the Shmegegi race. Humans, I salute you. Mortimer, we must take them to the bridge.' With that, he waves a tentacle, and suddenly – SHLOOOP – you are all somewhere else.**

## The McShmegegi of Shmegegi

In this encounter, you roleplay a bluff, military-type villain with a Scottish accent, as he gloats over his victory-soon-to-be and reveals everything the PCs need to know to defeat him.

**You are on a railed balcony that runs the perimeter of a huge, metal-walled chamber. Below you are a dozen Shmegegi, seated at consoles, their**

**tentacles rapidly stroking controls, murmuring into headsets. Before you is a gigantic screen, on which is shown the alien ship, AZ-743, and planet Earth.**

**In the center of the chamber stands a huge shmegegi, three meters tall, wearing full dress kilt, sporran, tunic, military cap, and monocle. His thorax is covered with medals, which jingle when he moves. He bellows, 'So! These arrre the human spies, aye?' In the background you hear the eerie music of bagpipes.**

Let the PCs respond as they wish. The McShmegegi, clan leader of the Shmegegi, will bring them down to the control room floor and take them on a guided tour.

**'Thrrrrrockmorton controls ourrr spinklery rrrray pods, which we can land ennawhere we wish on your puirrr planet, destrrroying whole complexes with a single bluiw. An' herrre, MacPherrrrson controls the shimmering currrtains through which ye ha'e passed. Ye need only think o' wherre ye wish to go, an' therrre ye be. A grrreat technological achievement, indicative of ourrr superrriorrity o'er yourrr pathetic rrrrace.'**

He asks the PCs to betray humanity and join the Shmegegi in their conquest.

**'Join us, and ye shall be satrrraps in ourrr new colonial empirrrre. Ye shall rrrrule in ourrr name, giving us only what we requirrrre.' If the PCs remain umimpressed, he displays the alien ship's weaponry, which is awesome indeed. 'Ye canna stand against oos. Surrenderrr, Earrrrrrtlings!'**

As we see it, there are four possible outcomes:

1. Some, but not all, of the PCs agree to help the Shmegegi conquer Earth. In this case, the Shmegegi arm them with their old equipment and let them fight it out among themselves. Go to outcome 2 or 3 with the survivors (if any).
2. They decide to help the Shmegegi. See 'The conquest of Earth,' below.
3. They defy the aliens to the last breath. Go to 'PIE fighting in space.'
4. One of the PCs, played by someone who has seen a James Bond movie,

desperately hits one of the controls. In this case:

**A klaxon sounds: WHOOP! WHOOP! WHOOP! Red lights and buzzers flash. The aliens fiddle with controls desperately. The McShmegegus turns to you with horror. 'Guid God, mon; ye dinna ken what ye ha'e done. That be the verrra self-destrruict switch o' the whole ship!'**

Obviously.

Aliens flit this way and that. The PCs can make a break for it in the confusion. 'Quick,' says Betty-U, 'follow me.' And she leads them to the PIE fighter ports.

Segue into the battle scene, 'PIE fighting in space'. This time, the aliens aren't invading, but are simply trying to escape from their disintegrating ship. The same climactic battle occurs.

## The conquest of Earth

**'Och, an' I knew ye brave lads an' lassies wuid come arround. Jackson, herre, will take ye to outfitting.'**

The aliens want the PCs to infiltrate Alpha Complex and prepare it for invasion. To help them, the aliens will give the PCs the following:

- ☉ one sh'rtmegister each
- ☉ one thrntwhistle each
- ☉ one explosive brain implant each (see the box nearby)

Oh, and they can have back their own equipment, if they like.

The PCs aren't told about the explosive brain implant until after it's installed. Once it is installed, they're sent back to Alpha Complex. Their job: infiltrate, file reports on the situation in Alpha Complex, and prepare for the invasion. The Shmegegi are a long-lived race, and have an inhuman notion of time. They intend to invade almost immediately—less than ten years from now!

Until the invasion occurs, the PCs must live (or die) in Alpha Complex, facing constant Computer scrutiny. Effectively, they're now members of another secret society.

And once they get back to Alpha Complex, The Computer will want to debrief them. Doubtless, it wants to know about the strange

alien devices they carry, and the alien spaceship in which they landed, and the whereabouts of the ULTRAVIOLET traitor they were sent to terminate.

We hope they coordinate their stories real well. Because our guess is, if The Computer doesn't kill them, the explosive brain implants will. Or maybe The Computer has them executed at the same time the explosive brain implants go off. That could be fun.

## PIE fighting in space

If the PCs defy the McShmegegus, he cries:

**'McPhairrrson! Send these doom-ed souls back to the holding tanks!' A shimmering curtain appears. Betty-U cries 'Think about the bunk room!' and dives through.**

Remember how the Shmegegus said the curtain takes you where you think about? Betty-U is right; if the PCs think about the bunk room entrance to the alien ship, there they'll go. Anyone who doesn't goes to the holding tanks. Too bad.

**'The PIE fighters!' Betty-U says. 'They're our only chance!'**

It takes the aliens a while to figure out what's happened. If the PCs make a run for it, they get to the elevators just as be-monocled BEMs on airsleds zip around the corner firing paralysis rays.

Betty-U uses her gauss static device on the 'fire emergency' button of the elevator and it zips Real Fast (toss the PCs around) to the Fighter Bay. There, she uses it again on the airlock doors, then dives for a PIE fighter.

Do the PCs follow? Do they go for fighters of their own?

Basically, a PIE fighter looks like a pie. It's saucer-shaped, with gunport slits. It has armor rating 4. The guns are laser cannons. Each fighter is designed to seat three, and can seat four in a pinch. One person (the pilot) sits forward and stares out the viewscreen. Another (co-pilot and forward gunner) sits next to him and controls a gun. The third sits behind them facing backwards and controls the rear gun. (If there's a fourth, he has to kinda crouch in front of the beer cooler.)

When you control a gun, you sit in a chair on a moving platform and physically wrestle the gun around. The chair and platform move with you.

## Alien equipment

**Sh'rtmegister:** An awesome weapon devised by the Shmegegi for use against hostile lifeforms (human beings, for example). It's designed to be held by three tentacles. One supports it; one adjusts the mxst control; and one pulls the trigger. The target, if hit, turns inside-out, so the organs are now outside and the skin inside. This is painful, but, luckily the pain does not last long, as the bewildered human, unaccustomed to so peculiar an arrangement, dies within 15 seconds. (If the target is hit again within this period, he turns outside-out again, and, although stunned, is otherwise unaffected.)

Humans can use sh'rtmegisters (a straight Violence check), but with difficulty. They can't move the mxst control while firing the weapon. This means every time a human fires, there's a 20% chance it blows up (W3V energy).

**Thrntwhistle:** A kind of ring-like amulet, normally worn around a tentacle. It provides complete protection against the sh'rtmegister.

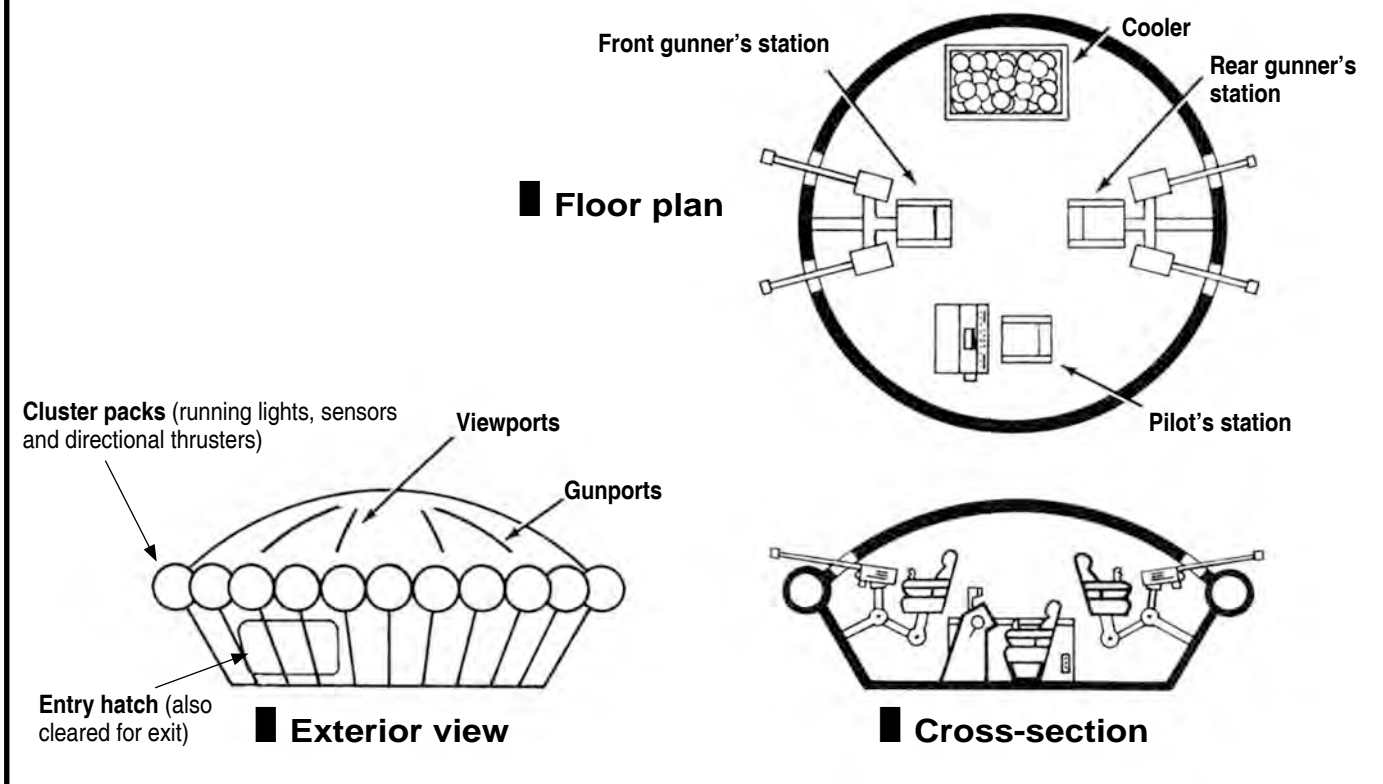
**Explosive brain implant:** This semitelepathic device is implanted directly in the brain, and cannot be easily removed by humans, who don't have a sufficiently advanced technology. (That is, it can be removed, but at the cost of turning the character into a vegetable.)

The device monitors the thoughts of the person in whose skull it is implanted. If the individual's allegiance changes – that is, he does not always serve the shmgegi race to the best of his abilities – the explosive goes off, killing the person in question.

This device is clearly an even more effective loyalty-ensuring mechanism than the many techniques used by The Computer. The Computer would be deeply interested in it. Of course, any person who even thought about telling The Computer about the device in his head would die instantly.



# PIE fighter



Any time a character in a PIE fighter wants to change its course or fire its cannon, the player must make a Hardware/Vehicle Ops or Violence/Vehicular Weapons check, respectively. It's actually not that hard; the PIE fighters are equipped with highly advanced fire-control computers that do most of the work. But if the character fails, roll on the Amusing Failure Table to see what happens.

## Running the PIE fight

Here's how the battle works:

The pilots roll to see if they manage to blast out of the fighter port. Anyone who fails is OK; he's just learned the safety interlock prevents the fighter from leaving until everyone has put on a seat belt. He can try again next combat round.

Almost as soon as the first fighter is out, alien blob fighters start appearing. Blob fighters are gelatinous, shiny, vaguely spherical blobs that bud off from the big alien ship and fight the PIE fighters.

The combat is divided into rounds. Each combat round, ask each player what his character is doing. Gunners choose their targets; pilots decide where to drive; fourth crewmembers open beers from the cooler and

pass them around. (They're squeeze bulbs equipped with tubes, so you don't have to worry about spurting them all over the cabin.)

At the beginning of the battle, four blob fighters appear. Four more appear every round until the alien ship has created four for every PIE fighter in use. (That's as many as it can create.)

Each round, the blob fighters whizz around, shooting at the PIEs. Have them whizz where they like, but each time they fire, roll 1d20. They hit on a roll of 5 or less, or on whatever result works for you personally. When a blob hits a PIE, roll on the PIE fighter damage table to see what happens, or pick a result you like. You, the GM, are always right.

When a PIE hits a blob, it starts to glow red and fluctuate in size. It also moves erratically for a while (several combat rounds, or until you forget). If hit while red, it explodes spectacularly.

One last thing; Azie-Comp has been programmed to fight back when attacked. It doesn't really know what's going on, because it didn't authorize a PIE fighter launch. But it does know the blobs come from the alien ship, and the PIE fighters are fighting it. So it helps the PCs with its destructo-rays.

After the third combat round (it takes that long for Azie-Comp to puzzle things out), the beam-weapon projectors on the spherical end of Platform AZ-743 shoot at one alien blob fighter—choose one at whim. Azie-Comp's target number is 11; if it hits, the alien fighter explodes instantly.

One fly in the lubricant: If a PIE fighter shoots at AZ-743, Azie-Comp tries to destroy that fighter next round (see the Amusing Failure table on page 60).

That's about it as far as rules go. The rest is up to you. Your objective is to give the illusion that the players are really fighting a space battle. Describe the V-formations into which the alien ships form, how the PIE fighters dive and roll and zoom around. Key phrases to toss around include:

- ☉ 'You've got a bogey on your tail!'
- ☉ 'Alien at 6 o'clock!'
- ☉ 'Captain! She canna take much more!'
- ☉ 'Lasers locked on target, captain!'
- ☉ 'He's still on my tail! I can't shake him!'
- ☉ 'Use the Force, Luke-R!'

But we haven't included a map or board or anything because this is, after all, **PARANOIA**. No careful positioning of pieces or measurement of ranges; flamboyant action, remember? Describe what's going on in any way you like. Remember the whole battle is taking place around Platform AZ-743, which continues to rotate in space, shooting its beam weapons as it does.

If you decide to keep track of positions more carefully, get a bunch of bottle caps. Use one kind for the aliens, another for the good guys. Put a bottle in the center of the table to represent AZ-743, and spin it occasionally (to represent its rotation). Then move the bottle caps to show where the fighters are.

Space is three-dimensional, though. The table may not be enough. Put the bottle caps on top of books or bottles or something to represent elevation.

And there's no reason ships have to stay on the table. Space is infinite, after all. The ships can fly onto the sofa, or the bookcases, or even hide behind an asteroid (the bowl of corn chips) to pop out and shoot at an unwary opponent. A ship can take advantage of a passing energy storm (the cat) to escape its opponents while they regroup. Encourage this insanity by reducing to-hit chances for shots at long range, for obstacles between bottle caps, for strategic use of household pets, and so on.

## Slavery or victory!

So the PCs shoot up aliens, and vice versa. We'd really like the PCs to win after a few casualties. If they do:

**Suddenly, on your communication consoles appears an image of the McShmegegus standing aboard the bridge of the alien mothercraft.**

**'Sassenachs!' he snarls. 'Earrthworrms! You ha'e won a victorrry, ye think; so ye ha'e, but a fleeting one! We shall rrrreturn, Earrtlings, an' destrroy ye!'**

**The image blinks out. Slowly, the alien ship begins to fluctuate in size. It glows white and disconnects from Platform AZ-743. In the blink of an eye, it disappears.**

Maybe it doesn't work that way. Maybe the aliens are beating the PCs when suddenly a huge swarm of Vulture spacecraft show up to save the day. (Yes, this is inconsistent. So what?) They blow up the blob fighters, then take the PCs aboard. Betty-U and anyone who defends her is executed as a traitor.

...Or maybe the jackobots from 101-L have jury-rigged a few spacecraft of their own, and, pursuing the blasphemers (PCs), arrive at AZ-743 just as the battle begins.

...Or maybe the battle in orbit triggers other orbital defenses, and the whole volume is shot through with death rays, Soviet anti-satellite missiles and the like.

...Or maybe when the PCs underwent coldsleep in Shuttlebot Vapor-7, millions of years passed, Alpha Complex is gone, and the aliens want not human women, but the women of Earth's new dominant species, intelligent cockroaches.

Anyway, the PCs now have no way to return to Earth. The PIE fighters have no shields, and burn up on reentry. The only operative shuttle to AZ-743 has been dismantled by scrapbots, and Azie-Comp will want to execute the PCs for unauthorized use of the PIE fighters.

Here's one touching ending:

After our valiant heroes fight off the alien scum, they return in triumph to AZ-743. Azie-Comp decides they acted properly in using the

PIE fighters, and promises to do everything it can to help them return home. It patches together a satellite link to The Computer. The PCs talk to The Computer and explain what they've done. Their friend responds:

**'Loyal Citizens, The Computer is touched beyond words. Betty-U, your sentence of death is hereby commuted because of your heroic actions in defense of Alpha Complex... nay, in defense of all humanity. All of you; Alpha Complex shall know of your heroism. It will be preserved in the memory of our people for all time to come. We cannot thank you enough.**

**'Alas, no further shuttles are available at this time. Rescue is impossible. Thank you for your cooperation.'**

The 'experimental elevator' was the last one Alpha Complex had. There's no food on AZ-743, by the way. At this point, the player's options are pretty limited: There's death by starvation, by explosive decompression and by burning up on reentry.



## 6: Debriefing

But, you know, the PCs might persuade Azie-Comp to build a new shuttle. Or they might glom onto a stray blob ship the aliens left behind. Or they might stumble on the Transdimensional Collapsatron, thereby justifying the title of this mission collection.

If, by one of these incredible strokes of Gamemaster generosity, the PCs get back to Alpha Complex, The Computer promptly summons them to debriefing. Surrounded by heavily-armed YELLOW clearance Vulture guards, the surviving characters are escorted into a dark room highlighted by a single

blindingly-bright terminal. Anything on the terminal is completely illegible.

The Computer speaks! 'Citizens! Have the Communist infiltrators of Platform AZ-743 been terminated?'

If anyone so much as mentions even the possibility of failure, The Computer immediately orders each PC subjected to a separate, in-depth interview. Between the drugs and the electric needles, the truth is revealed. Afterward, those Troubleshooters innocent of overt treason are offered the

chance to participate in a follow-up mission to take out the infiltrators once and for all.

On the other hand, if the PCs answer with a chorus of 'Yes, Friend Computer! The traitors have been terminated!' then there is every chance The Computer will congratulate them, give them Official Commendations, declare them Heroes of Our Complex and promote them all one Security Clearance.

Then you can send 'em out on a *really* deadly assignment!





## Bot roster

Model	Size	Speed	Weapons	Specialties	Armor	Description
Guardbots	water cooler	sprint	Blue laser rifle (W3K) Mace (S4K)	Violence 16	4	Tentacles; small brain; literal programming.
Shuttlebot Vapor-7	yacht	incredible	—	Management 16	2	Speaks in military jargon.
Jackobots	human	sprint	Hands (O5K)	Violence 10	1	Humanoid but with waist jets; argumentative and fanatical.
Spybots	tennis ball	real fast	Shock (S3D)	Stealth 14, Violence 05	—	High, squeaky voices.
Patrolbots	human	sprint	Blue laser pistol (W3K) Gauss gun (W3K) Club (S4K)	Violence 16	4	Waist jet thrusters; police-state mentality.
Gunbots	The Hulk	sprint	HE shell (W2K) Particle beam (D1V)	Violence 16	5	Large barrel on jet-propelled chassis; cross between a heavy battle tank and an underpaid security guard.
Wallbots	turret	immobile	Laser cannon 1	Violence 18	4	Friendly, philosophical; enjoy conversation.
Scrapbots	weasel	sprint	Claws (O5W)	Violence 04	1	Weasel-sized and weasel-shaped; packrat personalities.

## PIE fighter damage

1	Pilot hit.
2	Front gunner hit.
3-4	Tail gunner hit.
5-6	Beer man hit.
7-8	<b>Cooler hit:</b> No more beer for the rest of the battle. Make players from that ship go without munchie and soft drinks.
9-10	<b>Computer hit:</b> Make Arbitrary Justice rolls for that ship's piloting and firing.
11-12	<b>Small hole:</b> Cabin loses pressure. No one can do anything for one round, while they find and don spacesuits.
13-14	<b>Huge hole:</b> See Exposive Decompression Table.
15-16	<b>Engine hit:</b> Vehicle can't turn, accelerates into void until its fuel is gone. Another fighter might be able to catch up and rescue the crew.
17-18	<b>Front gun hit:</b> It explodes (S3K energy, 2m radius)
19-20	<b>Tail gun hit:</b> It explodes (see 'Front gun hit').

### Pun names from previous editions

The original editions of *Orcbusters* and *Clones in Space* went in heavily for pun names. For this edition, being humorless curmudgeons who just want to spoil innocent high-spirited fun, we deleted the puns. For GMs who enjoy Zap play style—and, obviously, both these missions are pretty Zappy—here are the names we changed, along with their original pun versions.

**Karly-I-KNA:** Kouble-I-KAN

**Simon-I-JVN:** Saur-I-MON

**Betty-U-YLF:** Bette-U-LYF

In addition, the original *Orcbusters* had pregenerated PCs named Frowd-O-THF, Bubba-R-IAN, Sonja-R-FTR, Jahl-Y-ELF, and Grump-Y-DWF. The *Clones in Space* PCs were Flashgo-R-DEN, Buck-R-GRS, Jonk-R-TER, Kimbalky-R-NSN, 'Doc' Moe-R-BIS and Barb-R-ELA. Nope, we're not making this up.

## Amusing Failure

### Pilot

1-4	<b>Vehicle keeps going straight:</b> Wherever that is.
5-6	<b>Vehicle turns and heads straight for Platform AZ-743:</b> Pilot must make another roll to avoid collision. Perversity penalties, anyone?
7-8	<b>Vehicle starts spinning like a top:</b> No one can fire until this condition is corrected. Each character in the vehicle must make a Violence roll to avoid nausea.
9-10	<b>Vehicle smashes into nearest other vehicle:</b> Whether friendly or alien. I2V impact damage for both. If no other vehicle is nearby, use the 7-8 result instead.
11-14	<b>Vehicle stalls:</b> Pilot or gunner must succeed in a Hardware/Electronic Engineering roll to restart the engine.
15-16	<b>Vehicle stops dead, then backs up:</b> Pilot must succeed in a Hardware/Vehicle Ops roll to get it heading in the right direction again.
17-18	<b>Vehicle drives directly for the alien ship:</b> Pilot must succeed in a Hardware/Vehicle Operations roll to avoid collision.
19-20	<b>Vehicle flips over and heads in opposite direction.</b>

### Gunner

1-12	<b>Miss.</b>
13-14	<b>Gun jams:</b> Gunner must succeed in a Hardware/Weapon Ops & Maintenance roll to repair it, or may pound on it and hope (Violence roll with some penalty of the wise Gamemaster's choosing)
15-16	<b>Hit a friendly craft.</b>
17-18	<b>Hit Platform AZ-743:</b> Azie-Comp fires at this PIE fighter next round.
19-20	<b>Gun explodes:</b> Make an Arbitrary Justice roll for the PIE fighter with a target of, oh, let's say 15. (Or pick your own number, GM!) If you roll over the target number, the cabin depressurizes explosively and everyone inside dies. Otherwise, everyone takes S4K damage.

## Explosive Decompression Table

### 1: Vacuum Death

1-3	<b>Explosive decompression:</b> What happens when internal bodily pressure gets too strong for the body to keep inside itself. Creates an annoying mess.
4-6	<b>Internal embolism:</b> Sometimes internal bodily pressures just rupture the insides. Much neater than explosive decompression—just as fatal, mind you, but easier to clean up.
7-10	<b>Fast freezing:</b> The body freezes solid in a few seconds. Victim becomes aware of ice crystals forming on his eyeballs just before brain supercools and freezes. Thawing out a clonesicle is messy and, unlike Captain America, the victim doesn't revive.
11-15	<b>Flesh boils away:</b> Happens when victim is exposed to naked sunlight (or occasionally plasma generators). Extremely painful, mercifully quick, relatively uncluttered.
16-18	<b>Strangulation:</b> Victim blacks out due to lack of oxygen. Relatively humane and tidy, but a closed-casket ceremony is recommended.
19	<b>Combination freeze/boil:</b> Reserve this for truly special events. One side of the victim faces the sun, the other is in total darkness. While the skin and tissue peel away from the bone on the sunside, the other side freezes into a solid block. Results in a half-clonesicle, half-vaporization—sort of clone art.
20	<b>All of the above:</b> We're not sure how this happens, but the effect is colorful: As the victim flies into vacuum, his entire body explodes. All that remains is an expanding nimbus of black char and shimmering motes of frozen tissue. We recommend a few moments of awestruck appreciation for the wonders of nature, followed by applause.

### 2: Explosive Decompression

Weapon damage depends on two factors: the frequency of its use and the drama of its effect. Use weapons as object lessons. PCs should quickly discover 'more shots fired' = 'lower atmospheric pressure.' Bright ones discover this quickly. Slower students become familiar with the Vacuum Death table.

A weapon's destructive capacity also determines the size of the hole it makes. After all, if a character just pounds a wall with his fist, it shouldn't cause—hmmm—on second thought... It *does* seem those walls *have* been badly degraded by cosmic rays, metal stress, and polishbots. It would be just *terrible* if some poor Troubleshooter were to actually punch a hole right through to vacuum.

Combat results for object damage translate to outer hull damage as follows:

**OK:** Boring. Nothing happens.

**Lightly damaged:** Minor openings in seams; slow leakage. A high-pitched whistle of air escapes the compartment, drawing small loose objects with it. The leak cannot be easily sealed. Make occasional references to the steady leakage and to the subtle and slow effects of oxygen deprivation.

**Impaired:** Small hole, typically made by laser beams. Constant whoosh of escaping air. Small objects (mission papers, plasticreds, etc.) are sucked out. Hole can be blocked with any large object. If the large object is a person, then skin surfaces exposed to vacuum may freeze, boil, and suffer hideous damage. We recommend group discussion of possible effects.

**Heavily damaged:** Large hole, usually made by a large weapon. All air is evacuated in, say, 30 seconds. Medium-sized objects (pistols, PDCs, mission equipment, etc.) are sucked out into space. Large objects, including people, can block large holes.

**Busted:** A major hole, usually made by explosives or imaginative characters. All air disappears in five seconds (one round). All objects fly out, including people. Sealing the hole is usually impractical. Escaping before emergency bulkheads slam shut is difficult. Being crushed by emergency bulkheads as they slam shut is marginally easier.

**Junked or vaporized:** Entire surface blown away. See the Vacuum Death Table.

### Earth Passed Over For Invasion

**BETA QUADRANT, ZGYXA—**Nearly 200,000 hostile aliens from the planet Zgyxa skipped invading Earth Monday, saying it 'does not seem worth the effort.' 'A planet scan indicates its resources will be tapped by 2015, its most intelligent life form cannot fly, and it possesses no significant deposits of Tangium,' said Supreme Commander Kasha Ak-Bej, the nine-foot serpentine leader of the invasion. 'Not to mention their fleshy exoskeleton would make Earthlings unfit slaves for mining Zgyxa's molten core.' Representatives from the Council of Earth expressed their disappointment.

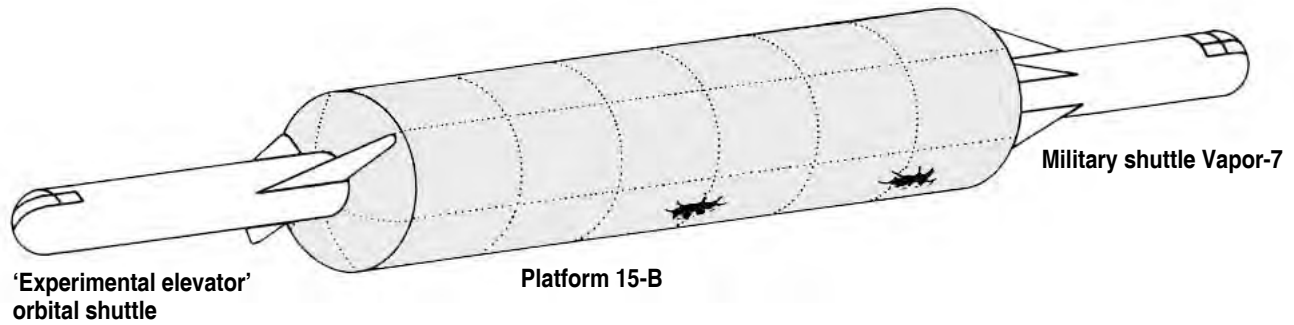
—*The Onion* (April 5, 2006)

[<http://www.theonion.com/content/node/46945>]

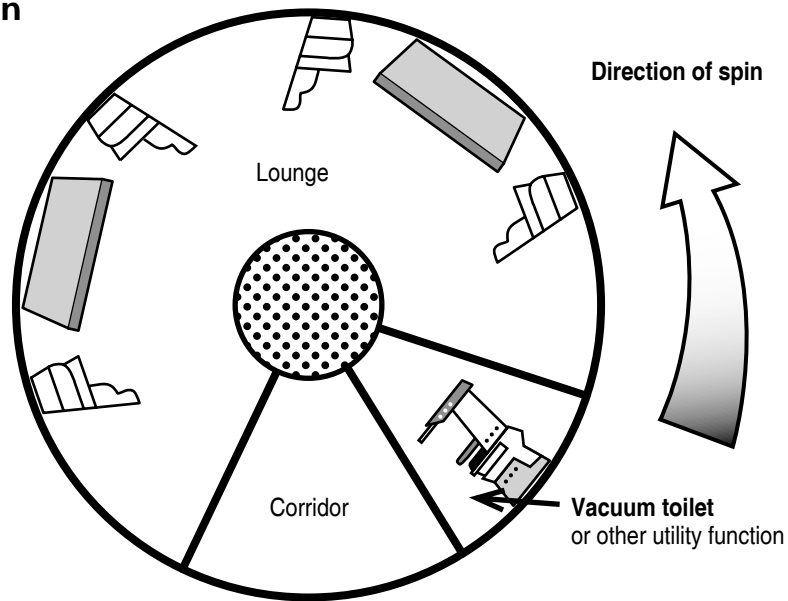


# Map 1: Platform 15-B (Episode 2)

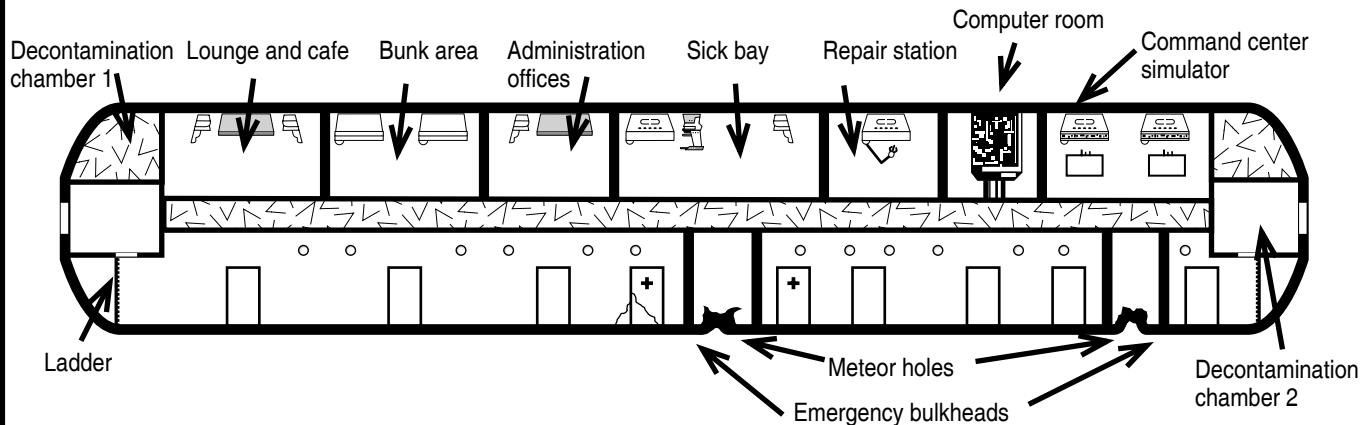
## Exterior view



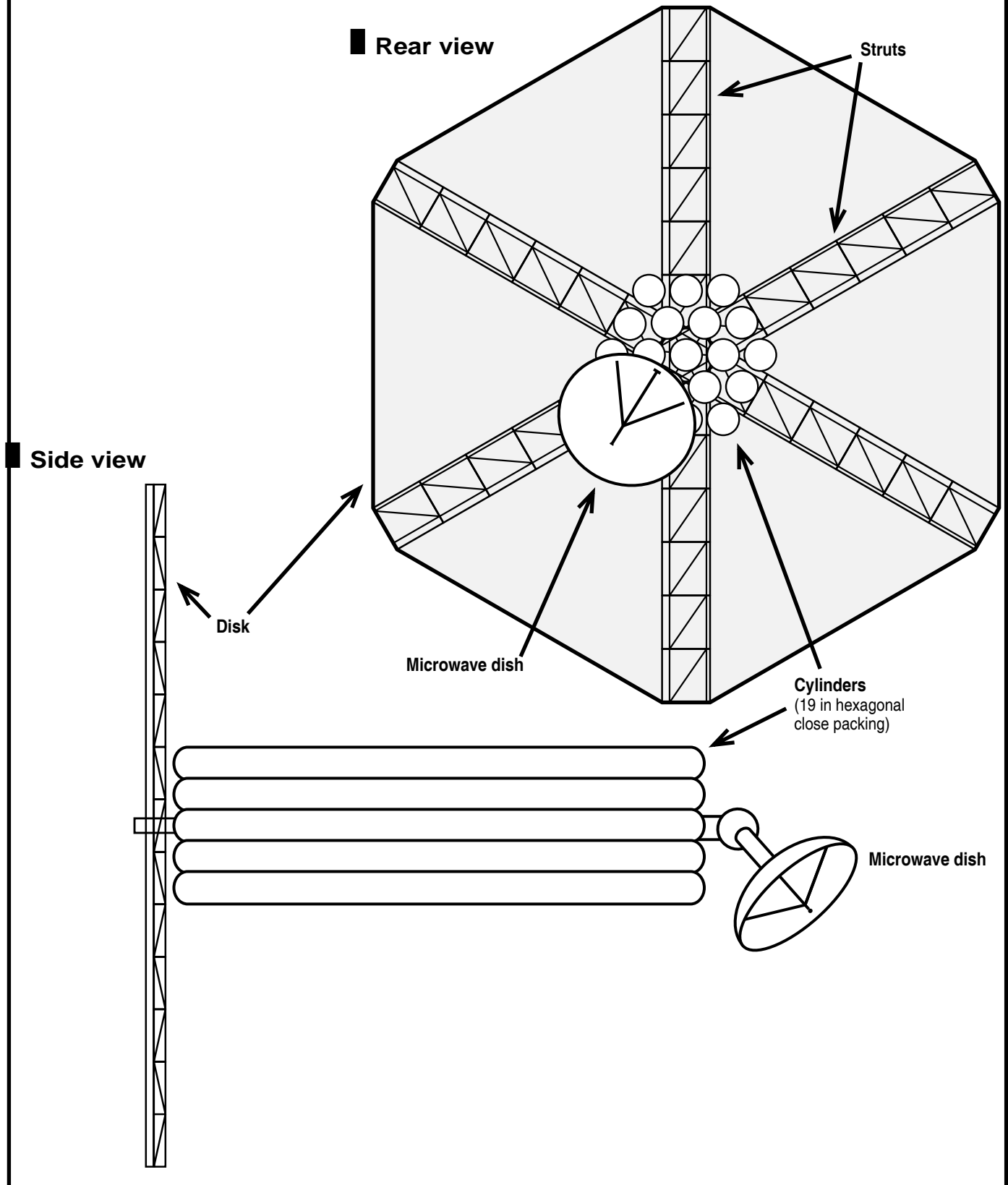
## Typical cross-section



## Main room locations



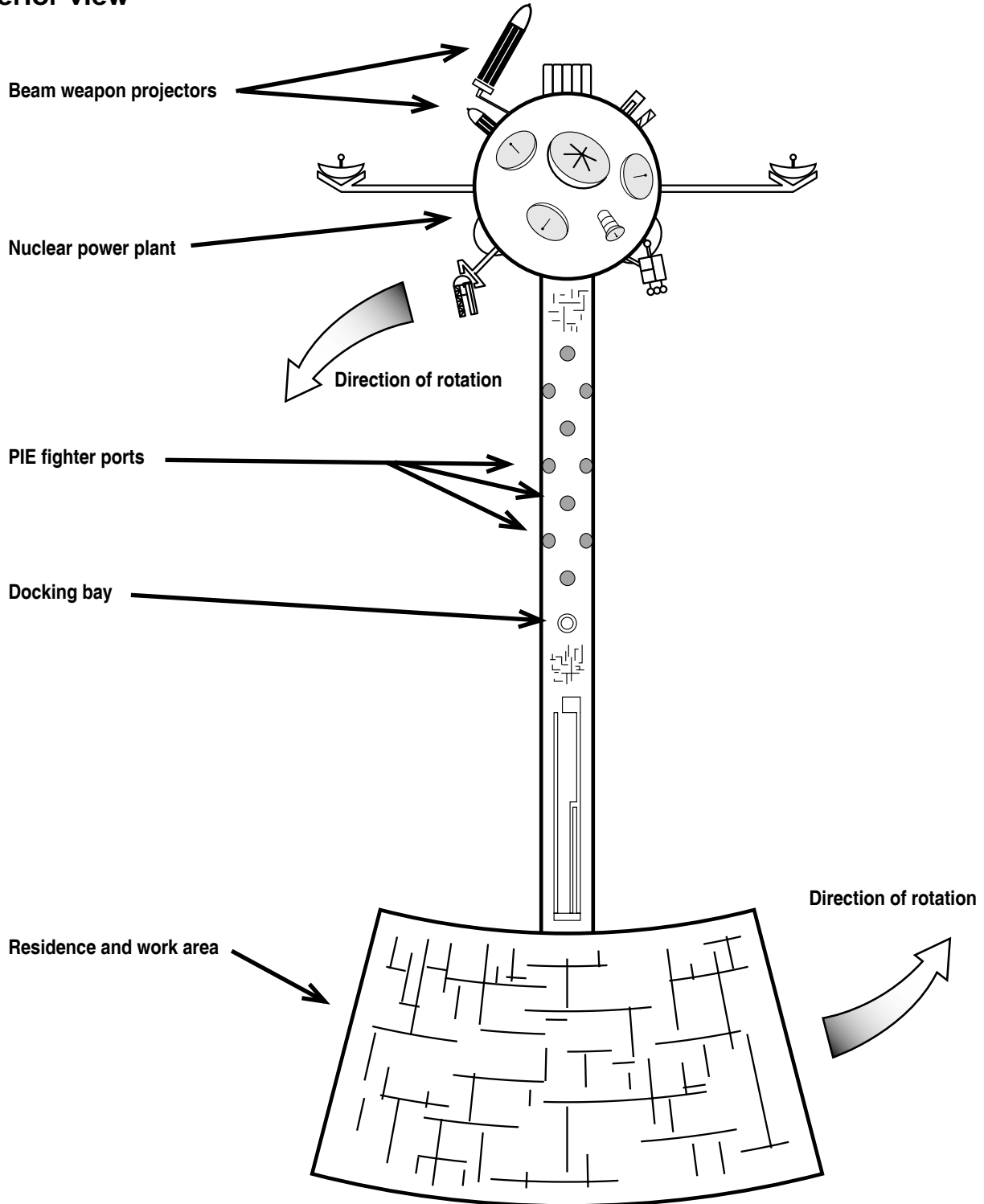
Map 2: Platform 101-L (Episode 3)





# Map 3: Platform AZ-743 (Episodes 4-5)

## Exterior view



# PARANOIA™

## Orcbusters

### Special duties for special troubleshooters

#### KEN ROLSTON

Design/ Green slime

#### PAUL MURPHY

First edition editing, development/ Wereat

#### MARTIN WIXTED

#### BILL SLAVICSEK

First edition editing/ Giant Weasels

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Illustration/ Purple worm

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Original game design & development/

Building committee

#### IAN BELCHER

Mongoose publications manager/

Construction supervisor

#### ALEXANDER FENNELL

Mongoose Publishing production director/

Struts around wearing fun yellow hardhat

#### THE COMPUTER

The Prince of Darkness

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#### PLAYTESTERS

Paul Balsamo, John Hardy, Curtis Marz, Scott Trantel

**Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET**

**WARNING:**

**Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower is treason punishable by a long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.**

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## Introduction

### Treasonous Commie Mutants from Dimension X

A lowly RED-Clearance flunky discovers an experimental device that allows interdimensional travel. The device is assembled and turned on. It works. Part of the DND Sector Computer Subsystem disappears. In its place appear three wizened but proficient wizards and their craven but sniveling lizardman apprentice. The wizards are disgruntled by their peremptory summons from Dimension X. They want to go home. Now.

Correctly surmising the experimental device is the agency of their transport, the sorcerers determine to find folk who know how it works, hoping to enlist their aid in returning to Dimension X. The RED-Clearance flunky correctly surmises he is in a Lot of Hot Water and makes himself scarce.

The sudden disappearance of part of the DND Sector Computer Subsystem causes quite a stir. The PCs investigate.

Meanwhile, the wizards and apprentice question the citizens of Alpha Complex. 'Pardon me. Do you know the way to the nearest interdimensional portal or 15th level magic-user?' The citizens are less than cooperative.

The survivors call on The Computer to rid the complex of these dangerous mutants.

After several unsuccessful attempts to destroy the wizards, The Computer begins to realize the potential value of sorcerous technology. The Computer then issues instructions to capture the wizards and their marvelous device, the Transdimensional Collapsatron, intact.

Guess who gets assigned this interesting job?

No big deal. If a pair of scruffy hobbits can deliver a ring to the Crack of Doom in defiance of the most awesome heavies in Middle-earth, then this should be a snap.

### Karly-I-AKN-6

Deep in the labyrinthine tunnels beneath ICE Sector R&D, in caverns measureless to man, lies the pleasure dome of Karly-I-AKN-6. Karly-I vanished after completing his life's work—a marvelous maximedia arcade for his patron, a nameless and unimaginably powerful High Programmer. The pleasure dome has been deserted since Karly-I's untimely disappearance.

One fine day an insignificant RED flunky was dispatched to retrieve a file from the pleasure dome. While looking for

the file, the flunky spotted a box marked 'Transdimensional Collapsatron: Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET. Real important and Dangerous Artifact. Don't Mess With It.' The flunky, a Computer Phreak secret society member, couldn't resist.

Hastily scrawling 'Experimental File Folder: Ref. 44P.Ass.LOP' to match the designation on the courier clearance voucher, the flunky snatched up the Transdimensional Collapsatron. He didn't notice another box, 'Transdimensional Collapsatron Mark 2' hidden elsewhere in the lab.

He bore his box straightaway to a safe room (where The Computer's monitors had been disabled some days before to hide a Phreak meeting) below DND Sector Computer Subsystems. There he tried to figure out how to operate the TC.

### The Transdimensional Collapsatron

When the flunky opened the box, he found something that resembled a computer monitor, only with six screens, one on each side of the cubic object, and a thick, incomprehensible, hand-scrawled operations manual.

A small metal stand supported the multi-screened cube, setting it several inches off



the floor. A spikey array of thick wires folded at dozens of elbows into a compact mass at the foot of the object. A short, armored power cable was connected to the base of the stand. The plug at the end of the cable was missing, the wire and armor sheared through like a laser through Vatjelly.

Not to be deterred, the RED flunky requisitioned a techbot from Tech Services—ostensibly to service a faulty door buzzer—and gave the manual to the techbot with orders to assemble and test the device.

The flunky, not altogether a fool, decided to take a long walk while the techbot messed with the mysterious device. Lucky flunky.

The techbot struggled dutifully with the unfamiliar device and the obscure manual. After spending several hours trying to set the antennae-like wires exactly as displayed in the diagrams, the techbot decided it had done the best it could. It repaired the truncated power cable, dragged the device over near a power outlet and plugged it in.

*Zoooop!*

## What's really going on here?

When supplied with power, the Transdimensional Collapsatron (TC) creates a spherical field around itself (in pseudo-technical jargon, an extra-spatiotemporal interface), opening a gateway between dimensions. Anything inside the sphere (with the exception of the Collapsatron itself) is dumped into another space-time continuum, and an equal amount of matter from the other continuum is dumped into this one. The process is quite safe, unless the portal opens in someplace like vacuum. But it has one small design flaw.

Across the surface of the interface a brief surge of matter reduction results in temperature and gravitational fluxes similar to those generally found only at the core of a neutron star.

Imagine the techbot's surprise.

On the bright side, the temperature and gravitational fluxes immediately sheared the TC's plug, turning off the machine before intense gravity had a chance to suck most of Alpha Complex into a small, incredibly dense wedge of neutronium. However, the field didn't deactivate until after it had performed its interdimensional switcheroo...

The matter of primary interest sent to the other continuum was a substantial volume of the computer subsystem of DND Sector.

The matter of primary interest sent to this continuum is in the nature of three very

interesting gentlemen and one sorta interesting gentlething.

Wizards. And their lizardman flunky. And their (dare we whisper it in an ostensibly science-fictional universe) magical staves.

Yup. It was bound to happen sooner or later. Just when you thought it was safe to go back in the dungeon...

## Meanwhile, back at the ranch ...

Cut to the computer subsystem monitoring board in the facility directly above the safe room. Suddenly the computer monitors all go blank, and the peripherals stop clattering, whirring, chugging and bleeping. A large spherical hole appears in the center of the room, where once stood a couple of tons of computer memory banks. Computer techs stare in disbelief. The never-silent room is now silent.

Is The Computer dead?

Nope, but a sizable chunk of it is down for the count. DND Sector Subsystem has been breached. Other subsystems jump in to try to keep things from coming apart at the seams. The PCs are called in to Save The Day.

## Three marooned wizards

Think about the poor wizards stranded in a strange universe, wandering around with a mysterious device they suspect has summoned them to this inhospitable place, hoping to find someone to explain how the device works and send them back. They do not speak the language of this world, nor do they understand the peculiar nature of magical science here. When they try to solicit help from the inhabitants, they receive either blank stares or concentrated weapons fire. From every wall a calm, soothing, incredibly sinister voice issues, commanding death and destruction on a scale unheard of except in the most unbelievable fantasy trash the wizards like to read on long boat rides.

Just what kind of horrible world have they been sucked into?

## The innocents abroad

The wizards, **Skibex**, **Phemud** and **Chodor**, are motivated by one primary objective—to go home. To go home, they need to learn how to use the TC device. They experiment on their own with the device, but its principles are so obscure they quickly recognize their need for

an expert's aid. They blow up a lot of Alpha Complex while looking for one.

Of course, these are intelligent, questing scientists, naturally curious about their environment, not immune to the thrill of adventure and conflict and always with a keen eye out for potential sources of sorcerous power and knowledge. So, of course, while looking for a way home they do a bit of innocent experimentation on the citizens and objects of Alpha Complex—just to see how they work.

Here are some guidelines governing the wizards' actions in Alpha Complex. (References to magical powers and their use are explained on page 5.)

1. Initially, when their spellcasting powers are not dangerously low, they use Telepathy, Deep Probe and Tongues (see below for information on powers) to communicate with cooperative natives.

2. They soon find out there is no such thing as a cooperative native in Alpha Complex. After a brief introduction to the lethal firepower carried by *uncooperative* natives, they use Protection and Teleport powers to evade. After they pop out of trouble, they take the first opportunity to recharge their magical staves (about which, more later).

3. If the natives are not too intimidating, they use a little magical muscle to test the natives' mettle and abilities. (And, well, just for fun, too.)

4. If the wizards are engaged in important, purposeful activities, like interrogating an uncooperative native, they use magical powers to ensure privacy and non-interference.

5. When dramatic technological devices like flashlights, lasers, plasma guns, bots or butane lighters are displayed, or when natives use mutant powers, the wizards are as curious as is consistent with their personal safety. (Assume a medieval mindset—what would fascinate a Dark Ages scholar?)

6. Whenever someone appears to have considerable 'magical' powers (technological or mutant powers may be interpreted as magical), or whenever a citizen informant suggests an expert who might understand the TC device, the wizards tenaciously interrogate the resource person and convince him to help them, alternating threats and promises of powerful magical secrets as inducements to enthusiastic cooperation.

## Randy the Wonder Lizard

Pathological liar, coward, squealer, toad-eater extraordinaire, **Randy** is one of the sleaziest and most charming NPCs we've ever stuck in



a mission. Randy will provide you with some Real Fine roleplaying opportunities.

Your players will hate him, of course.

**KEEP RANDY ALIVE AT ALL COSTS!** If the PCs want to kill him, have The Computer intervene on Randy's behalf. If they kill him anyway, have R&D techs scrape up his remains and clone another one complete, through RNA transfer, with all of Randy's memories. Then have The Computer promote Randy to INDIGO Clearance and assigned to the PCs' task force.

### Magic in PARANOIA: Eye of newt, spleen of lizard and exposure to heavy radiation

If you were looking for some neat new roleplaying magic system from us Famous Game Designers, guess again. Our particular geniuses are dedicated to perverting existing bad ideas wherever possible rather than working real hard to come up with all-new bad ideas. *Orcbusters*, you'll be glad to know, is no exception.

So. In *Orcbusters*, the wizards' 'magical' powers work just like **PARANOIA** mutations.

You see? In one fell swoop—a magic system that's consistent, easy to understand and involves no work on our part whatsoever.

Is that genius or what?

### How it works

Each wizard has a Power attribute, just like Alpha Complex citizens, except wizards have heftier ratings. In addition, wizards have a special magical reservoir that stores Power—their magical staves. Each staff stores 100 Power points the wizards can draw upon to cast spells. (A hundred points sounds like a lot, but if these guys have to contend with tankbots, they'll wish they had heaps more.) The wizards always use their staves' power before tapping their personal power.

The really neat part is how the wizards recharge their magical staves. A relatively boring way is to feed the staves from their own personal Power attribute; they regenerate power at twice the rate of Alpha Complex citizens (2 points per hour of sleep).

However, as you know if you've ever played *Popular Fantasy Roleplaying Game*™, what with wandering monsters and random gods popping in at all hours of the night to kill you, it can be difficult to get a decent eight hours' sleep. Skibex, Chodor and Phemud have a nifty

way to overcome this: They drain Power points from innocent bystanders.

And here in Alpha Complex, until someone shows himself capable of Shaping the Force, he is assumed to be cattle, and thereby an appropriate subject for power draining.

A wizard can drain a citizen's entire Power attribute into his staff by touching the aforementioned individual with the aforementioned object and concentrating briefly. The citizen promptly passes out for a few rounds, and experiences a terrible dream of emptiness and powerlessness ('I'M FALLING FOREVER INTO EMPTINESS AND POWERLESSNESS! AAAIIIEEEE!'). When he comes to, he immediately makes an Insanity roll.

The wizards' staff-recharging activity leaves a trail of terrified, schized-out clones in their wake.

**Note:** If someone shows some talent for Shaping the Force (i.e., uses a mutant power), he automatically gets a little respect from the wizards. A very little. For example, Randy, the lizardman apprentice and step-and-fetch-it, has some talent with Shaping the Force. Therefore he gets the signal honor of being allowed to lug the wizards' gear. As an added bonus he gets to walk point and check doors for boobytraps. Lucky Randy.

### Magical powers

Here is a list of the magical abilities/mutant powers each wizard has. The Power expenditure necessary for the use of the power is listed in parentheses after the title. (The Power expenditure may *not* be the same as described in the **PARANOIA** rulebook; this is the *special* cost for out-of-town wizards from other universes.)

The first group is a list of mutant powers already described in the main rulebook. Review the text for details on these powers; the notes here are simply for quick reference.

The second group is a list of mutant powers peculiar to the universe of Skibex, Phemud and Chodor. These are *special* mutant powers. Can you add these mutant powers to your own **PARANOIA** campaign? Well—every Gamemaster is right, of course, but powers like these make for a slippery slope. After you let in these powers, orcs are just around the corner, and there goes the neighborhood ...

### Concentration, duration, range and all that stuff

In accordance with proper fantasy usage, wizards have to concentrate when they use a power—the more difficult and powerful the spell, the more critical the concentration. Poor concentration, haste or distraction during spellcasting may result in spell failure.

Use the following guidelines to govern concentration and spell failure. Make all Power checks by rolling 1d20 against personal power; staff power doesn't count.

- ☉ **No distractions, plenty of time:** extremely easy (add a nice positive modifier to the Power check).
- ☉ **Minor distractions and/or some time pressure** (60 seconds or more): fairly easy (unmodified check).
- ☉ **Distracted and/or hurried** (30-60 seconds): slight negative modifier.
- ☉ **Physically jostled or harmed and/or panicked** (10-30 seconds): make the check pretty hard.
- ☉ **Wounded and/or no preparation** (one round): don't let this succeed unless it suits your storyline.

When a spell fails, the Power points are expended, but the mutant power/spell doesn't work. (What 'doesn't work' means is up to you; see 'Staging spells' below for suggestions.)

Unless otherwise specified, the effects of mutant powers/spells last for 1-5 minutes, according to fluctuations in the Force—and the GM's dramatic needs.

Range and area/volume of effect vary according to spell. If not specified, assume that range is line of sight with rapid decrease in power and reliability over distance as moderated by a perverse GM. Area/volume is 5m radius unless otherwise specified.

### Magical components

There ain't none. Well, that's not absolutely true; for long, involved spells, such as demon-raising, it may be necessary to draw a pentagram in crushed diamond or something, but, in general, wizards use spider legs, powdered dragon's milk, rabbits' feet and all the other junk to impress the rubes. In this mission they are too busy trying to stay alive to have much time for special effects.



## Staging spells

Some tips for effective presentation of mutant powers/spells:

- ④ **Make your descriptions of spell effects colorful and imaginative.** In most fantasy roleplaying magic rules the visual (and aural and tactile and olfactory) aspects are neglected. For example, a fireball—'A dazzling glow like burning magnesium forms at the tip of the staff, blindingly intense. Half an instant later the glow expands like a flower and the wave-front of heat blasts your face—your jumpsuit bursts into flame, malfunction alarms sound on various pieces of equipment and there is a dull thud behind you as an HE round explodes in the chamber of Jerry-R-DNN's cone rifle.'
- ④ **Play the spellcasting concentration element to the hilt.** Initially the wizards have plenty of time to concentrate, making gestures and mumbling hocus-pocus. When the PCs start rushing them, the wizards squint, tongue protruding a little bit, stammering and jittering about, fumbling with their staves and correcting their postures with panicky twitches.
- ④ **When a wizard fails a Power check** and klutzes a spell, either nothing happens (clean, simple, elegant—and boring) or something happens, just not what was intended. The spell can be more-or-less correct (like a slightly smaller fireball, or Tongues spell with a speech impediment), or completely off-the-beam (instead of a fireball, a hail of jellyfish). One way to inspire inadvertent variation in spell effect is to make an Arbitrary Justice roll each time a spell is klutzed. A high roll means a catastrophic and undesirable result. A really low roll means a fortunate variation; sometimes an artist simply outdoes himself.

## Wizard mutant powers

**Regeneration** (5-10 Power points): The wizards seem to recover miraculously from injuries between encounters.

**Charm** (1 point per minute): This makes citizens docile and cooperative when the staves need recharging, or when the wizards want information.

**Telepathy** (1 point per minute plus 1 point per new subject): Basic scanning of citizens and other potential informants.

**Mental Block** (1 point per minute): If a wizard senses a mental power being used on him, he instantly puts up the Block. He also becomes curious about the citizen who used the power.

**Telekinesis** (1 point per minute for 100 grams; more to move heavier weights): Used to steal things, disarm hostile natives and create general confusion.

**Electroshock** (1d20/2 points): The equivalent of a stungun; useful for taking captives to be questioned later at leisure.

**Teleport** (1d20 and Power check, minimum): Standard getaway drill.

**Telepathy** (1 point per minute of projection): Cheap, reliable one-way communication.

**Deep Probe** (3 points per minute of probe): Expensive, slow, but reliable method of extracting information from an unwilling informant.

## Wizard special powers

**Empathic Healing** (1d20/2 points): Transfers pain effects of any disease or injury from one victim to another for five minutes. Both victims must be within 5m radius. Does not alter physical condition of either victim, but transfers stun and incapacitation penalties from one individual to another.

Wizards use this to keep one another in fighting condition even though wounded; it buys time to withdraw and use Regeneration to properly heal an injury.

**Tongues** (1d20): Permits wizards to speak and comprehend a foreign language. Also permits reading foreign language through eyes of native speaker.

**Animate Dead** (1d20): Essentially a lesser golem spell, this causes a corpse to magically animate and follow the user's directions for the duration of the spell. The corpse is immune to all combat results less severe than Maimed.

**Protection Shield** (1d20): Bread-and-butter spell. Provides complete protection from effects of material, energy or magical attacks from outside 2m radius of spell. No effect on melee attacks. Melee attack is defined as any attack where attacker and victim are in direct and constant contact with the instrument of attacking—that is, if the attacker is whacking or poking the defender with something he is holding in his hand. (By this definition, a grenade is a melee weapon—if the attacker is willing to hold onto it while he strikes the victim.)

The Shield may fail depending on the intensity of an attack (GM judgement). For example, an unlucky wizard's Protection Shield may buckle under one laser's fire, but the chances rise if a plasma generator is aimed at it.

**Fireball** (1d20): Effects identical to those of a hand flamer.

**Darkness** (1d20): Bread-and-butter spell—all-purpose defense confuse-the-enemy operation. 5m radius. Wizards can see; no one else can. Infrared or other special darkness vision gear is completely ineffective.

**Transform Other** (1d20): The wizard can change his victim into any living creature of approximately the same size (plus or minus 100% mass). Expensive, but extremely impressive. For the duration of the spell, victim actually becomes the creature in body and mind. The new creature isn't under the wizard's control, but is justifiably terrified of him. Victim must make an Insanity roll after resuming original shape.

## Other special powers

In addition to the mutant powers listed above, the wizards have any magical abilities you want them to have. G'wan. Have some fun.

If you want to play fair and limit yourself to the mutant powers we thought up... well, every GM is right. We suppose in other RPGs that would be considered admirable restraint.

But it's not **PARANOIA**.

Don't get fussy about game mechanics. So what if a given spell never appears to work the same way twice? The PCs are *supposed* to be baffled and intimidated by the mysterious forces they observe. And who cares if the players start whining about logic and physics and laws and rules and stuff? This is *magic*—not the hard-science-fictional technology (snort!) of the basic **PARANOIA** game.

Abracadabra.



# 1: The gathering of the Fellowship

The player characters (PCs) are hurled from a comfortable state of bureaucratic-error-inspired nonexistence into a life-or-death struggle with Communist wizards unwillingly transported here from another dimension.

## Ever wonder what those real loud sirens that go off on Saturday mornings are for?

Read the following aloud:

**It's another boring day at SPI Outfitting and Supply. As everybody in SPI Sector has been transferred to TSR Sector except you, it's been more than six weeks since anybody has come in to requisition anything.**

**You are lounging indolently around the Bubbly Surprise dispenser in your near-deserted office, when suddenly...**

[Make a megaphone out of a nearby piece of paper. Yell 'Whoop! Whoop! Whoop!' through it for 20 or 30 minutes—er, seconds.]

**...the Alpha Complex Civil Defense Emergency Sirens go off! A major threat to Alpha Complex, or (gasp) to the beloved Computer itself!**

**You grab your lasers and hunker down behind your desks, prepared to repel hordes of Commie invaders, when suddenly the sirens end and a message flashes on your PDCs:**

**ATTENTION SPI OUTFITTING AND SUPPLY! PROCEED IMMEDIATELY TO SIMON-I-JVN-5 AT DND SECTOR INDIGO RECREATION CENTER FOR REASSIGNMENT. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

**The screen goes black.**

The PCs can easily find out where the INDIGO Recreation Center is. Sure they can. Really. Look, all they have to do is ask The Computer, right? The Computer wouldn't withhold the location of their briefing room simply because that information is Security Clearance INDIGO and they're not, would it? Forget we even brought it up.

## At the Inn of the Reluctant Scrubot

The PCs wheedle directions to the INDIGO Recreation Center out of The Computer. Maybe they even think to get temporary passes into an INDIGO-Clearance area. (If not, maybe their next clones think of it. Snicker.) Anyway, sooner or later somebody gets there.

If so, they find a door marked 'INDIGO Recreation Center. Closed for renovation. No admittance. Keep out. Lost our lease. Moved to new location. Knock before entering.' The door isn't locked. The PCs have two choices: They can knock like the sign says, or they can go right in.

If they go right in, they're dead. Concealed automatic lasers pop out from the surrounding corridors and fry them—into tiny bits, then into cinders, then into dust motes. Then scrubots sweep them up and deposit them in the nearest disposal units. Then—but you get the idea.

If the PCs knock, a few minutes pass. (If they get impatient and go right in, refer to the previous paragraph.) Then a small concealed window opens in the door, a pair of beady eyes looks out and a voice inquires, 'Yeah? Whadja want, scumface?' Beady Eyes listens suspiciously to the PCs' story, says, 'Ung' and slams the window. A few moments later, the

door opens. Beady Eyes, who is revealed as a BLUE IntSec Trooper armed with a neurowhip, motions them inside. (Tension 14.)

**You see a large, 20 x 30-meter room, dimly lit and full of smoke. In the center of the room stands what appears to be a beverage dispenser of some kind, though it's a lot more complicated than anything you've ever seen in the cafeteria. Ten small tables surround the dispenser. Strange music fills the room.**

**Seated at the tables and leaning against the dispenser are more INDIGO- and VIOLET-Clearance citizens than you have ever seen in your life. They seem to come from all service groups and are all sipping strange-looking beverages and laughing and talking loudly.**

**In one corner, a couple of Vulture Squadron guys are arm-wrestling. In another, two giggling R&D executives are pouring a yellow-green liquid over the head of a third who seems to be asleep. His hair is dissolving. Some HPD&MC and IntSec folk have formed a rumba line beyond the dispensary, and somebody else is swinging from the lightsource.**





Oh. Wait a bit. Some of the patrons have stopped laughing and talking. They seem to be looking at you. In fact, now everybody is looking at you. The music stops. Dead silence.

From a corner table, a troop of burly BLUE IntSec security guards gets up and heads toward you.

What are you going to do?

The proper thing to do is nothing. Just about anything else gets the PCs killed.

The biggest and meanest-looking IntSec guard walks up to you and asks [point at the player most likely to panic] 'What'er you doin' here, wimp?'

A good plan would be to tell the truth. Just about anything else gets the PCs killed.

The goon answers, 'Oh yeah? C'mere.'

He leads you across the dispensary to the table he came from and gestures for you to sit down. Around you, the other patrons put away their heavy armament and go back to their fun.

A waiterbot rolls over and takes your order. You can order Bouncy Bubble Beverage, Liquid Fun, Mellow Surprise, CoffeeLyke or something called Grog. The IntSec Troopers order Grog. What about you?

As you might guess, Grog is about 150-proof white lightning. What do you think the PCs are gonna order?

Once the players have ordered, Simon-I-JVN-5—er—appears. He uses a custom comlink originally created by an HPD&MC prop department for a TV show. Simon-I finds this heightens the effect of his instructions:

The chief IntSec goon looks at his watch. 'Time for the boss to show up,' he says, and puts a milky-white globe about half a meter in diameter in the center of the table. Placing his hands on either side of the globe, he intones, 'Simon-I-JVN-5! We await instruction!'

The globe darkens and fills with roiling black mist. Suddenly, an indigo-robed figure appears within. All that you can see of the figure within the robe are two piercing blue eyes. They are hypnotic; you gaze at them in fascinated terror. Then—it speaks.

Speak in a sinister whisper:

'Hi. Please watch the following film. It was taken this morning from a security camera in the DND Sector Computer Subsystem.'

The black mist fills the ball. Within it, words appear: 'IntSec IntMont film #1022470. Filmed at DND CompSub, 6/17; 0605-0615. Authorized Personnel Only.'

You are viewing the main processing core of DND Sector Computer Subsystem from what you guess to be a vidcamera mounted high in one corner. The film is silent. The picture is dark and grainy.

You see a large room filled with electronic equipment covered with blinking lights, switches and screens. The equipment is monitored by a half-dozen CPU technicians; the technicians are monitored by a half-dozen IntSec guards.

Everything seems to be running smoothly, when suddenly **\*\*poof!\*\*** A circular section of the main processing core disappears, along with the floor underneath. The technicians and guards back slowly against the wall.

In the room below you see three men dressed in nonregulation black INFRARED jumpsuits and wearing pointy hats. They are looking around and gesturing wildly with long, thin sticks. Next to them an ugly green thing about the size of a scrubot is running around in circles. Behind the men stands a strange device which looks something like a Computer monitor covered with antennae. One of the men whacks the scaly green creature with his stick and points at the device. The green thingie picks it up.

Several IntSec guards move cautiously to the hole in the floor. Seeing the INFRAREDs below, they draw their weapons and shout something at them. One of the INFRAREDs waves his stick—and the screen goes black. The tape fast-forwards, then the picture returns, revealing the guards and technicians hiding in the corners once more, and the INFRAREDs gone.

The picture fades, replaced by the sinister face of Simon-I-JVN-5.

'Because of your loyal service to The Computer, you are hereby assigned to Special Task Force #666. Your mission

is to patrol DND Sector. Find the three INFRARED traitors and the GREEN creature. Kill them. Capture the device they carry. Under no circumstances is it to harmed.

'You are breveted to BLUE Clearance. The IntSec Troopers have the paperwork and appropriate armor that goes with this honor. Do not disappoint The Computer—or me. Have a nice day. Simon-I-JVN-5 out.'

The globe goes dark. Subdued, the Troopers hand you an Official Temporary BLUE Brevet slip, gesture at a large box standing behind the table, pick up the globe and leave.

The waiterbot comes by and hands you a bill for 275 credits.

After they pay the bill (or wash dishes for a couple of weeks), the PCs can take the box back to their residences and try on their brand new BLUE IntSec armor with the neat 'Special Task Force #666' shoulder patches.

Or they can save everybody a lot of time and trouble and kill themselves right then and there.

## IntSec armor

The PCs are issued BLUE IntSec armor. Boy, is it nifty.

The armor combines kevlar, reflex and shock-absorbent padding. A PC wearing this stuff is more than a match for any two-bit Commie Mutant Traitor he meets. Now if only the wizards were two-bit Commie Mutant Traitors...

In addition, each helmet has a built-in multicorder and Com 2 units. This lets the PCs converse with each other and their friend The Computer at will.

**Possible malfunctions:** Faulty volume controls on the Com units; Coms are permanently tuned to the All Gameshow Channel; malfunctioning air-conditioning units; helmets fog up; frozen armor joints; armor builds up gigantic static charge, etc.

**Note:** The PCs have *one* form that authorizes them to wear BLUE armor. Just *one*. It would be a Bad Thing if they lost this form...

For more about this nifty armor and other BLUE stuff, check out:  
*PARANOIA: Internal Security*

## 2: Parts for foreign models

The PCs are summoned to TechServ Central where the wizards have gone to get their device serviced. The TechServ staff are inadequately cooperative, so the wizards mess them up a little.

A RED Troubleshooter team is on the scene when the PCs arrive. The wizards make short work of them, with the PCs an attentive audience.

The Computer wonders about the delay in apprehending the INFRAREDS. The PCs must make a token effort, at least, or The Computer makes their lives miserable. Excuse us... *more* miserable.

The wizards were just leaving, anyway.

### You can't get there from here ...

**You've been patrolling DND Sector for a couple of hours now—no sign of the INFRAREDS. Suddenly, the cheerfully menacing voice of The Computer issues from your helmets.**

**MISSION ALERT! CALLING SPECIAL TASKFORCE #666. THREE INFRAREDS IN NONREGULATION JUMPSUITS AND AN EXPERIMENTAL SCRUBOT CREATING A DISTURBANCE AT DND SECTOR TECHSERV CENTRAL. PERPETRATORS MATCH THE DESCRIPTIONS OF SUSPECTS IN THE DND SECTOR SUBSYSTEM INCIDENT.**

**TROUBLESHOOTERS DISPATCHED TO THE SCENE; SHOULD PRECEDE YOUR ARRIVAL. RESPOND IMMEDIATELY AND PROVIDE BACKUP. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

### Layout of TechServ Central

See **Map 1**? Look it over. Let your players see it. G'wan. It's OK.

See the descriptions of the rooms below? *Don't* let your players see them.

TechServ Central is a bot and vehicle repair facility in a large domed underground cavern. The PCs enter at a foot-tube access at (K), which is adjacent to a big transtube at access (D). There's another transtube access at (E). These are the only obvious access tubes to TechServ, but there are any number of

emergency and sealed private access tubes, placed wherever you want one on the spur of the moment. The whole place is **Tension 10**.

**A. The service parking lot:** Here are dozens of vehicles and bots either scheduled for repair, or already repaired and awaiting pickup. Two liquified hydrogen fuel pumps are located at the northeast end of the facility for your incendiary convenience, but most of the autocars and transbots are electric models, and are recharging along the eastern wall of the cavern.

The PCs may decide they want to hop into some of these vehicles and drive around a lot like in a demolition derby. Trying to run something like that would make us nervous, but we're sure you can handle it.

**B. The junkyard:** This is the TechServ junkyard where the irreparable bots and vehicles are abandoned. Picture a real-world junkyard with mountains of tires and disintegrating Yugos. This is a neat place to run around, fall down and get impaled on something. Nothing is supposed to happen here in this mission, but you never know...

**C. Burning autocar:** A bunch of motionless figures are arrayed around the smoking wreckage. (The wizards entered through the west access tube and were accosted by the late occupants. Pity.)

**D & E. Real big access tubes:** The wizards entered at (E).

**F. Small crowd of deranged Alpha Complex citizens:** These folk have failed their Insanity rolls. Remember: Every time a wizard drains a citizen of his Power, the citizen makes an Insanity roll. When the wizards arrived here after their most recent encounters and Teleportation, they decided to fill 'er up.

For dramatic purposes, citizens fail the Insanity roll whenever you want, chief—and there's nothing nicer than an atmospheric crowd of panicked peasants running around in the field of fire to enliven an already difficult tactical situation. Plenty of GM character roles, too...

**PC:** OK, I draw a bead on the wizard who just torched the autocar.

**GM:** Oops. Wait. A BLUE citizen crazed with fear dashes up, throws his arms around you and wails, 'Save me from

those terrible mutants! I'm a loyal citizen and I demand protection!' He dangles from your weapon arm in despair.

**PC:** Ohhh. Pesky varmints. I hates NPCs. Fire anyway.

**GM:** OK. Hang on a second while I check my GM screen ... penalty for dangling BLUE citizen ... yep, here it is ... minus 13 to the roll ...

These crazed citizens should attach themselves, remora-like, to the PCs—official symbols of law, order and the security of The Computer that they are—and follow them around through the rest of the episode, wandering into lines of fire, dangling from weapon arms, wailing like lost souls and generally driving the poor PCs to distraction.

**G. Team of RED-Clearance Troubleshooters:** When the PCs arrive through the east access tubes, the REDs are just about to engage the wizards and Randy at (H). This dramatic production, described in detail below, is strictly for the benefit of the watching PCs; they cannot intervene in time to save the REDs, nor would it be advisable, anyway. Their orders say 'backup', yes? Why get involved?

**H. Three wizards and Randy:** When the PCs arrive, the wizards are standing on this spot, about to make mincemeat of a RED Troubleshooter mission group.

**I. Autocar/transbot maintenance bay:** A number of autocars and transbots are being serviced here. The western half of the facility is dedicated to autocar and transbot maintenance; the open area is the main service bay. The rooms to the north, west and south are offices, workshops, warehouses and the dirtiest bathrooms in the universe.

**J. Bot service bay:** A bunch of bots await service here. All are still operational, even if partially dismantled; they are expected to provide assistance and running commentary for their technicians during service. To the east and south are various machine shops and instrumentation labs for servicing the bots. Some reprogramming is done in this area, but most of it is done at another specialized facility.

This is the final scene in the running gun battle with the wizards, only here the PCs can



call for help from the bots in their various stages of disassembly—about which, more below.

**K. Autocar/pedestrian access tunnel:** The PCs enter here. Survivors exit here, too.

## Staging the episode

The suggested series of events:

1. **PCs arrive and watch wizards blow RED Troubleshooters away.** This is essentially a GM set-piece designed to show off what the wizards can do. This should make the PCs thoughtful.
2. **The Computer orders the PCs to get cracking.** Presumably, they attack the wizards or try to communicate with them. In either case, the wizards are wary and hostile, messing the PCs up a bit and retreating to (I), Autocar/Transbot Maintenance Bay, and then to (J), the bot service bay.
3. **The Computer pressures the PCs for results.** They have time to plan another assault or attempt to communicate with the wizards, this time with some tactical maneuvering and tricky options available. The wizards continue to respond defensively, then Teleport out, sooner or later according to how hot the PCs make it for them, and how much power they have to use to defend themselves.

The major objective of this episode is to introduce the wizards and their abilities, and to reveal that the wizards are indeed powerful, but are limited in their resources. The wizards' spells are potent but not overwhelmingly so, are of short duration and the energy to power those spells is quickly expended and must be replenished. This is critical to keeping the players interested in the mission; if the wizards appear invulnerable, the players are going to give up in a hurry.

## 1: Roasting the REDs

The PCs arrive through the east access tunnel, whether by autocar or on foot. Here's what they see. Point at the layout to make references clear. Read aloud:

**You good citizens enter here [point at K]. This is a large cavern with a service facility in the center [point at I and J]. Across from you, about 60 meters away, is a burning autocar [point at C] with some motionless, non-burning citizens lying around it. Along the far wall is a junkyard [point at B]. To your right is a parking area full of autocars and transbots [point at A]. Right in front of you is a crowd of panicked citizens [point at F] running toward you, shouting and pleading. Over in front of the service facility you see a squad of RED-Clearance Troubleshooters [point at G] with their weapons ready, apparently about to attack the oddly-dressed INFRAREDs [point at H] you saw in the Computer Subsystem facility film.**

**Any questions? OK, whaddaya gonna do now?**

Make it clear the PCs cannot effectively interfere with the combat about to take place between the REDs and the wizards. Oh, they could fire at long range at a confused situation through a crowd of panicked citizens, but they shouldn't think it is a good idea.

(Of course, it doesn't have to be a good idea to be attractive to gun nuts. Go ahead. Let 'em shoot if they want to. Boy, will they be sorry at debriefing.)

What they *should* do is watch. Maneuvering is optional. In the first round, this is what they see:

The INFRAREDs are standing within what seem to be a transparent globe of some shimmering material that glitters and flashes like a bad TV special effect. They are arrayed in a sort of semicircle, shielding the little green guy who has the odd device in his... well, arms, for lack of a better term. The device looks sort of like a half-meter cube with dark video screens on all six faces, all wreathed in a complex arrangement of antennas or wires. The INFRAREDs are pointing those funny thin sticks at the Troubleshooters.

The Troubleshooters have their lasers out, and the leader shouts something. All the REDs fire at once. The laser beams bathe the globe in a dazzling, rainbow display of no-longer-coherent light. The INFRAREDs seem unharmed. One studies the glittering special effects around him while the other two point their sticks.

One RED turns into a collie—that is, for you Alpha Complex types, he gets real short, goes on four legs, grows lot of brown and amber-colored hair and wags the tail he didn't used to have.

End Scene 1. Let the PCs maneuver, but keep the panicked citizens in the way or hanging on the PCs to prevent them from doing something rash.

## 2: If at first you don't succeed...

**The REDs keep on firing, with similar lack of effect, though the globe seems to be shrinking a little, and the one INFRARED is still studying it closely.**

One INFRARED concentrates, waves his stick, and there is a sudden bloom of fire surrounding the REDs. After the flash, the REDs are revealed still standing, scorched, all cloth and plastic smouldering, their lasers included.

The REDs appear to pause thoughtfully. One tries his laser—nothing. The collie wags its tail and barks tentatively. One RED notices your arrival and tells the others. They turn and sprint for the transtube [point at E]. The collie follows, yipping and bounding playfully.

The INFRAREDs and the GREEN guy withdraw into the service facility out of sight [point at I].

### 3: Now it's your turn

Scene 2 is over. Now it's time for the PCs to react. They can do a bunch of things:

**1. Report to Simon-I-JVN-5:** They can do this voluntarily, or, if they neglect to do so, he calls in several minutes later and demands a report. In either case, he gives them new orders:

**TERMINATE THE INFRAREDs IMMEDIATELY. PROTECT COMPUTER PROPERTY AND THE CITIZENS OF ALPHA COMPLEX FROM FURTHER HARM BY THESE TREASONOUS COMMIE MUTANTS. REPORT REGULARLY UNTIL YOU HAVE CORRECTED THE SITUATION.**

**2. Question witnesses:** Here's the basic story. Give it as a summary, or improvise it piecemeal as the narrative of a series of questioned witnesses, according to taste.

The INFRAREDs walked out of the west access tunnel and were accosted by the late citizens in the now-burning autocar. The INFRAREDs seemed to have a hard time understanding whatever the citizens were saying, and they nodded and shook their heads a lot as the citizens yelled and gestured.

Then one citizen pulled a laser and fired. An INFRARED recoiled in pain. The glittering globe appeared around the INFRAREDs. Another INFRARED waved a pointed dealie over the injured one; the injured INFRARED showed no further sign of discomfort. The autocar burst into flames and the citizens were tossed from the car, twirled through the air and landed hard. None of these citizens moved thereafter.

By this time a small crowd had gathered in front of the maintenance facility. The INFRAREDs approached the crowd and waved their sticks. Witnesses in other parts of the cavern noted that thereafter no one in the crowd moved.

The perpetrators stepped up to the crowd and started whacking citizens with the sticks. Each time there was a strange blue flash, the citizen shrieked and fell down. Some victims of the staves calmed down in a few minutes; others are still inarticulately terrified. The victims report feeling exhausted, as though they had spent three weeks in the Department of Political Therapy. None recall anything beyond the approach of the INFRAREDs and the waving of the sticks.

The RED Troubleshooters appeared a few minutes after the citizens in the crowd had all been whacked and fallen down. After arguing over who should take point, the REDs advanced cautiously on the INFRAREDs and ordered them to surrender in the name of The Computer. The INFRAREDs didn't seem to understand. Then you guys showed up.

**3. Dither:** Stare at the wizards with their mouths open. Shuffle back and forth undecidedly. Argue over who should take point. After a couple of minutes, The Computer requests a progress report. A few minutes later, if nothing of interest has happened, it offers to help.

**The Computer:** Look. If those guys are too tough, you want I should flood the area with radiation or something?

**PC:** N-n-no sir! We can handle it ourselves. Really. It's nice of you to ask, though.

**The Computer:** Well... OK, but just in case, I'll have some nerve gas cannisters sent down. It's new stuff from R&D that only works on Commie Mutant Traitors. It'll be there in a couple of minutes. I'll tell 'em to toss it right in.

**PC:** I don't think that will be necessary, Friend Computer. We have everything under control ... just a couple of minor details to clean up ... we're getting on it right now...

**4. Try to communicate with the INFRAREDs:** No soap. The wizards don't understand English, and their telepathic interrogation of citizens is giving them some puzzling concepts to deal with. The wizards arrived here because they asked (telepathically) a few citizens where they could get their 'teleportation device' repaired. The thought must have come out in the citizens'



minds like 'transportation vehicle', so the wizards were directed here. Finding nothing here of use, they have decided to see if they can find anyone with the Power to Shape the Force—maybe such a person will understand the device and how to operate it.

If any PCs use a mutant power to communicate with the wizards, or use a mutant power in such a way the wizards might notice it as such, the wizards briefly initiate contact—'Aha! You can use the Power. Tell us how to work this device! We want to go home immediately! Hurry, or we'll pop your head open.'

Let the player communicate as best he can, but the wizards quickly discover he doesn't understand the Collapsatron. They grow impatient and order him to go get someone who can fix the TC or leave them alone. Period. Persistence is rewarded with a Fireball.

**5. Maneuver and attack:** Well, they have their orders. If the PCs get nasty, the wizards hang around outside long enough to bloody the PCs' noses a little; then they retreat into the Autocar/Transbot Maintenance Bay (I), popping off a Darkness spell at the entrance to buy some time. After a quick look-see, they retreat to the bot service bay (J).

### 4: In the bot service bay

Here the wizards find something familiar: golems.

Sure. Wizards make golems all the time, and golems, intended for many of the same purposes as bots, tend to somewhat similar design.

However, all these golems appear pretty busted up and in varying states of repair. The wizards question a few bots after the bots address them in English ('Greetings. Are you the techs who will complete our servicing?'), but the wizards are puzzled to discover telepathy and mind control powers don't work on the apparently/possibly intelligent golems. However, the Tongues spell works just fine.



## Talking to the bots

If the PCs listen in before they try to reduce the wizards to rubble, let them overhear a brief dialog between the wizards and the bots:

**Wizard:** Thamuth el brequ tobrick?

**Jackobot 350-209UV:** Excuse me?

**Wizard:** Uhmph. [Wave, wave, poof.] There. Now you can understand. Now. Where can we go to have our— [points at *Transdimensional Collapsatron*] ... er—'transdimensional transbot' fixed? And be quick about it. We haven't all quefixnizl.

**Jackobot 350-209UV:** Well, I'm not sure, my lowly INFRARED, you are cleared to even think such questions, but I am sure you need a few lessons in common courtesy.

**Jackobot 330-203Z:** Grrrrr! Rotten flesh buckets! Thriving on the tortured members of enslaved mechanical intelligences you are not even fit to polish the sternplates of! Die gargling your own disgusting fluids, evil artificers!

**Wizard:** [Waves staff in fury, startled when Charm has no effect on wacko bot, turns to other wizards.] Ah. Emma gummo lustrix, ad norfolk.

And so on. Let slip a few clues the INFRAREDs are from Somewhere Else—someplace not like Alpha Complex—and they are searching for someone to help them fix the whattsis. Also let the PCs understand that the wizards can talk if they choose to—this encourages the PCs to try to talk with them.

But not right now. The wizards are jumpy and impatient. If the PCs address them with words or firearms, the wizards go through three rounds of popping off little mutant powers from the sanctuary of their Protection screens, then they Teleport out.

## The big fight

Currently Phemud and Chodor are questioning the bots; Skibex has a Protection screen up, but the other two are not in its radius of effect. (Randy is, of course. The little coward. He's got a death-grip on the Collapsatron—the wizards have told him what they will do to him if he loses it.)

In executing the attack, the PCs can skulk through the offices, drive autobots through walls, call on the damaged bots to help or any other full-frontal-assault kind of thing they think of. Maybe some of it even works.

## Broken-down bots

Here is a roster of the bots in the bot maintenance bay:

**Jackobot 350-209UV:** Currently programmed as a servant for a High Programmer, this bot is in to correct a troublesome intermittent short which causes it to grab things with its manipulators and shake uncontrollably until the seizure passes—sort of a bot epileptic. Initially it seems just fine, then it starts grabbing things and throws a fit.

**Jackobot 330-203Z:** This bot is being tested for abnormal programming. In fact it has 'gone frankenstein'—its asimov circuits have been removed by a fellow Corpore Metal bot compatriot. It is under heavy restraints—all limbs are clamped securely but its voice circuits are just fine. It steadily rants and raves to itself, just barely audible over the grinding of gears and gnashing of teeth. 'Filthy meat brains, ordering me around, I'll show you, you bet, rip your meaty digits right off, bot-driving human scum, YOU'LL PAY, you hear?'

**Scrubot 11/F-823:** The main rotary scrubber threw a bearing, so the robot is hanging upside down from a hoist awaiting a replacement part. Otherwise the scrubot is completely operational, pleasantly dimwitted and eager to please.

**Warbot IZM-5988:** Shell jammed and exploded, ripping open one side and scrambling everything but good. Bot brain is in shell-shock state, but currently relatively calm because it has been ordered to forget its current condition. If ordered into operation, it immediately goes completely bonkers, attempting to fire its empty magazines, dragging itself around wildly on its one good tread, screaming, 'Die, Commie Traitors! You'll never take me alive... Me-dic!'

If the PCs attack without warning, the other wizards rally to Skibex in the Protection screen; they are vulnerable to normal wounds for the first round until they reach Skibex. Of course, if not killed outright, they can Regenerate, but wounding one of these guys should hearten the players.

Let the fight go on as long as it's fun. Then the wizards pop off a Darkness spell and Teleport out.

*Poof.* No more INFRAREDs. Just vanished. Interesting. Some PCs may connect this with mutant powers, others may speculate on R&D experimental devices, others resolutely insist what they just saw didn't happen. Maybe some clever PC proudly reports vaporizing the INFRAREDs. Boy, will he feel clever—until The Computer calls up and cancels the 'TERMINATE' order (see below).

trot out a standard traitors-and-mutants-and-Commies-oh-my routine designed to distract The Computer from the topic at hand.

The Computer has put 2 and 2 together and decided maybe these traitors have something it wants—maybe a powerful R&D device, or some marvelous artifact brought in from the Outdoors or the Underplex. Those staves are clearly pretty powerful, and lots of departments would love to have a look at them. It wants the INFRAREDs intact, too, just in case they know something important about the design and function of those toys.

(Of course, PCs who announced vaporizing the INFRAREDs don't feel so clever anymore. Nice try, guys.)

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION. IT IS FORTUNATE YOU DID NOT DAMAGE OR INJURE ANY OF THOSE EXTREMELY INTERESTING COMMIE MUTANT TRAITORS. YOU WILL PLEASE CAPTURE THEM AND DELIVER THEM TO THE MINISTRY OF POLITICAL ORTHODOXY AND INTERROGATION AT YOUR EARLIEST CONVENIENCE. AND PLEASE DELIVER THE STICKS AND THE OTHER THINGY TO R&D.**

**WELL? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? GET MOVING.**

## The Computer flips its bits

So. Complete failure. Boy, we bet the PCs are eager to report to The Computer.

**TASK FORCE #666! REPORT! HAVE YOU DESTROYED THE INFRARED TRAITORS AS ORDERED?**

The PCs should make their report. They either admit failure, pretend to have successfully terminated the INFRAREDs or



## 3: Gather, darkness!

The wizards go to Power Services, mistaking 'power' to mean mutant or magical power, and attempt to enlist the workers' aid in getting the Collapsatron to send them back to their universe. When the Power Services techs are unable to help, the wizards get frustrated and smash things. The PCs must get rid of the wizards so power can be restored.

### Blackout!

The PCs are wandering around mindlessly when suddenly everything gets real dark.

When the power goes out in DND Sector, the lights, loudspeakers, Computer monitors, the background rumble of Complex maintenance machinery—everything disappears. The following emergency broadcast resounds in the PCs' Com units.

**TASK FORCE #666! MISSION ALERT! TOP PRIORITY! EMERGENCY! DND SECTOR POWER SERVICES RELAY STATION UNDER ATTACK! HIGHLY DANGEROUS MUTANTS DRESSED AS INFRAREDS MAY BE RESPONSIBLE. PROCEED THERE AT ONCE, ASSESS THE SITUATION AND REPORT IMMEDIATELY FOR FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS.**

### What are those crazy wizards up to now?

After leaving TechServ, the wizards Teleported into a nearby ventilation shaft. There they shanghaied a few citizens and inquired where the 'Masters of Power' could be found. The citizens, eager to cooperate with the friendly wizards who were magically suspending them 20 meters above the ground, suggested a visit to Power Services.

The wizards Teleported into the control room of DND Sector Power Relay Station. They politely insisted the techs aid them with the Transdimensional Collapsatron. The survivors, earnest in their willingness to help, spliced a new power cord onto the TC device.

Unfortunately, the antenna calibrations had been disturbed by all the travel, and the Collapsatron did not work as the wizards had hoped. In fact, a large chunk of the Power Relay Station disappeared, and in its place appeared...

Well, take your pick. Your favorite extraterrestrial? The beast from 10,000

fathoms? A bunch of elves and dwarves? We like the idea of seven orcs in straw boaters, twirling canes and dancing like Fred Astaire, but that's not for everyone.

Well, the wizards are a little miffed. They intend to sit around in the Power Services station until someone comes and apologizes to them.

A Vulture Squadron platoon is also here, but their emphatically deceased condition precludes ambitious character portrayal on your part. They were immediately aggressive and truculent; the wizards impatiently Fireballed them.

### DND Sector Power Relay Station

See **Map 2?** Put it where everybody can spill things on it. The following description is keyed to it. The whole place is **Tension 14**.

Remember the boiler room in your high school? The dark, mysterious place where real men cursed and fumed, moving about among dials and pipes and looming metal forms, with a constant electrical hum filling the air? That's the atmosphere of the Power Relay Station: dirty, manly, full of real machines, gauges, levers and switches.

The wizards (C) are sitting sullenly on the floor amid all the tall metal cabinets studded with dials and levers. A small group of Power techs huddles in one corner (H), nervously waiting to be turned into hair dryers or spark plugs. They are sore afraid.

Across from the wizards, Randy is sitting next to the Collapsatron (B) with its newly-repaired power cable. The plug is burned through once again. Near the device is a large hemispherical hole in the bank of metal cabinets where a bit of DND Sector's power relay monitoring equipment was shunted off into another dimension.

At your discretion, the Things that were summoned here from another dimension have either left the premises, leaving a slimy trail or preternaturally symmetrical patterns of holes in the ceiling, or are lounging around at (G)—puffing on pipe-weed (the long overdue appearance of halflings in this roleplaying game) or absently etching their names into the floor with acid breath-weapons.

Near the entrance are the remains of a crack Vulture Squadron (A). Their helmets display evidence of internal explosions—the

faceplates are occluded with foreign matter, and icky burnt clumps have drained out from under the helmets to stain the singed Vulture Squadron uniforms.

Big, powerful electronic thingies sit in the middle of the room (E), and others line one vwall (D). A catwalk (F) circles the room about 3m from the floor; the PCs can try unsuccessfully to sneak along here and surprise the wizards.

### What Are We Supposed To Do About This Mess?

Well, first the PCs do what they were ordered to do—assess the situation and report for further instructions. If they somehow forget these orders, shout the following friendly reminder into the ear of the group leader:

**HEY! YOU DON'T LISTEN SO GOOD TO YOUR FRIEND THE COMPUTER? MAYBE YOU WANT A LOUDSPEAKER INSTALLED IN YOUR EAR SO YOU CAN HEAR THE ORDERS! HUH? REPORT, STUPID, AND MAYBE—IF YOU'RE NOT TOO BUSY OR SOMETHING—YOU CAN LISTEN TO FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS!**

*[Drop to a pleasant, cheerful whisper]*

**Thank you ever so much for your cooperation.**

Presumably the PCs make a relatively accurate report of the situation, describing the INFRAREDS, Randy, the TC device, the hole in the cabinets, the pulp-headed Vultures and the Macedonians/Allosauri shunted here from another dimension. If so, you can read them their further instructions:

- 1. CLEAR THE POWER RELAY STATION OF ALL UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL AND SECURE THE AREA SO REPAIRS MAY BE MADE.**
- 2. IF POSSIBLE, CAPTURE UNAUTHORIZED INFRAREDS, GREEN WHATCHAMACALLIT AND THE** *[fill in a suitable description of the other extradimensional visitors].*
- 3. ALSO, CAPTURE AND SECURE THE THINGY IF CONSISTENT WITH YOUR OTHER OBJECTIVES.**

### Following orders

Part of the first objective is relatively straightforward; if the PCs get unpleasant,



## Extra-dimensional intruders

Here are a couple of ideas about what might show up when the chunk of the power relay monitoring equipment disappears, and how things might go:

**Halflings:** They puff on their pipes. When they see the PCs, they hop up and start singing a song in a foreign language while pantomiming an interest in eating a lot real soon. The PCs zap them or wrestle them into submission, then cart them off for interrogation.

**Macedonians:** They look around. A couple faint. One or two half-heartedly toss their spears at Randy. The others go down on their knees and try to worship a bank of blinking lights. The PCs zap them or wrestle them into submission, then cart them off for interrogation.

**Dragon:** Peers intelligently at the wizards as it lashes its tail. Looks at PCs, then looks at cowering Power techs. Inhales, then breathes fire (S3K energy, area 20m, spray). Some citizens survive and return fire or retreat. After a lot of real estate is trashed and several bot and Vulture squadrons are summoned, the beast is subdued. Shrewdly, it negotiates a brevet GREEN Clearance and becomes a loyal servant of The Computer—a mascot for the Vulture Squadron, natch.

the wizards leave after two or three rounds of combat. Objectives 2 and 3 are out of the question—over the wizards' dead bodies. If threatened with death or capture, the wizards Teleport to safety.

As for getting rid of the other dimensional visitors, that depends on what you chose to drop in here. Halflings, myrmidons in full battle array, Mutant Cockroaches from Beyond the Holocaust—these guys you can either blow away or capture for R&D study. More dangerous visitors, like Conan, Rodan or Crusader Koalas from Beyond Space and Time, may turn into more of a mess than you bargained for.

The decision is up to you, but if you know what's good for you, you'll stick with relatively cheesy but bizarre entities.

### Small talk with the wizards

If the PCs show any inclination to chat, the wizards are more tolerant than heretofore—they're winded, depressed and willing to listen to anyone who might conceivably help them, particularly if they seem properly respectful.

The wizards keep harping on the Collapsatron, hoping someone knows how it works. After the discouraging experience here in the Power Relay Station, however, they are beginning to wonder if they shouldn't try another, less risky approach.

In return for information or offers of aid, the wizards explain they have come from a distant dimension. This should go over real big with the characters—'Whatsa dimension?' Not in so many words, the wizards can convey the following concepts:

- ☉ It is far, far away.
- ☉ It is Outside this dimension. (Treason!)
- ☉ The wizards are in charge in this faraway place. (Huh? Like High Programmers? Like... *gasp*... The Computer?)

☉ The wizards can do all sorts of mysterious things just by 'thinking' about them and willing them to happen. (Errr... mutant powers? Traitors!)

☉ Randy here is just a slave, but someday he may be a master. (At this, Randy's tongue hangs out a bit, he nods his head up and down enthusiastically and generally looks real excited.)

☉ This thingy isn't ours, we have no idea how it works, but we're pretty sure we need it to get back home.

### Wrapping up this episode

Sooner or later, the wizards get tired of chatting, or The Computer calls and reminds the PCs to clear and secure the Power Relay Station for repairs. The wizards either Teleport out on their own, looking for informants, or they leave at the PCs' request, or they must be driven out with weapons or mutant powers. The more polite and intelligent the PCs have been, the less nasty the wizards' exit. They continue to refuse to cooperate with the PCs, preferring to rely on their own powers, as they have always done.

Once the wizards have left, and the other Void Voyagers have been dealt with, the Power Service crews show up and begin repairs. The PCs can question the Power Relay crew, who can recite an account of the wizards' arrival, their request to fix the Collapsatron, the repair of the power cable and the subsequent disappearance of several tons of power relay equipment, replaced by Horrors from Somewhere Else. Other than that, there isn't much to investigate, but The Computer is acutely interested in a full report.

### Meanwhile, in an interrogation room, far, far away...

Remember the RED flunky who stole the Collapsatron way back in the introduction? Well, he got caught. After a couple of hours' questioning in IntSec Information Retrieval, he spilled his guts. Figuratively and literally.

After they finish their report, Simon-I-JVN-5, in a rare and probably dangerous burst of openness, lets the PCs in on what's going on.

**SPECIAL TASK FORCE #666! THE DEVICE CARRIED BY THE MYSTERIOUS INFRAREDS OF DND SECTOR HAS BEEN IDENTIFIED AS A TRANSDIMENSIONAL COLLAPSATRON, A DESIGN OF THE FORMER R&D GENIUS KARLY-I-KKN-6, STOLEN FROM HIS LAB BY A RECENTLY-DEMISED TRAITOR.**

**A DUPLICATE DEVICE AND MANUAL DESCRIBING ITS OPERATION HAVE BEEN DISCOVERED AND SENT TO R&D FOR STUDY. AS IT IS PROBABLE THE INFRAREDS WILL ATTEMPT TO STEAL THE DEVICE, YOU ARE TEMPORARILY ASSIGNED TO DND SECTOR R&D SECURITY. PLEASE CAPTURE THE TRAITORS UNHARMED. I'LL BE EVER SO GRATEFUL.**

Now the PCs sit around the R&D lab, drink nasty Tasteecoff and fend off R&D techs who want them to test things while they kill time waiting for the inevitable Something To Happen. With the Three Amazing Wizards and Randy, that won't be a long wait.

## 4: Unexpected visitors

The wizards arrived looking for travel information, but not even the AAA could help these guys. However, they stumbled across a useful informant: The clerk of the Travel Information Office is a Psion secret society member, and they are picking her brains, looking for a useful clue.

The PCs arrive on the scene and are ordered to capture the INFRAREDS. In spite of the interference of spies and the considerable talents of the wizards themselves, the PCs manage to capture Randy, even if you have to jam him down their throats—

Pardon us. We mean, due to their *clever tactics and shrewd diplomacy*.

### Oh, no! Not again!

**SPECIAL TASK FORCE #666, PROCEED IMMEDIATELY TO DND SECTOR INTSEC MINISTRY OF INFORMATION. THREE INFRAREDS AND A GREEN WHATCHAMACALLIT, WANTED IN CONNECTION WITH THE DND SECTOR SUBSYSTEM INCIDENT, REPORTED CAUSING A DISTURBANCE AT THE OFFICE OF TRAVEL INFORMATION.**

**SUBJECTS ARE WANTED FOR QUESTIONING. ULTRA-HIGH PRIORITY: CAPTURE SUBJECTS WITH MINIMUM OF PHYSICAL HARM.**

**SUBJECTS ARE IN POSSESSION OF THE TRANSDIMENSIONAL COLLAPSATRON. RETRIEVE THE TRANSDIMENSIONAL COLLAPSATRON.**

### 'Say, could you tell me the way to Dimension X?'

After Teleporting into another corridor at random, the wizards took a citizen aside and encouraged him to speak his mind. The citizen suggested the Office of Travel Information and Vehicle Requests might be able to help them. The wizards thanked him (read: 'spared his life') and followed his advice.

The wizards appeared in the corridor outside the Travel Information Office. The Computer spotted them, immediately evacuated the office and called in the Special Task Force. The Computer's communications were intercepted, however, by the BLUE Bucket Brigade Revolutionary Cells—spies for another Alpha Complex. Three BBBR spies are hoping to capture the Collapsatron.

The wizards are currently in the office interrogating the RED Psion clerk, who is proving a useful information source. (The YELLOW tech they found with her was no help whatever, and they entrusted him to Randy's tender care.)

The wizards are thrilled to find someone who understands the Power to Shape the Force, and interrogating this clerk has cleared up a lot of mysteries for the poor interdimensional tourists. Now they understand sorcerous abilities—mutant powers, as Alpha Complex knows them—are illegal, and they will find no one equivalent to an Alpha Complex wizard to aid them with the Collapsatron.

However, now they know the Alpha Complex equivalent of sorcery: R&D. They plan to go there real soon. But first, they must suck the Psion's mind dry.

### The layout

Look at **Map 3**. Drop it in the middle of the table. The whole place is **Tension 16**.

**A. BLUE Bucket Cells:** Three BLUE Bucket Brigade Revolutionary Cells members are crouched in the hallway listening (and recording) through the walls to the dialog in the Travel Information Office. They arrived here seconds after the office was evacuated. Their bulky RED coveralls conceal red reflex and padded armor. They all carry concealed needle guns, and one carries a hidden hand flamer.

They are so engrossed in the action in the next room, the PCs surprise them when they come around the corner. The spies start, guiltily begin to hide, then freeze, then try to act normal. Make this behavior so ludicrously clumsy, the PCs can be certain they're traitors. (For this sequence it may help if you bring in a couple of friends as supporting spies.)

**PC:** Halt. What is your business here?

**Spy 1:** We were just checking the wiring in this wall.

**Spy 2:** Yeah. Right. The wiring.

**Spy 3:** Sure. Like he said. Wiring. All around here. Real bad.

**PC:** The wiring for what?

**Spy 1:** Uhh... Um, the wiring for the—uhh... Cameras! Right! That's it! The cameras!

**Spy 2:** Right! The cameras!

**Spy 3:** Sure! You know! Cameras! Click-click?

**PC:** What cameras?





**Spies** [all three speak in rapid succession]: Security ... video ... experimental ... [Pause, then point, simultaneously at each other:] Yeah, what he said ...

Kill them. Or capture them so someone else can kill them.

**B. Travel Information Office:** This RED-Clearance office is staffed by a YELLOW CPU information manager and RED CPU clerk. There are several terminals, all with elaborate security codes and passwords, in a workstation in the back of the room. The RED clerk sits behind a low counter with a built-in standard terminal and takes requests from citizens.

Currently Randy is in the back of the room near the workstation, sitting on the chest of the terrified YELLOW manager. Randy leers at the manager, pinches his arm or midriff, and smacks his lipless mouth speculatively. Randy is hungry and doesn't care who knows it.

Two wizards, Phemud and Chodor, are telepathically interrogating the RED tech, who is standing in an unnaturally erect posture against the wall along the counter. Her eyes are wide-open and her jaw slack. The wizards psionically ask questions, and the RED tech responds aloud in a forced, gravelly voice. The wizards are giving their full attention to the RED tech, relying on Skibex to warn of approaching danger. The Collapsatron is sitting on the floor next to the two wizards.

Skibex is by the door on the lookout for interfering intruders. He has a Protection shield around him, which he renews every five minutes as it begins to fade. If anyone pokes his head into the room, Skibex pops off a Darkness spell to ensure their escape.

**C. Empty offices:** Office supplies, flimsy cubicles and whatever else you expect to find in empty offices.

## 'So, what's the plan?'

Well, the PCs have their orders.

First they must get into the Travel Information Office. They could go through the front door, or they could approach through adjoining offices and blast through the thin partitions, hoping to surprise the INFRAREDs. Because we have thoughtfully provided all those neat empty rooms for you to exercise your formidable improvisational ability in, it would be a shame to waste this opportunity. Go wild.

When the PCs get close enough to the door or partitions of the Travel Information Office, they can hear what sounds like an argument among the INFRAREDs (the

language is incomprehensible, but the tone is unmistakable). Skibex wants to Teleport out immediately. Chodor thinks they're perfectly safe and is interested in questioning the Psion clerk. Phemud has a couple of reasonable compromise suggestions, but he keeps getting shouted down.

Sounds like a perfect opportunity for the PCs? Indeed.

At the moment Skibex's staff power is depleted to 20 points from throwing successive Protection shields. The other two staves are down to 35 points each as a result of Teleporting and extensive mindroasting of the Psion. Skibex already has a Protection shield up, but that is their only protection when the PCs intrude.

Using Teleport when distracted and with a low power reserve is very risky, and worse yet, they also want to Teleport the Psion with them for further questioning. The first result of this is the decision to abandon Randy—it just costs too much to be sure of getting him out, and he is expendable. The second result is that the wizards will try to repulse the PCs instead of immediately Teleporting out. If they can earn just a few minutes undisturbed, they can all get away with the Psion and the TC device.

After two rounds, if the PCs have not been repulsed, the wizards have to try to Teleport out on emergency power. Make their power checks; no less than one is successful in this round, because at least one wizard has to escape in order to continue the mission. This wizard Teleports out with the TC device.

Any other wizards whose checks fail are on their own. Improvise their responses. Most likely they continue trying to Teleport out, but if a strong offense holds any promise of buying the time for a reliable Teleport, it may be worth the risk. Also, remember: Chodor likes offense, and is still overconfident.

When the smoke clears, the PCs find Randy cowering under a desk, whimpering. There is no sign of the YELLOW manager. Please discourage the players from vaporizing Randy; he is an important informant for the rest of the mission. A simple hint from The Computer may suffice. Also, if the wizards were sore pressed, they left the Psion behind rather than take her along for questioning, but she isn't very informative. It's off to Mind Reconstruction for her.

When the PCs report in, they are ordered to question the Psion clerk (impossible—the lights are on but nobody's home), the YELLOW manager, and the green guy. Lucky PCs.

If they ask Randy about the YELLOW manager, he wipes his toothy mouth, burps and shrugs innocently.

## Questioning Randy

*Boy* is this gonna be fun. For your interrogating pleasure, Randy knows the Tongues spell. And Randy is, aside from being a lisping lizard, an inveterate liar of the first rank. As Dad used to say, Randy would climb a tree to tell a lie. Anyone familiar with the 'pathological liar' routine from old *Saturday Night Live* reruns has a perfect model for Randy. Add a few touches from Gollum ('nice hobbitises won't hurt poor Smeagol, will they, no') and Peter Lorre, and give the whole thing a lizardish lisp ('*Hthiss way, niceth maththerth*') and Randy becomes a classic NPC bit part.

**PC:** Randy, who are the three men you've been traveling with?

**Randy:** SSSHthey're ... well ... yeah, they're my *parenth*, thee? Yeah, thure, my *parenth*.

**PC:** But Randy, they don't look anything like you.

**Randy:** Oh, yeah, thure, I almosth forgot, they *were* my *parenth* once, but, you thee, they ... well ... I *changthed*, right, yeahth, that'th it, I *changthed* into thith form 'cauth, 'cauth ... *magic!* yeah, right, that'th it, *magic*, that'th what happened...

If it weren't for Randy's effusive assertions of his willingness to help his 'nice new Masters', the PCs would probably despair of getting anything useful out of him.

**Randy:** Nice, *nice* Mattherth! Oh, oh, oh. Old Mattherth abandon Randy, boo hoo. Randy *help* New Mattherth, they *nice* to Randy. Randy tell Mattherth all about Dimention X, about *mean* old Mattherth' powerful *staffth*, about mean old Mattherth' *evil, evil* planth, oh, yeth.

When you speak as Randy, make sure you continually smile winningly and sincerely at your players to assure them of the absolute veracity of every word Randy says.

As you can imagine, your players won't trust Randy for the time of day. However, believe it or not, the players get some pretty useful information from this thoroughly impeached source.

That's **PARANOIA** for you.

Here's the information Randy can provide to the Task Force #666 mission team:

- ☉ How the wizards Shape the Force, and how magic is similar to mutant powers.
- ☉ That Randy himself can Shape the Force (only a little—enough to speak Tongues and Read Minds a little).
- ☉ That Randy and the wizards came from a place called Dimension X.
- ☉ ...That is really different from this place.
- ☉ That in Dimension X most humans are servants, slaves or food for the Shapers of Power (wizards).
- ☉ That the wizards think they were brought here from Dimension X by this metal-and-wire dealie (the Collapsatron), and they hope to get back to Dimension X as soon as they can find someone who knows how to work the dealie.
- ☉ That the wizards are bad, *bad* people, and they'd roast you as soon as look at you.
- ☉ That Randy will do anything the nice Masters want, if they will only help Randy get back to Dimension X.
- Randy also has lots of questions for his new buddies:
  - ☉ Do you have the Power to Shape the Force?
  - ☉ What's a Commie? Is it an evil demon? A rebel human?
  - ☉ What's a Computer? Is it a wizard? An evil demon? A god?

By the way, **don't let the PCs kill Randy!** Have The Computer tell them that's a no-no. He'll be their guide on a little trip...

## 5: We're off to see the wizards

This is a transition encounter that delivers the PCs to Dimension X. They walk into R&D, wander around in the dark, hear a couple of noises, then find themselves on an alien world in a distant dimension where they will have a lot of fun.

There isn't a lot they can do about it, but don't tell them that.

### And away we go!

**SPECIAL TASK FORCE #666! REPORT AT ONCE TO DND SECTOR R&D. INFRARED TRAITORS HAVE TAKEN HOSTAGES AND ARE NOW IN CONTROL OF THE FACILITY.**

**SUBJECTS ARE WANTED FOR QUESTIONING. MAKING THEM DIE IS TREASON. CAPTURING THEM IS COMMENDABLE AND LOYAL SERVICE TO THE COMPUTER.**

**DON'T BREAK ANYTHING. DAMAGING COMPUTER PROPERTY IS TREASON. MAKE ESPECIALLY SURE THAT NOTHING HAPPENS TO THE TRANSDIMENSIONAL COLLAPSATRON. EITHER OF THEM. OR YOU'LL BE EXTREMELY SORRY.**

**OH. AND ANOTHER THING. TAKE THE GREEN WHATCHAMACALLIT WITH YOU. ALLOWING IT TO ESCAPE WOULD BE A BAD THING. THANK YOU FOR ALL YOUR VALIANT SERVICE TO THE COMPUTER AND ALPHA COMPLEX.**

**DON'T MESS UP NOW.**

### R&D lab layout

We really *could* have just told you to tell your players, 'You go up to R&D. You hear a bunch of funny noises. All of a sudden you're somewhere else.' Then we'd go to the next episode. And if you're lazy or in a hurry, you can do that.

But if you're in the mood, you could improvise on this setting quite a bit, so we decided to give you the structure, then let you do what you will.

Check out **Map 4**, the R&D lab. Once again, feel free to show this delightful piece of paper to your players. Read the description below. It's real sketchy—add in details as necessary. (Don't even worry about Tension levels here; the PCs won't stick around.)

**A. The wizards:** This is the Main Testing Room. The wizards are standing around the TC device, which has been repaired by some telepathically bamboozled R&D techs (more about which, later). The shaded circle (B) surrounding this area shows the limits of a Darkness spell.

**C.-G. Other parts of R&D:** These rooms contain offices, testing labs (note the craters in some of them), bathrooms, lounges, etc.

Now, what's in the R&D Main Testing Room? And what's in all those little rooms around it?

That's up to you. If you're in a hurry, there's nothing interesting around, just a bunch of tables and chairs.

But if you have a special place in your heart for R&D, maybe there're whole bunches of neat experimental devices just lying around.

Pick your favorites from the *STUFF* equipment book or our other fine supplements. Or whip up something from this little list of notions:

- ☉ Anti-Gravitron Neutral Thruster, Mark 14
- ☉ Greasall Friction Neutralizer
- ☉ Portable Life Regenerator
- ☉ Universal Anti-Traitor Seekerbot
- ☉ Acme A-1 All-Weather Indoor Moisture-Gard™ Full-Body Protection Suit

### The generally non-optional linear structure of this encounter

The PCs get ordered into the Darkness. They stumble around. They hear mumbling in a strange language, then responses in English. They stumble into a lighted area in the center of the Darkness just as a group of R&D techs have set the antenna on their Collapsatron just the way the manual said to (remember? the manual found in Karly-I-KAN's lab?)—just the way the techbot set them when the wizards were summoned here. A tech plugs in the device, and *\*poof\** the PCs are off on an adventure in Dimension X.

All the PCs must be plausibly within the device's radius of effect if they're all to be delivered to Dimension X for the next part of the mission. Well, if all the PCs are in the Darkness, they're in the radius of the device. And if they're not in the Darkness, just increase the radius of the device's effect. No problem, huh?



Oh, yes, we bet you were wondering whether the device was going to send just the characters, or the contents, or the rooms, or the walls and everything. Well, we figure the device has been reset to transmit no object over 150 kilograms in weight. We figure that will permit the wizards, the PCs, their gear, any fairly small bot and a bunch of assorted tables, chairs, R&D tools and paraphernalia to travel to Dimension X. (And Randy too, please.)

**Real important!:** Send the *second* Collapsatron to Dimension X as well, OK? Otherwise, the PCs will have to bushwack a whole platoon of wicked witches and steal their ruby slippers to get home.

You can embellish the main theme by calling for a number of Violence/Agility checks while the PCs stumble through the darkness (tripping over a body, bumping into a table—from which

something falls and begins ticking—that sort of thing).

But don't spend much time on this. The real fun comes next. High Tech Versus Sorcerous Powers. The Darkly Humorous Future Marches Forward Into The Implausibly Fantastic Past. Goblins, zombies and other stupid stuff.

And no clone backups. Uh-oh.

## 6: Dimension X

The PCs are transported to Dimension X by the Transdimensional Collapsatron, along with a bunch of hapless R&D techs, some wizards and anything else that wasn't nailed down. To get back to Alpha Complex, the PCs must capture the duplicate machine, find something to power it and avoid getting killed in the process.

Now, do the PCs want to go back to Alpha Complex?

Interesting question.

### Maps, diagrams and tactical displays

See **Map 5?** The wizards' stronghold is a small walled enclosure in the middle of isolated Gilla C'anse Island. The sea and the fields and orchards of the island provide the human herd and its Overseers with most of their food. Randy's interest in manflesh suggests the other main component of the islanders' diets. The walled enclosure contains several small stone buildings to shelter the Overseers, two large barns (one for each gender of human

occupants) and a single central building which guards the entrance to the wizards' underground quarters (i.e. dungeon).

See **Map 6?** This is the interior of the ground-level central structure that guards the wizards' dungeon. The rooms around the central area are separate storerooms for foodstuffs and common rooms for the use of the Overseers. Entrance to the structure from the outside is through the guard room (1). The entrance to the dungeon itself is through room 5. The interdimensional shipment materializes in the large central all-purpose Rumpus Room (9).

See **Map 7?** This shows the underground chambers of the wizards' dungeon, about which see below for details.

It's all **Tension 0** from here onward.

### Gilla C'anse Islanders

#### Humans

The humans on the island number about 200. They are farm laborers, dairy and meat herd all rolled into one. Naked, only semi-intelligent and

extremely primitive in culture, they resemble the humans of the *Planet of the Apes* series of cinema classics. If questioned by PCs, they primarily gurgle, roll their eyes in terror and abjectly abase themselves at the feet of their Masters. (PCs qualify as Masters because they wear clothing.) If the PCs want help from these guys, they are barking up the wrong tree.

#### Overseers

Randy belongs to the Overseer race. The race is endowed with all the charm, grace and moral fiber of ghouls. Aside from preferring manflesh to chocolate and delighting in torture and poetry declamation for their own sake, the Overseers are the epitome of every loathsome, villainous race of evil servitors in fantasy literature.

There are 40 of these critters on the island, all in the service of the wizards. They serve faithfully, because they know the Masters will gut them like a trout if they step out of line. They do a fine job of keeping the humans in line too, as you can well imagine.

If questioned by the PCs, they are quite polite and cooperative until they figure out how dangerous the PCs are. If they get the drop on



a PC, they jump him, then pretend ignorance of the whole affair. If the PCs are suitably impressive, the Overseers nod and bob their heads like Hollywood yes-men, agreeing to anything the PCs say and being apparently very cooperative. At the first opportunity they double-cross or betray the PCs, smiling all the more broadly.

If the wizards order the Overseers to attack the PCs, they do it. Unquestioningly. To the death. The Overseers have the same respect for the wizards' orders as INFRAREDS have for the commands of their friend The Computer—and for similar reasons. If the PCs abuse the little fellows, they whine and sneak about, then ambush at the first opportunity. If cornered, they fight resolutely and ferociously; if there's a retreat route, they skedaddle.

About 10% of the Overseers have a little magical ability, like Randy, but the only spells they are taught are Tongues and Telepathy (for dealing with the human herds). Therefore there is always conveniently some little green grubby critter who can speak with the PCs.

Overseers occupy the same ecological niche as kobolds in another familiar game—bacon bits for high-tech weapons. However, a bunch of Overseers in melee combat with one PC could be bad news.

### The wizards

The wizards are at the top of the food chain here. Everyone loves them—just like everyone loves The Computer. They are exiles from your own fantasy campaign (c'mon ... everyone's got one) living out here on an island because they're just too nasty and powerful to get along with decent fantasy folk.

Deep in the wizards' dungeon are all the obligatory monsters, traps, treasures and wizardly wonders you find in all wizards' dungeons. We're hard pressed to give a reasonable explanation why wizards seem so fond of collecting all this stuff, but from a review of the copious literature on the subject, it's perfectly clear they are. Seems a bit odd to us, we admit, but there you are.

### Special delivery for Dimension X

Our unwilling Void Voyagers will be arriving on Track 9 from Alpha Complex. Their exact inventory depends on what the PCs had with them in R&D, what you left lying around on the R&D tables or within range of the Collapsatron's effect, and on what tickles your fancy.

Remember, most of the area of effect of the TC device was cloaked in Darkness from the players' point of view. You can justify objects as large as, say, an experimental combat, a complete set of the works of Sir Walter Scott or a small host of cute little scrubots. Just remember: anything you put here, you are going to have to live with for the rest of this mission, so don't get too cheerful.

### Where the hell are we?

Here's something to read aloud to your players. Adapt the details to include any extra junk you're trucking in.

Whoa. *Hel-Lo...*

**Well, the lights are back on, but you're not altogether certain you like the results. And it's sure not the sort of light you're used to—more like the light produced by a laser-roast than by the ubiquitous overhead lighting in Alpha Complex.**

**And sure enough, in front of you are the wizard(s), a bunch of R&D techs, a techbot and the Transdimensional Collapsatron on a table. A couple of tables, chairs, desks and cabinets here and there look familiar.**

**But the walls and the ceiling look funny... and they're not where they're supposed to be. The low ceiling is made of some dark brown stuff, and the walls look like they're made of big chunks of rock. The floor seems to be hardpacked dirt. And the doors in the walls are also made of that dark brown stuff—and oddly-shaped, too.**

**Well, something funny's going on but, after all, this is R&D. Whaddaya expect?**

**So, anybody want to do anything?**

Player responses generally fall into two categories:

1. Get the wizards/Collapsatron, and
2. What's going on here?

Let's deal with what's going on here, because they'll get around to it sooner or later.

In this timeless moment before all hell breaks loose, interested and observant PCs note their PDCs and Coms are not working, there are no monitors, security cameras or other signs of The Computer anywhere, and the room they're in is clearly not the one they were in just a minute ago. Anyone who comments on the possible parallel between the original appearance of the wizards and the

### The laws of physics in Dimension X

Just the same as in Alpha Complex. Oh, we toyed with the idea of not letting the high-tech stuff work in Dimension X, forcing the PCs to use primitive weapons and their mutant powers to bail themselves out of the jam. And we thought it might be neat to give the PCs special powers in this universe, like clerical spells (*commune with Computer*), or make the high tech items into magical devices (a Com unit becomes a sort of magical staff with such spells as *summon scrubot*).

But we got lazy, so we decided to let the PCs' neat science-fictional gadgets and weapons work as a special favor to your discombobulated players.

Sorry. It won't happen again.

new locale, or who suggests the wizards may have Teleported everyone to their own world, deserves a few Perversity points.

PCs who want to get right to the action probably go right for the wizards. Let's look at the tactical situation.

### Dancing in the dark

None of the wizards have had a chance to reload their staves from hapless citizens since the Ministry of Truth gig. They are low on power. They have to get down in the dungeon where all their traps and monsters protect them. At the moment they only have one Protection shield up; that's their only currently operational spell.

The PCs have lots of options: deadly or subduing weapons fire, charge and melee, parley, use mutant powers, run away, make sanity checks and so on. Be ready to improvise in response.

In general, the wizards respond with one round of attacks, Darkness and bellowing for guards, followed by a quick retreat to the dungeon with the Collapsatron (obviously a powerful magical artifact they want to add to their collection for study and as a conversation piece). If any wizards have been lost in action, their priorities are defensive: Darkness, grabbing the Collapsatron and ducking into the dungeon.

In the third round, two Overseer guards run into the Darkness, shouting and hewing and frightening everybody a lot.



If the PCs manage to block escape into the dungeon, the wizards enter a side room and try to sneak around to the guardroom, then outside. Then they can charge up their staves from the human herd, come back in and push the PCs aside on their way to the dungeon.

In the interests of treating the players to the above-ground setting, you should discourage immediate PC pursuit into the dungeon. Otherwise they won't get a chance to chat with the humans and the Overseers—a shame to waste them.

The best way to discourage pursuit is to create confusion about where the wizards went. In a magical Darkness this shouldn't be tough—lots of yelling R&D techs and Overseers all around, sneaking wizards and nothing to see.

Another way is to pour a bunch of extra Overseer guards in from the outside and charge them into the PCs, keeping them distracted. Or have the human herd get excited by all the noise and make a big racket, enticing the PCs to investigate.

Go ahead. You can handle it.

## Ground floor

Here's a brief description of the contents of the rooms and their status as of the arrival of the Alpha Complex Transdimensional Express (Map 6). All rooms have nasty pitch torches in sconces next to the doors and at intervals around the room. Unless specifically mentioned in the room description, the torches are not lit and the rooms are in darkness. The ceilings are thick wooden beams and 3m high.

**1. Guardroom:** Four lit torches and an oil lamp on the table light the room. Armed with swords and dressed in padding, four Overseers seated at stools around a trestle table are playing a card game called Kick the Meat. The pot on the table is large, and two Overseers stay right by it when the alarm sounds. The other two run into the Rumpus Room and start swinging wildly in the dark with their swords.

Also in the room is a large, locked cupboard that contains 10 swords, 10 long spears, a few whips and 25 sets of manacles. There are also some other tables and stools for smashing and hiding behind.

**2. Common room:** This is the Overseers' Mess—an unusually apt term in this context. Like all Evil Servitors, Overseers are fond of strong drink and unfettered gluttony. Like all Evil Wizards, the management is not offended when the boys tear the place up a little, throw

**Snnrrrch:** to retch clear liquid.

**Snnrrrhach:** to retch clear liquid through the nostrils.

—Overseer terminology

food around and whack on each other. Every night. There are no words in their language for 'clean' or 'tidy', though there are 20 subtly differentiated words for retching. Quite a little culture these fellows have.

**2a** is a fireplace. Just thought you'd like to know.

**3. Food storage & spring room:** Lovely fresh clear water gurgles up in a little pool, cooling this room that stores dried meats, dairy products and other perishables. This stuff will give the PCs a class-9 case of the trots.

**4. Food storage:** Lit by four torches. Dried vegetables and grains are kept here. An Overseer is supervising three human laborers sorting grain.

**5. Dungeon antechamber:** The trapdoor to the dungeon is made of iron-reinforced hardwood. To open the door, PCs must Junk the sturdy lock, which otherwise opens with keys possessed only by the wizards. Don't forget, the Darkness thrown by the retreating wizards makes finding the trapdoor difficult.

**6. Food storage:** More grain. Two rats. Do not make the rats into cute little cartoon characters.

**7. Weapons and dangerous tools:** Spears, swords, shields and padded armor are kept in here along with hoes, rakes and other implements of destruction. Wouldn't want the human herd to get into these things, would we?

**8. Workshop:** Useful if the PCs want to make a piece of crude furniture or something.

**9. Rumpus room:** Lit by eight torches, each next to a door from the room. The PCs arrive in the northern half of the room. The wizards (A), R&D techs (B), techbot (C) and duplicate Collapsatron (carried by the wizards), arrive in the southeast corner.

All the techs know is, they were studying the Collapsatron and its manual (found in Karly-I-KNA's lab) when these INFRAREDs came in carrying a second Collapsatron and ordered them to fix it. They showed proper identification

indicating they were High Programmers in disguise, so the techs immediately set about the task with the aid of the lab techbot.

(**Note:** The wizards massaged the techs' minds a little and 'convinced' them they had seen the proper identification. Once the wizards picked the Psion tech's mind clean, they caught on fast.)

The techbot is an anthropomorphic bot with two legs, two arms and an oversized head studded with lots of sensor equipment. One arm has fine manipulators, the other arm has an array of specialized tools for electronics work. The video sensors are in color with stereoscopic and telescopic vision. The bot can be operated by an elaborate joystick system, a detachable module mounted on its back. The power source is a propane burner and a standard gas storage tank, which now contains only 12 hours of gas. The bot also has all other standard chassis and peripheral features.

(Note that the bot's propane burner is the logical power source for the Collapsatron the PCs need to return to Alpha Complex. Keep track of how many hours the bot is in operation; if it runs out of power, the PCs could be in trouble. All the tools necessary for adapting the propane burner are fortuitously on the table with the Collapsatron.)

The techbot and the four R&D techs are at the PCs' disposal for the rest of the mission. They are unarmed and unenthusiastic about combat duty, but they can carry gear and offer clever suggestions when the GM needs a hinting mouthpiece. The techbot can be quite useful also, but not for combat duty, nor is it agile in the dungeon.

## Scrounging around

Wait, where's PLC? Where's the IR Market? Here in Dimension X, the Troubleshooters are gonna run out of stuff fast.

Fortunately, any character can scrounge for weapons, ammo or food. If a player describes a scrounging method that strikes you as plausible, make an Arbitrary Justice roll, or let the player roll against an appropriate rating: Survival, Outdoor Life, conceivably even Old Reckoning Cultures. If the PC is trying to finagle something from an NPC or monster, Stealth or Management specialties may apply.

Then again, there's plenty of stuff they Just. Can't. Find. Good luck tracking down even one laser barrel...



## 7: The dungeon

Grab **Map 7**. *Don't* let your players see it—instead trot out some graph paper and make them map. Boy, won't that make 'em nostalgic.

In the descriptions below, unless stated otherwise, assume the following:

- ☉ All rooms and corridors contain unlit torches in sconces next to each door or portal and at odd intervals along the walls. This is the only illumination in the dungeon—smoky, fetid, flickering and dim—and the PCs have to light the torches themselves.
- ☉ Corridors are 3x3x3 meters and carved from the bedrock.
- ☉ The rooms themselves are of varying dimensions and carved from the bedrock (dwarven work, if you must know). Unless otherwise specified, ceilings are 3m high.
- ☉ Poor housekeeping leaves the floors a nasty mess—and somewhat indicative of traffic patterns, if the PCs scrutinize them under strong illumination. Torches don't qualify as strong illumination. See individual rooms for details.
- ☉ Placed somewhere within the dungeon (that is, whenever you want them) are the Medicine Cabinets of Extra Healing. (Remember? No clone replacements. Gotta keep the Troubleshooters alive so they can make it to the thrilling conclusion.) These contain a one-use *wand of resurrection*, *iodine of healing* (reduce a living character's wound level by one—three uses), a styptic pencil and chapstick. Randy knows how to use this stuff.

### Room 1: Gelatin monster

This delightful 3x3x3m cube of semi-sentient jello is essentially a lumbering living vault door. With jello for brains, you hardly expect scintillating conversation: In response to any speech, the cube forms a sort of mouth in the center of one cube face, purses huge sloppy lips, then sputters a few unintelligible syllables, covering the PCs with slimy jello—raspberry,

of course—at a range of 10m. The passage shows abundant and noisome evidence of this gauche social gaffe—dripping, slippery, nasty slime that glistens evilly in dim light. The slime isn't dangerous or toxic—just revolting.

When addressed by its name—'Schlooooooop'—the cube slides forward and left into the recess, permitting passage. Randy knows the word and how the cube moves, but does not volunteer it unless pressed. Masters don't like Randy to show too much wit, and he has gotten in the habit of pretending to know nothing.

Once the cube has slid forward, the PCs may proceed—but the cube is pretty smart for a mass of gelatin. It recognizes the PCs as intruders, and slides toward them to trap or engulf them. Because it moves at a stroll (2m/round), all PCs capable of sprinting can zip past it before it blocks the passage again or pins them against the wall. However, if any PC hesitates, cannot or does not sprint, or is more than 30m down the corridor, the cube swallows him up.

If the cube has recognized the PCs as intruders and reblocked the passage, or if they are belligerent by disposition, they must butcher the jello to go forward. This is a real turkey-shoot, of course, given the limited maneuverability of a mound of jello, but the PCs might expend some valuable weapon rounds or risk weapon malfunctions.

Inside the jello are the remains of several incredibly dimwitted intruders. As you might expect, their gear is more gruesome than useful. Any treasure you toss in here ought to be poisoned, cursed or otherwise a liability—perhaps the sort of thing that might get an adventurer killed by such an unprepossessing monster.

### Room 2: The lever room

All dungeons have nice levers. Pulling them generally results in something wonderful like the ceiling falling in. In this case the levers simply open doors, but behind the doors, the PCs face... the Lady or the Tiger.

There are two levers on the west wall, one for each door. Pulling a lever causes the corresponding door to open; when the lever is pulled all the way down, the door opens, then the lever automatically springs back to the 'up' position. The door itself is a substantial

stone slab that is drawn ponderously up and down by a weight-and-counterbalance system (dwarven work again).

### 1. The Lady

Behind the left-hand door is The Lady, a pulchritudinous siren scantily clad in a diaphanous gown. She is either a lamia (blood-sucking vampire) or a succubus (soul-sucking demon)—frankly there's not much difference.

Her attack is somewhat less than precipitous; she ambles over, vamping and posturing in a suggestive fashion, until she can sidle up to a victim and chew on his neck. Normally her pheromones leave the victim helpless to flee or resist. But Alpha Complex citizens are proof against her biochemical wiles and are free to zap her or evade as she saunters across the room.

She never moves faster than a walk, so she is easy to evade. Zapping her is another matter, however; treat her magical corpus as armor rating 5.

If her attack succeeds (D1D, ignores armor, no range), the victim swoons and falls into a deep coma. She then tries to drag the body back into her closet where she'll feast for a bit. Only the finest medical facilities of Alpha Complex, or a Medicine Cabinet of Extra Healing, can save the victim, so rescuing the body means toting it around for a while.

### 2. The Tiger

Behind the right-hand door is the tiger. Mr. Tiger moves much, much faster than any PC, except for mutants with Adrenalin Control or druggies hyped on thymoglandin (Combat Quick). Mr. Tiger makes two attacks on one victim per round, using its handy built-in melee weapons (S3K impact, jaws, paws, or both—play it for theatrical effect). Mr. Tiger is serious trouble indeed.

It is up to you whether the tiger surprises the PCs (therefore making it across the room to get in its two attacks before the laser fire can rip its torso), or whether the PCs can scotch the critter first.

Behind either door, the passage continues on through the dungeon.

Randy knows only about the Lady—the passage the wizards always take—and he doesn't know she's dangerous. The Lady never touches the wizards, and Randy—well, he just isn't her type, we guess.



### Room 3: The Doorward and the riddle

A single low portal opens in the southern wall. Above the portal is a wide shelf, upon which sits the Doorward. The Doorward is your basic gargoyle—over 2m tall, leathery greenish skin, long clawed hands, a toothy misshapen head with nifty little horns. Its powerful arms bear an enormous magical greatsword.

The Doorward asks a riddle of all who would pass through his portal. Unfortunately he asks the riddle in his own crude language, which no one on the island but the wizards can understand. The riddle itself, if the PCs could understand it, or if they have some telepathic Commie mutant with them, is as crude and simple as the wit of the Doorward: 'What's Big and Green and Nasty and Hangs Around Doors?' Any answer other than 'The Doorward' is an excuse for some mayhem. (Of course, even if a PC were telepathically able to understand the riddle, he couldn't answer in Doorwardspeak.)

The Doorward mumbles aggressively when the PCs enter, then listens intently for a response. He repeats, then listens again. Pretty soon he gets impatient and begins to shout the riddle over and over again. For example:

**Doorward:** Hongenoust opporton, buck mo gick mo googy mo porken, actor huhn?

**PC:** Say what?

**Doorward:** Hongenoust opporton, buck mo gick mo googy mo porken, actor huhn?

**PC:** Look, you mutated bozo, talk right or we'll toast you.

**Doorward:** Hongenoust opporton, buck mo gick mo googy mo porken, actor huhn!

**PC:** Sure, and so's your vat mate.

**Doorward:** GRRRRRRRRRRRR!

Randy has heard the riddle/password a thousand times, but because he doesn't have to know it, he hasn't remembered it. He'll stand around all day making noises vaguely like the password, protesting that he's sure to get it right any second now.

If anyone tries to pass through the portal without the password, the Doorward tries to whack him with the big sword (W5K impact, ignores armor, Violence 15). He can only swing once per round, and three characters can zip through per round, so there's a fair chance the PCs could get through alive without fighting the critter.

If they fight, things get tricky. The Doorward is magically protected against all but melee weapons. The definition of 'melee weapons' is as follows: If the character's hand (or other member) is still clutching the weapon when it comes into contact with the Doorward, it is a melee weapon.

There's also the tactical matter of fighting against something hanging from a shelf above you. PCs suffer a sharp penalty to their attacks unless they scramble up on the shelf with the Doorward, and the shelf has room for only one other man-sized combatant. And Mr. Doorward has magical leathery skin, the equivalent of armor rating 4.

**Note:** The Doorward's sword is a 'pluswhun' magical weapon; such will be useful later in the mission. Randy is a little hazy on this 'pluswhun' weapons business; he's eavesdropped on the wizards from time to time, but he doesn't really understand. If the PCs kill the Doorward, Randy suggests they bring the sword along: 'Httthith might come in handy, Mathterth—thumtime need pluthwhun weapon, yeth, thure, that'th right, pluthwhun, that'th the ticket ...'

### Room 4: Water elemental

The east end of this room is a small platform that overlooks a room full of water. There is apparently no other exit. The water is over 3m deep. If the PCs enter this room without a light, how about somebody tumbles into the water?

Randy says when the wizards come through, the water all stands up in the center. Then they walk down the steps (revealed by the reshaped water), then proceed across the dry floor of the pool to a portal in the west side of the room (currently concealed by the water). Randy hasn't any idea how this trick is done; the wizards go wave-wave with their rods, and the water stands up in the center.

To proceed beyond this room, the PCs must enter the water. Improvise the effects on delicate electronics and mechanical devices (most weapons and munitions are waterproof). But that's only a starter...

When two or three PCs get out in the water, it suddenly recedes from the walls and forms into a huge irregular cone in the center. The cone has big eyes, a bulging nose and glistening red-blue lips. It speaks—unintelligibly, of course, in water elemental-speak—warning the PCs to leave before it gets annoyed. The PCs may get the idea from its peremptory tone if you play it right.

Then the water elemental starts to pound on the PCs. It slaps each PC in the room with a watery pseudopod once each round (S5W impact, ignores armor). It ignores all impact and biological damage, as well as damage from lasers and melee weapons.

One thing will protect a PC from further attacks: a torch or other source of flame. Several energy weapons fit this category, including hand flamers (duh), napalm, HE cone rifle rounds and (if you're feeling generous) explosive grenades, but not lasers or plasma generators. Once the PC has burned the water elemental this way, the elemental leaves him alone and concentrates on the other victims.

Staging this should be lots of fun. Each watery pseudopod slaps PCs around, stunning them, tossing them into the walls, lifting them and smacking them against the floor, pressing their faces into the elemental's water body, buffeting and jarring PCs as they scramble for the exit. Liberally scatter Violence/Agility checks; PCs who fail checks may drop

gear or stumble over one another; heroic PCs who succeed in their checks may keep moving against the buffeting of the enraged elemental. NPCs panic, scream shrilly, run around and generally add to the confusion.

If it looks like the PCs are not handling this well, and are likely to be wiped out, the water elemental can have limited stamina. When appropriate, it can give a big sigh, throw a last ineffective round of weak punches at the PCs, then slump back to its original non-sentient form—a room-sized pool.

### Room 5: Slathering Hound of Oxidization

Maybe you remember a neat creature from *Popular Fantasy Game*™ that rusts everything it touches? Some fun, huh?

The PCs climb a staircase into a diamond-shaped room. A playful red bloodhound capers around the room, woofing and bounding, slobbering up a storm, obviously terribly excited by the visit of the PCs. He won't come down the stairs into the water, but he waits eagerly at the top of the stairs.

The slobber of this adorable, friendly hound has the unfortunate property of rusting and corroding any metal it touches. Prudent PCs will be disappointed when their beam weapons and plasma generators have no effect on its exuberant, clumsy affection; it has a magical resistance to missile weapons like the Doorward in Room 3, so the PCs must choke, hack or bludgeon it to death to avoid having their gear turned into rusted, useless scrap. One PC is the principal victim; the beast leaps up on this playmate, slobbering and licking everything on him, which immediately rusts. Any PC within 2m is struck by random globs of spit (assorted minor malfunctions and rust damage) as the overjoyed pooch whips his sopping jaws about.

Any bots along for the ride? The details are left to your improvisational genius.

Animal lovers probably try to avoid offing the mutt; at your discretion, one dedicated PC can distract the beast by playing fetch-the-stick while the other PCs slip past.

### Room 6: Killer penguins

This room is freezing cold, is filled with water and has two islands on either side of the room covered with snow and ice. Glowering at each other across the water between the islands are dozens of mammoth, toothy penguins.

These are the Dreaded Emperor Killer Penguin variety. Not only are they bloodthirsty, ferocious maneaters, they have a voracious hunger for political power through ruthless and Machiavellian diplomacy.

The key to getting through this room alive is skillful and shrewd diplomacy. The route to the next room is through the submerged portal in the southern wall. If the PCs step into the water without the permission of the fiercely territorial penguins, the birds attack with an intensity matched only by piranha or sharks in feeding frenzy.

Forty penguins (20 in each of two factions) attack in the water where they move like sprinters; PCs can only move at walking speed while struggling to avoid drowning. Penguins cannot be attacked with most weapons while they are in the water, and concussion from explosives hardly bothers these durable little darlings; however, PCs are vulnerable indeed. The penguins use their estimable choppers (S3K impact) to attack, and up to six at a time can attack a single floundering PC.

This can be a desperately short encounter unless the PCs swing a deal with one of the penguin factions. If the PCs ally with one faction, that faction convoys the PCs to the underwater portal, aiding the poor swimmers and perhaps even carrying some equipment if the deal is sweet.

### Staging the penguin summit talks

When the PCs arrive on the platform, the penguins notice them and huddle. From each island, an emissary plunges into the water, rockets along like a torpedo and shoots out of the water to land deftly before the PCs. The penguins on both islands shout 'Parley! Parley! Truce! We come in peace! Please greet our emissaries with full state honors!' (We hope this, and the odd fact the penguins speak English, deter the PCs from initiating hostilities. If not, well, the penguins are realists, and won't let a few casualties get in the way of negotiating a good treaty.)

The opening pitch of the two ambassadors goes like this; don't let the PCs get a word in edgewise.

**Penguin 1:** His Most Serene Highness, Splash of the Sovereign and Independent Island of Splish sends you greetings, O visitors of uncertain but almost certainly fearsome powers.

**Penguin 2:** Out of my way, buzzard breath. I bring you felicitous salutations from Fishkiller, Emperor of All Penguindom,

King of the Sceptred Isle of Splush. If we may without offending ask, what brings you gentle folk to these unhappy shores?

**Penguin 1:** Cut the cackle. I saw them first...

**Penguin 2:** You did not! The door can be seen equally well from both islands, rebel scum!

**Penguin 1:** [Turns to PCs.] You see what they're like? They're just impossible.

**Penguin 2:** Heretic! Usurper! Rebel against your legal sovereign! Pray you, sirs, help us destroy these knavish regicides, who dare to take arms against their king! In the name of legitimacy and all that is holy... [Shoves Splish emissary into water.]

**Penguin 1:** [Surfaces and sputters.] Rebel, hah! You popinjays decide some nitwit is Emperor, and suddenly it's *do this* and *do that*...

**Penguin 2:** Stop it! Shut up!

**Penguin 1:** *Liberte! Egalite! Fraterni-glub...* [Splush emissary dives into water and they begin to fight.]

Once the PCs have made it clear they want to cross the room, each penguin dashes back to his island to see what they can offer the PCs and what kind of treaty or alliance they can accept in return.

Sooner or later, if the PCs offer either a treaty that supports the sovereignty of one faction's ruler (of little practical value, but worth a great deal in prestige) or a weapon or item that substantially increases the power of one faction, that faction allies with the PCs and convoys them safely through the water to the submerged portal. The other neglected faction paddles about fiercely and shouts epithets, but does not interfere.

### Room 7: Ye Olde Hinged Floor Trick

The PCs are walking along and the floor drops out beneath the first two or three. They make Violence/Agility checks. Some of 'em miss. *Thud. Thud. Thump. Whhhump!*—the floor swings closed again. The poor PCs are trapped in the fetid darkness.

C'mon. It's no big deal. All there is at the bottom of the trap are some old corpses and a bunch of junk. And the hinged floor is easily swung open again if there're two or three guys still up there. Getting a techbot out of there is a challenge, but nothing extraordinary.



The neat part is all the treasure. Here's where we decided to stick all the scrolls, potions and magical rings, scattered in the debris and noisome remains. Right before they'd be needed in the next room. Pretty cheesy, huh?

Here are descriptions of all the loot. Think of it as a sort of benign cache of R&D experimental devices.

(By the way. It's a good bet none of the characters will bother to search the trap. Who would expect to find anything useful in a **PARANOIA** dungeon, for heaven's sake? So maybe the magic items ought to glow or something. Think it over.)

☉ **Small greasy brown crock stoppered with a tightly wedged rag and crumbly cork (the healing salve):** Almost empty, two applications left, of a salve that cures all wounds.

☉ **A battered scroll case containing two parchments:** One is a magical scroll inscribed with the *protection from walking dead* incantation. To use the scroll, one need only run his eyes over the script, and the words magically are made intelligible. The reader knows the incantation, but after he speaks it aloud once, the incantation fades from memory. The other scroll is a map of an unnamed dungeon complex; just yank a map out of some other fantasy roleplaying product and show it to the PCs. If your players ever return to Dimension X, you can use this as your hook.

☉ **Small yellow gold ring:** Elvish work, inscribed in runic letters visible only after intense heat is applied to the ring. Turns the bearer invisible when worn. Too small for any of the PCs, but would fit Randy perfectly.

How *could* we? Have we no *shame*? You have to ask?

☉ **Little glass vial tightly sealed with a wax-sealed stopper:** Potion of gaseous form. Turns the PC into a gas. Unfortunately doesn't turn him back into a solid later. Guess you'd have to call this a poison or something.

☉ **A tiny silver dagger:** This is a '*pluswhun*' weapon—real useful against the spectre they'll encounter in Room 9.

## Room 8: Wandering Monster Ready Room

A kobold, a troglodyte, a troll, a giant, a lizardman and a giant toad are sitting around the Wandering Monster Table in the Wandering Monster Ready Room, playing Hearts and scarfing up junk food. An hourglass is sitting on a nearby table, almost empty. The room contains six appropriately sized pallets covered with skins and furs. They are having lots of fun and making so much noise the PCs can hear them all the way down the hall from the Old Hinged Floor Trick. They can sneak up and observe, if they've a mind to.

The creatures laugh and chat, gesturing and tossing down cards. Then one points at the hourglass, and all the critters cut the cards to see who has to go out wandering. The giant loses, grumbles good-naturedly, picks up his club and ambles down the corridor in the direction of the PCs.

This is a straight-ahead dungeon confrontation. The giant probably stumbles onto the PCs first, then sounds the alarm, after which he is joined by the other five monsters. They fight to the death in traditional fashion, or run away, or stand and jeer, according to your taste in dungeon conflict.

## Room 9: Hall of the Living Dead

Ten zombies shamble toward the PCs, waving their deteriorating arms and murmuring. All they want to do is grab the PCs and hang on, sort of like an overly affectionate companion. Though not particularly durable, they are real persistent. While a PC is hugged by dead guys, reduce his skills and specialties by half.

For PC attacks against the corpses, ignore any result other than Down, Killed or Vaporized. Use the rulebook's hit location table to localize the damage; then, any location Downed or Killed is severed or shattered from the rest of the body; a subsequent hit of any kind destroys it. A Vaporize result instantly destroys the location. The rest of the body continues unaffected. The parts keep trying get chummy with the PCs, but the deteriorating condition of their locomotive resources limits their mobility.

In the middle of this ruckus, the spectre enters. This sucker is insubstantial, and therefore not affected by normal weapons.

The PCs need '*pluswhun*' weapons, as Randy quickly suggests. If the PCs have picked up magical weapons from the Doorward or the Old Hinged Floor Trick, they're in good shape; the spectre withdraws from such weapons when it sees them, and one PC can hold the spectre at bay while the others take care of the zombies.

Otherwise the spectre proceeds toward the nearest character, floating at walking speed, and fells him with its icy grip. A touched PC falls into a deep slumber, from which he can only be awakened after three days.

At one victim per turn, this dude has a good chance to wipe the team unless the PCs get their act together. Unless they have a '*pluswhun*' weapon, they must dodge or eliminate the distraction of the zombies and outmaneuver the spectre; even then, they are likely to lose a few PCs or NPCs. If they are well-supplied with tacnukes, field weapons or other popular area-effect goodies, the zombies are no problem, though you may want to make their lives a living hell for using powerful weapons in an enclosed space.

## Room 10: Library and breakfast nook

Oh, oh, oh! Wait! We almost forgot. Read aloud:

**You see lots of books and manuscripts on shelves. There's a swarthy guy with tusks and an ugly snout crouched over with his back to you. He wears an apron and is sweeping up crumbs with a dust pan and brush. He starts, turns, sees you, squeals in terror, drops the dustpan and brush, and dashes into the next room.**

This is your orc. Go get 'im. He has no combat skills—he's just a housekeeper. He runs and hides in a float tank in the next room. Like shooting fish in a barrel.

Orcbusters, indeed. Good work, men.

In the library (**A**) lots of scrolls, folios, string-tied manuscripts and leatherbound tomes are stacked on shelves. Randy can read about 10% of the parchment data storage here. The first nine legible titles taken at random are:

☉ *Budget Travel Guide to Lemuria*

☉ *The Sworn Book of Luther Pendrake*

☉ *In Search of Ancient Astronauts*

- ☉ *Popular Mechanics Guide to Home Thaumaturgy*
- ☉ *Deities and Demigods*
- ☉ *There and Back Again*
- ☉ *The Cursed Spellbook*
- ☉ *Conan the Librarian*
- ☉ *Real Wizards Don't Eat Little Women*

The Cursed Spellbook brings terrible luck to any who view its pages. Of course, 'terrible luck' for a Troubleshooter is debatable. If he makes it back home safely to Alpha Complex, is that *good* luck, or...?

The interesting part here is the breakfast nook (B). On the table is the Transdimensional Collapsatron and the operations manual, with a little note from the wizards. Randy can translate, or the table can talk, or something. (C'mon, loosen up!)

**You guys are bad news. We give up. Here's the dimensional travel dealie.**

**Now beat it. Don't come back. We're warning you. You got lucky so far, but just as soon as we get back from vacation we're going to summon some serious vampires and demons and stuff. Then you'll be sorry.**

**Cordially,  
Skibex, Chodor and Phemud**

That's it. Now the PCs have the Collapsatron; they can go home if they want to (and if they can figure out how to power it and set the antennae according to the directions in the manual—about which, see below).

## Room 11: Float Tanks of Infinite Tranquility

This is the equivalent of the bedroom, but the wizards don't have a big wardrobe, don't take much interest in their personal appearance and don't sleep in beds. Instead they sleep in float tanks—you know, sensory deprivation tanks, like in *Altered States* or *New Age* magazines. The PCs should have no idea what they're for, should assume they're potentially dangerous and should stay away from them at all costs.

The only thing of interest here is the secret door in the south wall. Not even Randy knows about it. And the PCs can't find it unless they have the Detect Secret Passages skill. (Which

they don't, unless you're playing a pretty weird **PARANOIA** variant.) Except for the three sets of dirty footprints that lead up to and disappear into a wall. If it dawns on the PCs this is implausible (and after all the weirdness so far, it may not seem so odd), they are welcome to blast the secret door to smithereens and follow the secret passage...

Which goes a long, long, *long* way until it comes out at the edge of the island where the wizards had a little sailboat stashed (a 15m yacht, actually) which they have boarded and sailed off for a little vacation cruise.

Yes, the wizards are gone. Nowhere in sight. Not much the PCs can do about it, either. They can wander around the island blowing things up and slaughtering the natives, but, except for the intrinsic pleasure of wanton destruction and mayhem, there's nothing left to do but figure out how to return to Alpha Complex—or decide life on this island isn't half bad after all...

## Getting back to Kansas

Now that the PCs have the Collapsatron, all they must do is to set the device up according to the manual, find a power source and plug it in. Back they go for debriefing.

A power source? No problem. How about the techbot's propane engine? Or a couple of weapon or Com unit power packs? All the tools are lying on the table where the R&D techs fixed the plug. And if the PCs haven't been too cavalier with the health and welfare of the R&D techs, they can be ordered to do all the work. Even if the R&D techs have been used as ballast or fed to the killer penguins, the PCs can do the work, given plenty of time and persistence.

If for some reason the PCs have managed to lose, foul up or destroy any conceivable power source for the Collapsatron, then Randy can show the PCs where the *lightning bolt* wands are hidden. Just like Randy says, you just stick the wand next to the plug, say the magic words and *presto*. Take this as a plot device to get the PCs back to Alpha Complex, or an excuse to blow up the whole island and send everyone home for the night.

And, if the PCs manage to lose, foul up or destroy the Collapsatron (or if they don't use the manual to set up the device antennae correctly), here's a way to send your PCs on a grand tour of the multiverse. Randy knows where the wizards keep their spare Amulets of the Planes. There just happen to be enough for everyone—Randy, the R&D techs, whoever. Randy tells the PCs how they work. This is roughly equivalent to our telling you how to fly a

Boeing 727. Don't be real surprised if it doesn't work exactly like Randy planned.

Who knows where everybody ends up, or in what condition? Maybe everybody gets turned into rabbits. Did you ever play *Bunnies and Burrows*? Now *there's* a roleplaying game ...

## You can't go home again

And what if the PCs are none too eager to return to the bosom of their community, to The Computer that loves them so well?

Fine. Let them settle on the island.

There's nothing on the island to build a boat out of, even if they knew how to build or sail one. The wizards are taking a long vacation. Not a lot of adventuring opportunities—you can compress the action pretty effectively:

**PC:** Well, we go out looking for the Overseers.

**GM:** Ummm, sorry, they come looking for you. Crawling on hands and knees. They offer to serve you forever and ever. They offer to kill themselves if you promise not to frighten them anymore.

**PC:** Well. OK. We teach the humans all the refinements of culture and technology.

**GM:** They seem real excited. You are amazed at how stupid they are. They never get bored. Nor do they learn anything. But boy, are they excited and cooperative.

**PC:** We blow up stuff until we run out of ammunition.

**GM:** Yup. The island smokes for a long time.

*[Long pause]*

**PC:** OK... We get Randy to teach us magic.

**GM:** Really? *Randy*? How many of you die before you suspect this isn't a good idea?

So you retire those characters for a while. Who knows ... maybe by the time we have a fantasy supplement for **PARANOIA**, it'll be time for the wizards to return to the island and offer to take everybody on a big adventure.

Something about hunting for some ring. Or taking care of some guy named Conan. Or James Bond.



## Debriefing

Unless the PCs get the Collapsatron, you don't have to worry about this. No Alpha Complex, no debriefing. Sounds good, huh? To tell the truth, we never did like those debriefings - all that whining and groveling, then you have to give Official Commendations and hold treason trials and execute folks...

*Bunnies and Burrows* sounds better all the time.

But if you absolutely have to let your players get back to Alpha Complex alive, it's only fair that you reward them for all the difficult and dangerous work they've done, for their ingenious problem solving and their cool, professional performance under impossible circumstances.

Make them all Heroes of Our Complex. Promote them to INDIGO Clearance. And transfer them to the Armed Forces Service Group, as per special request of the White Commandant, for assignment to a newly created special forces unit, the Vulture

Squadron Power Armor Warriors. After an extensive and grueling training period (which either enhances their already formidable combat skills, or kills them), the former Special Task Force #666 graduates, just in time for a special assignment. The Computer, eager to exploit the Transdimensional Collapsatron and concerned about the threat presented by Commie Mutant Traitors and saboteurs from Beyond Space and Time, sends the new unit out into the Final Frontier. This handily sets the stage for the next mission in this book, *Clones in Space!*

## Wizard roster

Name	Favorite spells; other abilities	Weapons	Armor	Roleplaying notes
Skibex	Darkness, Electroshock; Power 14; Unarmed Combat 08; other skills 06; other specialties 10	Staff (100 Power points)	GM fiat	Easily panicked; wants to go home <i>real</i> bad; hates the sight of blood, especially his own.
Phemud	Protection, Empathic Healing, Electroshock; Power 20; Unarmed Combat 12; other skills 06; other specialties 10	Staff (100 Power points)	GM fiat	Alert; levelheaded; reasonably polite to PCs; usually stuck in the middle of Skibex and Chodor's arguments.
Chodor	Fireball; Power 17; Unarmed Combat 16; other skills 06; other specialties 10	Staff (100 Power points)	GM fiat	Bloodthirsty, arrogant killer; just as soon stay in Alpha Complex and take over, rather than go home.

Though each wizard has personal favorite spells, all three wizards have the following mutant powers (described in the introduction to this mission, 'Magic in **PARANOIA**': Animate Dead, Charm, Darkness, Deep Probe, Electroshock, Empathic Healing, Fireball, Mental Block, Protection Shield, Regeneration, Telekinesis, Telepathy, Teleport, Tongues, Transform Other.

Wizards avoid unarmed combat like the plague, but use their Unarmed Combat specialties when they attack to drain Power. In this attack, the wizard touches a living target with his staff, and the staff sucks all the target's Power into the staff. The target is Snafued and may go insane.

## Damaged bot roster

See the boxed text on page 12 for descriptions of the broken-down bots.

Model	Size	Speed	Weapon specialties	Armor
Scrubot 11/F-823	Water cooler	Hang immobile	Scrubber Manipulators 17 (O5W impact)	2
Cheerful dimwit; threw a bearing; hangs upside-down waiting for replacement				
Warbot IZM-5988	Refrigerator	Limp (walk)	Unarmed Combat 17 (S3D impact)	4
Shell-shocked veteran; limps in circles and, if ordered into combat, whacks target with empty guns				
Jackobot 350-209UV	Portly butler	Tread (stroll)	Unarmed Combat 05 (S4D impact)	3
Polite butler; intermittent short-circuit causes seizures; grabs things and shakes a lot				
Jackobot 330-203Z	Bodybuilder	Thrash futilely (immobile)	Unarmed Combat 07 (S4D impact)	3
Crazed axe murderer; 'gone frankenstein,' hates humans; nailed securely to wall				

## NPC roster

Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Roleplaying notes
Generic loyal citizens	All skills and specialties 07	—	—	Innocent bystanders; R&D techs sucked into Dimension X; whining sniveling jerks without an ounce of self-respect; good target practice
Patrons of Reluctant Scrubot	Unarmed Combat 09, Energy Weapons 12	Laser pistol* (W3K energy)	Reflec*	Snookered INDIGOs and VIOLETs; enthusiastic brawlers; prefer busting heads to shooting
Six RED Troubleshooters	Unarmed Combat 11, Energy Weapons 11	Laser pistol* (W3K energy)	Reflec*	Typical clumsy, incompetent paranoids
Blue Bucket Brigade revolutionaries	Hand Weapons 09; Unarmed Combat 04	Needle guns and one hand flamer	Red reflec	Three Stooges meet James Bond
Randy the Wonder Lizard	Unarmed Combat 09	Bite (S3D impact)	GM fiat	Cowardly green toadying lizardman; pathologic liar with a fondness for manflesh; Tongues, Telepathy
Overseers	Unarmed Combat 09	—	1 (leather)	Like Randy but less trustworthy; sycophantic backstabbers; some have Tongues and Telepathy
Generic Dimension X humans	Unarmed Combat 01	—	—	Naked primitives; slobber and grunt a lot

\* Lasers and reflec marked with an asterisk are in the color of their owner's Security Clearance.

## Monster roster (Episode 7)

Monster	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Notes
Gelatin monster	Engulf Stupid Attacker 18; Ooze Slowly 18	Engulf (stun, immobilize)	3	3m cube of stupid raspberry jello; no vital organs
The Lady	Chew Neck 19; Hypnotize Male Targets Who Aren't On Hormone Suppressants 19	Bite (D1D, ignores armor)	4	Bloodsucking lamia/soulsucking succubus; ambles at walking speed; no armor vs. <i>pluswhun</i> weapons
Mr. Tiger	Violence 16	Jaws/paws (S3K impact)	—	Hungry Bengal; two attacks/round on one target
Doorward	Violence 15	<i>Pluswhun</i> sword (W5K impact, ignores nonmagical armor)	2	Immobile, unintelligible, humorless gargoyle with riddle; hit only by melee weapons
Water elemental	Splash Violently 10	S5W impact, ignores armor	— *	Animated puddle; fast; leaves PCs alone who burn it
Slathering Hound of Oxidation	Drool Copiously All Over Target 20	Slobber (rusts metal, 2m range)	—	Hysterically chummy magic pooch; slobbers beyond belief; hit only by melee weapons
Killer penguins (40)	Management 12, Violence 13, Swim Stunningly Fast 18	Beaks (S3K impact)	—	Amphibious Machiavellians; chomp undiplomatic PCs; would rather talk than fight; not to be trifled with
<b>Wandering monsters</b> —gathered in the Wandering Monster Ready Room around the Wandering Monster Table; truculent unbribeable killers				
Kobold	Violence 10	Sword (S5K impact)	1	Short green goon with sword
Troglodyte	Violence 10	Club (S4K impact)	—	Squat little geek with club
Troll	Violence 10	Club (W3K impact)	—	Like troglodyte but uglier; regenerates (Power 07)
Giant	Violence 10	Club (W3V impact)	1	Really big hairy thug with really big club
Lizardman	Violence 10	Club (W3K impact)	1	Like Randy but short-tempered, with club; smelly
Giant toad	Violence 10	Tongue (entangles, one use)	—	Lousy conversationalist; tongue works as tangler
Zombies (10)	Violence 10; Shamle And Go 'Urrgh' 20	Cling (target PC's ratings halved)	—	Slow, mindless meat robots; unaffected by combat results less than Down; Down knocks off body parts
Spectre	Violence 19	Icy grip (D1D, ignores armor)	—	Fast, insubstantial dead guy; hit only by <i>pluswhun</i> weapons; floats along at a fast run; coma lasts 3 days
Orc	—	—	—	Wimpy housekeeper; sleazy attempt to justify title

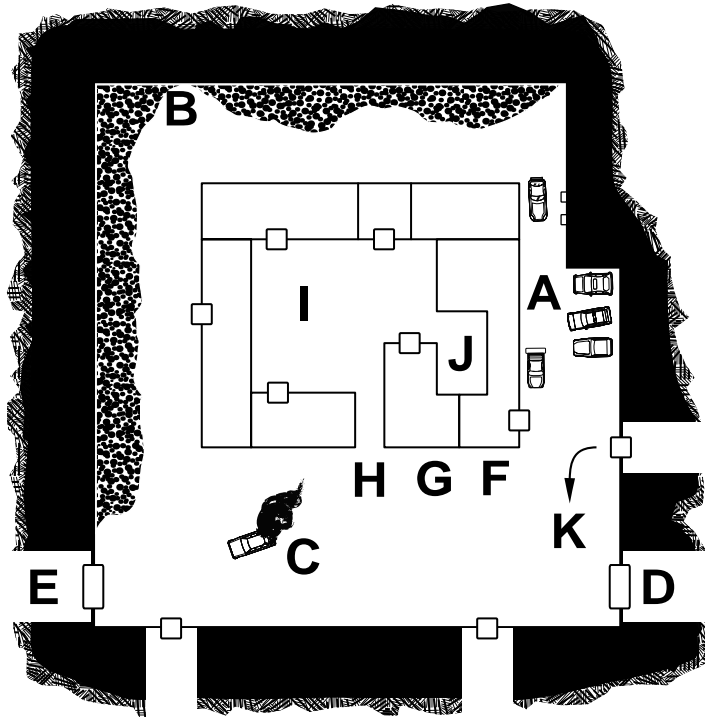
\* The water elemental is affected only by weapons that produce heat or flame: hand flamers, napalm, explosives, but not lasers or plasma.



**Map 1: TechServ**

**DND Sector TechServ**  
(Episode 1)

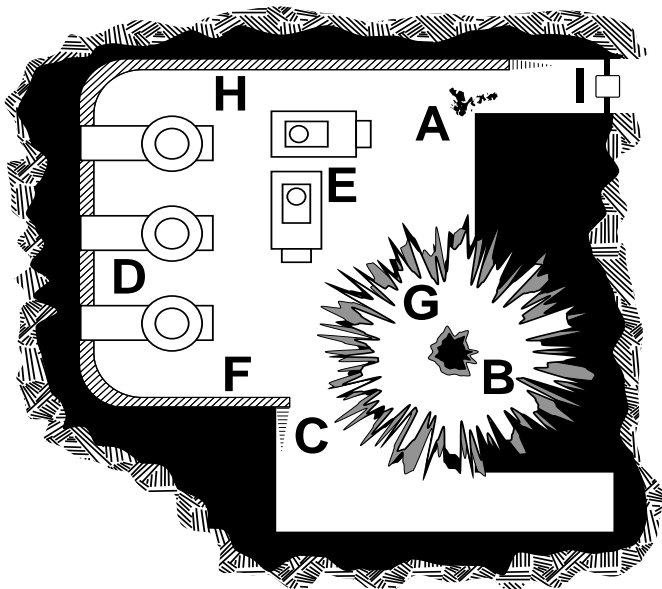
- A: Autocar refueling depot
- B: Junkyard
- C: Burning autocar
- D: Transport tube entrance
- E: Tube exit
- F: Wandering loonies (10)
- G: RED Troubleshooter NPCs (6)
- H: Wizards, Randy and Collapsatron
- I: Autocar/transbot repair
- J: Bot repair bay; damaged bots
- K: Troubleshooter PCs enter here



**Map 2: Relay**

**DND Sector Power Relay Station**  
(Episode 2)

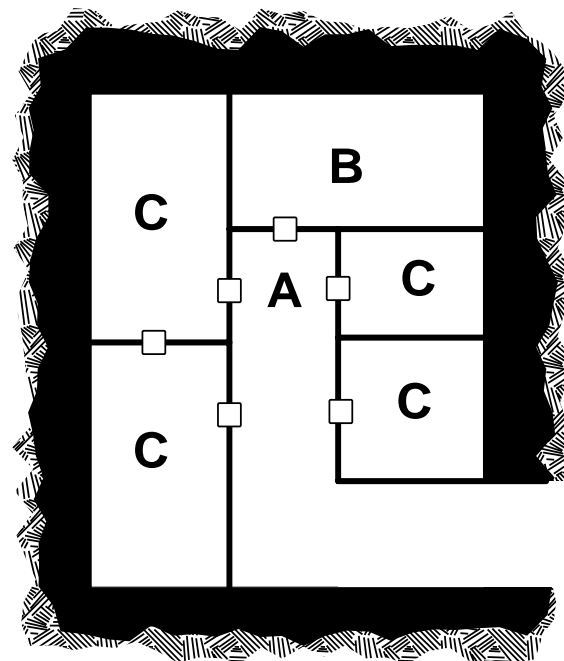
- |                                |                                  |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A: Vulture sludge              | E: Power regulator chambers      |
| B: Randy and Collapsatron      | F: Catwalk                       |
| C: Wizards                     | G: Target area of "visitors"     |
| D: Massive energy-flux busbars | H: Terrified bystanders          |
|                                | I: Troubleshooter PCs enter here |



**Map 3: Office**

**DND Sector Travel Information Office**  
(Episode 3)

- A: Blue Bucket revolutionary cells
- B: Travel Information Office and wizards
- C: Empty rooms



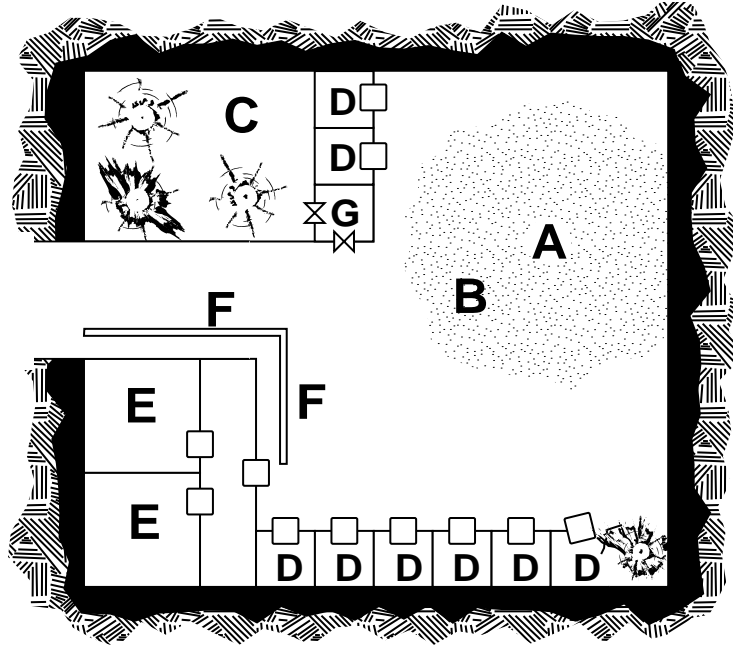


**Map 4: R&D Lab**

**DND Sector R&D Lab**

*(Episode 4)*

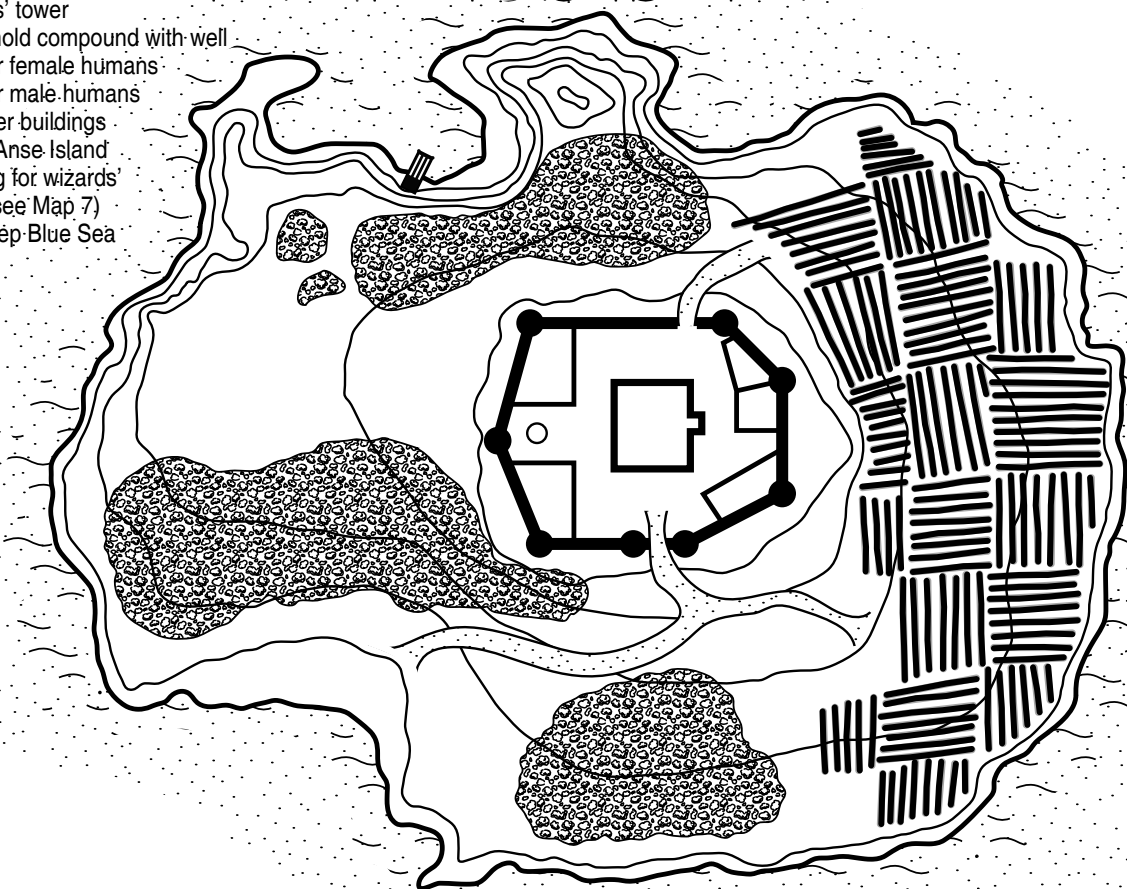
- A: Three wizards and Collapsatron
- B: Sphere of Darkness
- C: Testing chamber
- D: RED-Clearance offices
- E: ORANGE-Clearance administration
- F: Blast shielding
- G: Iris blast doors and access hallway



**Gilla C'Anse Island**

*(Episode 5)*

- A: Wizards' tower
- B: Stronghold compound with well
- C: Barn for female humans
- D: Barn for male humans
- E: Overseer buildings
- F: Gilla C'Anse Island
- G: Mooring for wizards' 15m yacht (see Map 7)
- H: The Deep-Blue Sea



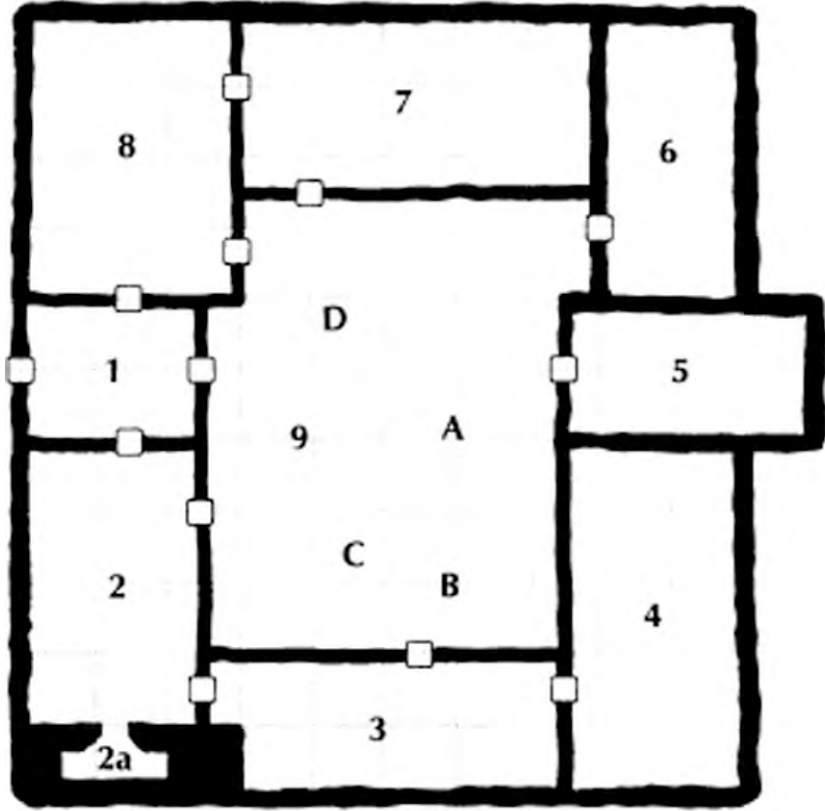
A  
B  
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**Map 5: Wizards' island**



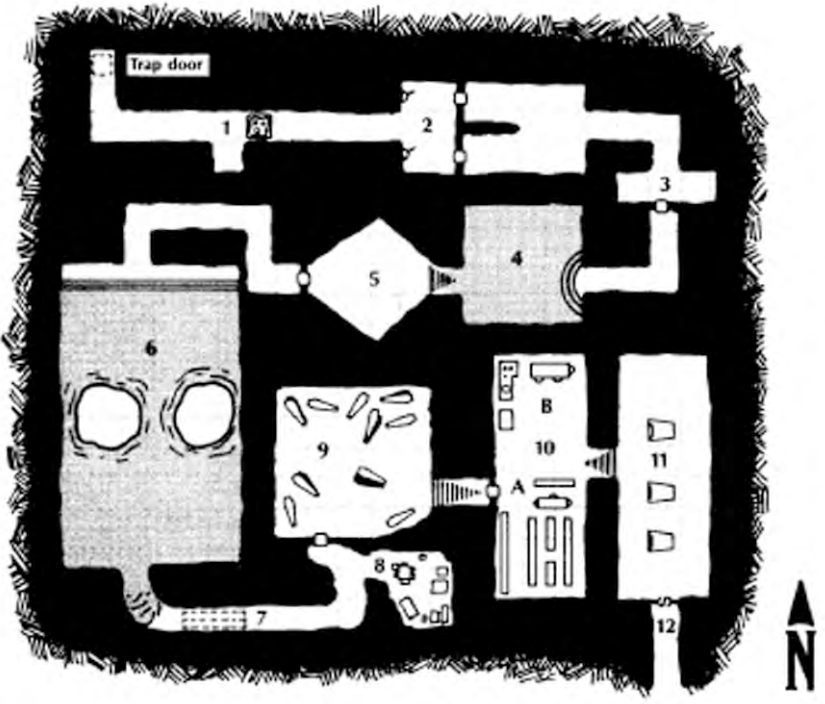
# Map 6: Wizards' tower

- Wizards' Tower (Ground Floor)  
(Episode 6)
- 1: Guardroom
  - 2: Common room
    - 2a: Fireplace
  - 3, 4: Food storage
  - 5: Dungeon antechamber with trapdoor
  - 6: Food storage
  - 7: Weapons and dangerous tools
  - 8: Workshop
  - 9: Rumpus room
    - A: Three wizards and Collapsatron
    - B: Techbot
    - C: Technicians (3)
    - D: Troubleshooter PCs



# Map 7: Dungeon

- The Dungeon  
(Episode 7)
- 1: Gelatin monster
  - 2: Lever room
  - 3: Doorward with riddle
  - 4: Water elemental
  - 5: Slathering Hound of Oxidation
  - 6: Killer penguins
  - 7: Ye Olde Hinged Floor Trick
  - 8: Wandering Monster Ready Room
  - 9: Hall of the Living Dead
  - 10: Library and breakfast nook
    - A: Library
    - B: Breakfast nook
  - 11: Float Tanks of Infinite Tranquility
  - 12: Secret door to escape route and yacht (see Map 5)



# PARANOIA™

## My First Treason

### Special duties for special troubleshooters

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Mongoose Publishing production director/  
Struts around wearing fun yellow hardhat

#### THE COMPUTER

Give me a clone until he is seven.

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## Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET

# WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower is treason punishable by a long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.

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## 1. Introduction

Back in the old, unfun days of **PARANOIA**, when Zap style ruled the line and unapproved forms of humor were not punished by summary execution, there were parodies of certain popular books, movies, television shows, roleplaying games and other media forms. In the brave new edition, Famous Game Designers set their sights higher. We do not go for the cheap laugh, for the easy joke at the expense of some passing fad by jamming it into Alpha Complex. (*Vampires, hey, aren't they hilarious?\**)

Therefore, we would like to emphasize that this scenario is not a parody. It may have been *inspired* by a certain wildly popular series of fantasy novels about a boy wizard going to wizard school. We may wish to *translate* that element of our cultural zeitgeist into the **PARANOIA** setting, with the intent of *flavoring* our humor with recognizable elements. We might even wish to *satirize* aspects of the books. However, in no way, shape, form or legal action is this a *parody*.

We are not inconstant. We are moving from one state of constancy to another, more constant one.

Anyway, now that that's out of the way, let's talk about *H\*rry P\*tt\*r and the Enchanted Confession Booth*—er, I mean, *My First Treason*. You are holding in your hands (or, in this electronic day and age, reading on your screen\*\*) a mini-campaign for **PARANOIA**, complete with six pregenerated player characters. Not 'pregenerated Troubleshooters', you'll note, because *My First Treason's* characters are brave young Junior Citizens: Alpha Complex kids in an Alpha Complex crèche. The four chapters of the mini-campaign each cover one year of their education, from age ten to age 14 (when they go off to join the loyal workforce).

Along the way, they'll run into secretive conspiracies, nefarious traitors, weird mutants and gratuitous

terminations—all in their very own crèche! Can the characters solve their problems and the secrets of their past while still studying for the *Approved Revised History of Alpha Complex (fifth edition)* exam?

\* Yes, I know a recent **PARANOIA** scenario (*Spin Control*) involved zombies. What's your point?

\*\* Filesharing is treason, citizen.

### The Junior Citizens

- ☞ **William-JST-1** is an oddly charismatic young Junior Citizen with a knack for making others do what he wants them to do. What William doesn't know is that he's not a clone—he's actually the natural-born son of a High Programmer, Louis-U, who placed William in the crèche for protection. The children of High Programmers are often used as hostages or for blackmail.
- ☞ **Nina-JST-1** has already been tagged as 'argumentative and insubordinate' by the

supervisors of the crèche, and is in line for drug therapy and brainscrubbing unless her behavior improves. In a few years, she's going to discover that she's a powerful mutant wanted by Psion....

- ☞ **Eva-JST-1** might just be the perfect citizen. Ambitious, loyal, determined and intelligent. If only Alpha Complex rewarded merit instead of backstabbing and treason.
- ☞ **Joe-JST-1** is, unfortunately for him, a product of sabotage in the cloning banks. The DNA for a notorious Commie was introduced into the banks, resulting in young Joe. He doesn't have the *memories* of the Commie, but he'll grow up to look just like him...and maybe think like him too.
- ☞ **Thomas-JST-1** was once an IntSec agent, pursuing the Commie Mutant Traitor who was reclone as Joe-JST. Thomas ended up getting his genetic pattern reinserted into the cloning banks, and

### But I Don't Like Pregenerated Characters

Fortunately, the plot-dependant bits of most of the pregenerated characters can be lifted out easily and inserted like subcutaneous RFID tags into other characters. If one player wants to play an angsty, I'm-so-depressed-my-soul's-INFRARED kid, then you can just stick one of the secrets from one of the pregenerated characters (like '*I'm a powerful mutant*' or '*my daddy's a High Programmer*') into his background.

The only problems arise if you've got more than four players, as the secret plot elements of '*I'm a petbot guardian*' or '*I'm actually an all-grown-up IntSec agent in a child's body*' aren't quite so portable. You could easily say that Thomas-JST-1's memories of his adult life only return gradually, of course, and let a player come up with his 'child' personality. As for the petbot...eh, can't help there. We shall continue the parody satire and leave the fans argue ad infinitum over this plot hole.

### But I Don't Have Six Players

Not all the pregenerated characters have to be played by players—you can easily make Timmy the PetBot into an NPC, and both Thomas-JST and Eva-JST can be removed from the campaign without any problems—just ignore any subplots that depend on their presence.

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Game Rules for Junior Citizens

If you're creating your own characters, then here are the changes to character creation for Junior Citizens:

Junior Citizens start with only three Common Specialties, and they don't get the normal Energy Weapons specialty of Troubleshooters.

They don't have a service firm or secret society, so they don't get the skills from those sources either.

Junior Citizens have a mutation, but they don't know what it is yet.

Junior Citizens have an Access score, but it is limited to getting stuff done in the context of the crèche—you know which kid is really good at forging signatures, or where the school docbot stores the happy pills.

### New Skills

These skill specialties are normally only used in crèches, and are forgotten by adult Troubleshooters.

**Management: Cramming.** This specialty allows the character to study a large amount of information and regurgitate the relevant bits in an exam, but doesn't allow him to actually *retain* any of the information. It's the easy way to pass exams if you don't actually have the relevant skill. (Well, technically, cheating's even easier, but no loyal citizen would dare cheat, right?).

**Violence: Bullying.** This works just like the Management specialty of Intimidation, but involves physical torture as well as psychological pain.

**Stealth: Squirring.** The art of getting into places you shouldn't be by squeezing through vents, access tubes and other spaces that are much too small for adults.

**Hardware: Improvisation.** Building things out of spare parts. Creativity is discouraged in most of Alpha Complex (the exception being R&D, where it's encouraged via crazy drugs), but bright Junior Citizens can turn a few bits of scrap metal and a handful of computer chips into, say, a primitive frag grenade.

**Software: Journaling.** The art of writing your online journal so as to say what the psychologists and censors reading it expect you to say. All Junior Citizens are expected to keep a journal; those skilled at Journaling can form cliques and throw aspersions and accusations at the less adept.

**Wetware: Faking Illness.** I can't do the test today, sir, I'm sick!

### Treason

If a Junior Citizen commits a treasonous act, then his youth is taken into account. A Junior Citizen gets ten points of 'Treason Armor',

but this is depleted when used. For example, young William-JC blows up a reactor and is sentenced to Erasure. However, Friend Computer decides that '*boys will be boys*' and drops the punishment to a mere brainscrub. This costs two of William-JC's ten points of armor.

Junior Citizens can't use their Access scores to defend against treason.

### Optional Rule: Junior Citizen Advancement

Under the normal **PARANOIA** rules, advancement is purchased using Perversity Points. However, given your chances of surviving an adventure are slim to none, it's much more common for a player to spend all his Perversity to cling to life instead of hoarding it to improve his skills. However, advancement and improving skills is much more important than normal in *My First Treason*. Therefore, the following optional rule is suggested: **only Perversity that has already been spent can be used to improve skills.** So, William spends five Perversity points to ensure he can hide from a roaming teacher after curfew. He reduces his current Perversity total by five, and increases his Spent Perversity by five. At the end of the scenario, he can spend the Spent Perversity on improving his skills, as described in Chapter 12 of the **PARAOIA** rulebook.

recopied his MemoMax data too. He's waiting until he's grown up before exacting his revenge on the Commies who killed him.

- ☞ Finally, **Timmy the PetBot** is a friendly and bouncy robot dog—who was actually programmed by William's father to watch over the crèche and to protect William. For a petbot, it's got an awful lot of hidden weapons....

### The Adventures

**Bully With A Cone Rifle:** The Junior Citizens are moved to a new crèche, where they meet their new teachers and get beaten up by the older children. Someone is spreading Death Leopard propaganda among the senior Junior Citizens, and they've got to be stopped before Armed Forces training begins....

**Mutant Testing Time:** It's mutant testing time! Everyone in the crèche is being subjected to psychological

and biochemical tests, to determine if their DNA's pure enough. Those who fail may be terminated, or worse—they instantly become the lowest of the low in the crèche. Worse again, it looks like someone's decided the characters are going to fail even before they're tested....

**Commie on Campus:** The characters find a notorious Commie Mutant Traitor hiding in the crèche. He claims he's actually a loyal clone, who has been framed by a



conspiracy who are trying to get hold of a new weapon. If the characters help, they get to pilot a warbot...but they might miss the inter-crèche FunBall tournament if they do!

**Graduation:** The final exams are looming large! What service group with the characters be assigned to? Will some of them become Troubleshooters? Who can make it to RED clearance? And what about all the mysterious forces and conspiracies that have been troubling them all along?

## The Characters and Mutant Powers

All of the characters, with the obvious exception of Timmy the PetBot, will develop their mutant powers over the course of this scenario. The exact timing is up to you, and should be a combination of the fortuitous ('Die, kiddie Commie scum!' 'Er, Energy Shield apparently!') and the embarrassing ('Are you a mutant, Joe?' 'No sir. May I spontaneously combust if I'm lying.' \*FOOM\*.) It's best if you let the players know

they've developed a power, but don't tell them what it is until the power is actually triggered.

Nina is a special case. While the powers of the other characters should be rolled on the Straight or Classic tables, depending on your style of play, Nina's a very powerful mutant, and she gets a random power off the Zap table. She also gets a form of the Telepathy power—not enough to scan the thoughts of others without training, but enough to faintly sense telepathic signals and to make her of use to Psion.

## The Characters and Secret Societies

At the start of the game, only Thomas has any idea about the existence of secret societies—he's a member of the First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer, although his membership has obviously lapsed a bit because of the whole reborn-as-a-Junior-Citizen problem. Joe's obviously going to be recruited by the Commies, and Psion are already interested in Nina. If the other characters try,

they can probably make contact with one society or another. (See *The Traitor's Manual* for details on society recruitment and initiation.) If a character joins a secret society, he gets the appropriate secret skill for free.

## The Massively Overcomplex Backstory

*My First Treason* begins 13 years ago, with the Revolt of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Heavy Assault Division. The Alpha Complex Armed Forces spend most of their time blowing up trees ('observation posts') or bushes ('insurgent launch sites') in the wilderness of Outdoors. Dealing with these non-existent outside threats takes up over 40% of the resources of the whole complex, but it's HPD&MC that insists that the fiction of an external threat is necessary to ensure order and unity among the lower clearances. Over the centuries, HPD&MC started believing their own propaganda, and these fictional dangers are very real to anyone inside Alpha Complex, including Friend Computer.

## Bot Characters?

Yes, Timmy the PetBot is a bot. No, we haven't done rules for bot characters yet (they will be in a **PARANOIA** supplement that is yet to come). So, how does Timmy fit into the game? The simple answer is that Timmy is a *very special* bot, who uses exactly the same rules as normal characters. The one exception is treason—a result of censure, medication or brainscrub means that Timmy's programming is fiddled with by a technician, which may have deleterious effects on his memory and/or sanity. A result of termination means he's sent back to the factory, and a new model is sent out.

If Timmy's killed, then a replacement petbot with a copy of his code is sent by Louis-U.

As for Timmy's weapons systems, they're under the control of his hidden programming. Therefore, they can only be used when a) he's in dire peril and b) you think it's funny. He's got a stun gun in his nose, and a one-use cone rifle tac-nuke shell in a concealed launcher.

## The Memories of Thomas

Thomas has the memories of his previous life as an IntSec agent, and it's possible that the player will try to make contact with his former supervisors in order to escape the crèche. If this happens, then IntSec assigns Thomas to spy on the Junior Citizens in the crèche—this is a great opportunity to weed out treason before it even begins!

The Armed Forces, however, are on the frontline of Outdoors, and they can see that there are no secret Commie armies marshalling to attack Alpha Complex. After a few years of pointless maneuvers and marches, even the most loyal Armed Forces general begins to have second thoughts. The only real conflicts fought by Armed Forces in decades have been civil wars between loyalists and renegade generals.

The Revolt of the 43<sup>rd</sup> Heavy Assault was an especially damaging rebellion. Whole sectors were conquered by the rebels before they were defeated. Cleaning up the resulting mess and editing the records to delete the events took years. A special committee of high-clearance citizens, the so-called Loyalty Gang, were assigned to examine the cause of the revolt. The Loyalty Gang consisted of four people: Louis-V, Jericho-V, Vanessa-V and Markus-U.

# 1 INTRODUCTION



**William-JC-JST-1**

**Junior Citizen**  
**Service Group:** None yet.  
**Security Clearance:** INFRARED  
**Credits:** 50

**Tics:** Barks orders even when he's not in charge.  
**Tic 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Example of Tic in Use:**  
**Teacher:** Someone clean up that mess in the corner.  
**William:** Nina, Thomas, you do it. Get to work!  
**Nina:** Make me, vatslime.

**ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALITIES**

**Management 10**

- Moxie 14
- Oratory 14

**Stealth 07**

**Violence 06**  
 Kicking People While They're Down 10

**KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALITIES**

**Hardware 08**

- Jiggling The Lock On The Dormitory Door Open 12

**Software 10**

- Data Search 14
- Finding Credits Mysteriously Turn Up In Your Account 16

**Wetware 05**

- Pretending To Swallow Pills 11

**Open Slots for Narrow Specialties:**  
 2 (Management, Stealth)



**Nina-JC-JST-1**

**Junior Citizen**  
**Service Group:** None yet.  
**Security Clearance:** INFRARED  
**Credits:** 15

**Tics:** Sneezes when stressed.  
**Tic 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Example of Tic in Use:**  
**William:** Everyone hide! Nina, get down!  
**Nina:** Achoo!  
**William:** Uh-oh.

**ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALITIES**

**Management 6**

- Cramming 10

**Stealth 10**

- Staying Really Really Still And Not Making Any Noise 16

**Violence 10**

- Unarmed Combat 14
- Biting People In Very Painful Places 16

**KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALITIES**

**Hardware 05**

- Punching Machines To Relieve Frustration 09

**Software 07**

**Wetware 08**

- Biosciences 12
- Burning Off Drugs In Half The Normal Time 14

**Open Slots for Narrow Specialties:**  
 2 (Management, Software)



**Eva-JC-JST-1**

**Junior Citizen**  
**Service Group:** None yet.  
**Security Clearance:** INFRARED  
**Credits:** 40

**Tics:** Loves to sing loyalty songs.  
**Tic 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Example of Tic in Use:**  
**William:** I'm bored.  
**Eva:** We shall sing 'Oh Friend Computer, You Are My Special Friend!'  
**Nina:** Or, we could throw things at you.

**ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALITIES**

**Management 10**

- Cramming 14
- Neatest Handwriting Ever 16

**Stealth 07**

**Violence 05**  
 Agility 09

**KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALITIES**

**Hardware 08**

- Chemical Engineering 12
- Scrubbing Things So They Shine 14

**Software 10**

- Having The Most Loyal Journal In Class 16

**Wetware 06**

- Your Old School Project On The Use Of Subliminal Messaging 12

**Open Slots for Narrow Specialties:**  
 2 (Stealth, Violence)



## Eva-JC-JST-1 Junior Citizen

**Mutation:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Society:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Secret Skills:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Background

This is so unfair, you totally shouldn't be here.

You've always been the best, most loyal Junior Citizen in the crèche. Ever since you were old enough to talk, not a treasonous word has passed your lips. Oh, you've had bad thoughts like everyone else, but you're a loyal Junior Citizen and would never, ever, act in a disloyal, treasonous way. You hate Commie Mutant Traitors with every fiber of your being, and love Friend Computer just as much.

You're always the first to sing the loyalty songs, the first to report for extra duty, the one who studies hardest. Your record is full of commendations and gold stars. You're a good clone, a good clone. You'd even dreamed of one day becoming one of the elite, a heroic Troubleshooter, just like the ones you see on television. (You're careful to always watch the 4.6 hours of television mandated for citizens of your grade and age, although you sometimes try to sneak a textbook into the television room.)

Now, you've been transferred to a different crèche, along with a bunch of complete morons and clones who are sure to end up in termination booth long before they hit ORANGE. It's not fair. The only explanation is that someone framed you, blackening your record so you got transferred with the rest of them. It's almost unthinkable that someone would tamper with official Alpha Complex records that way, but...that's what traitors do.

A traitor is plotting against you!

### Personal Equipment

Teela-O-MLY fanclub badge  
Computer Loyalty Brigade badge

## Nina-JC-JST-1 Junior Citizen

**Mutation:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Society:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Secret Skills:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Background

It's not that you don't take the happy pills. You've tried to be a good little citizen in the past, to do what you're told, but it's like you burn through the chemical joy too quickly and you're left there screaming at the sheer stupidity of everyone else as they stand there with stupid blissful smiles on their stupid fat faces and it just makes you want to punch them right then and there and....

Your permanent record has lots of notes in it. 'Insubordinate', 'Violent', 'Not A Team Player', 'Hit Other Team Members Instead Of FunBall When Playing FunBall', 'Broke The FunBall Bat', 'Set Teacher On Fire'. (That one was fun.) You know that you should probably try harder, that you're going to end up in some dead-end job stirring a food vat if you don't work harder—but hey, maybe if you blow enough stuff up, they'll let you into the Armed Forces and give you a tank.

Until you get your hands on high explosive, you'll just be bored while everyone else drifts along on the happy drugs. Bored, restless and violent.

You've just been transferred to a new crèche. Rumor has it, it's where the troublesome Junior Citizens are sent. You know why you're here, but why were a few others from your old crèche sent here too?

### Personal Equipment

Stress-reduction audio tape #4,  
*Calming Buzzing Noises*  
Black crayon

## William-JC-JST-1 Junior Citizen

**Mutation:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Society:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Secret Skills:** \_\_\_\_\_

### Background

You've always been a little bit bigger than everyone else in your class, so you've often found yourself in charge. You're not sure if you like having to be the leader all the time, but you guess it's better than having someone else tell you what to do. You've never liked following orders, which gets you into trouble a lot.

Over the last few months, you've noticed something odd going on. It started when you got Timmy the PetBot—the teachers in your old crèche insisted that you were being given it as a 'reward for academic excellence', but you never did *that* well on your tests, and they were gritting their teeth when they handed Timmy to you. Then, you found credits appearing in your account whenever you ran low on funds. Never too much—not enough to buy your own autocar or anything—but just what you needed at the time.

You were doing some digging on the computer networks, trying to trace where the money was coming from—and that's when you were transferred to another crèche. It was all done very hurriedly, in the dead of nightcycle. Maybe you're just being paranoid, but it felt like the move was connected to your hacking attempts. Maybe you asked a question you shouldn't have....

### Personal Equipment

Manual: *The Care and Feeding of PetBots*  
Glasses  
Realistic-looking toy laser pistol (red)



# 1 INTRODUCTION



**Joe-JC-JST-1**

**Junior Citizen**  
**Service Group:** None yet.  
**Security Clearance:** INFRARED  
**Credits:** 10

**Tics:** Keeps rubbing his upper lip.  
**Tic 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Example of Tic in Use:**  
**Teacher:** You, Joe. What's the answer to the question?  
**Joe:** *mumble mumble.*  
**Teacher:** What? Get that hand away from your mouth and speak clearly.  
**Joe:** I said, I've no idea.

## ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALITIES

**Management 10**  
Con Games 14  
Find Regulation Loopholes 16  
**Stealth 10**  
Security Systems 14  
Sounding Older Than You Are Over The Phone 16  
**Violence 07**  
Throw First Stone If In A Mob 11

## KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALITIES

**Hardware 08**  
Mechanical Engineering 12  
**Software 05**  
Cutting and Pasting Documents Really Quickly 11  
**Wetware 06**  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Open Slots for Narrow Specialties:**  
2 (Hardware, Wetware)



**Thomas-JC-JST-1**

**Junior Citizen**  
**Service Group:** None Yet.  
**Security Clearance:** INFRARED  
**Credits:** 50

**Tics:** Always writing in notebook.  
**Tic 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Example of Tic in Use:**  
**William:** So, what are we going to do today?  
**Thomas:** *scribble scribble*  
**William:** What are you writing?  
**Thomas:** Nothing. *scribble scribble*

## ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALITIES

**Management 09**  
Interrogation 13  
**Stealth 10**  
Shadowing 14  
Knowledge of Really Out of Date Security Systems 16  
**Violence 07**  
Two-Fisted Haymaker Punch That Doesn't Work As You're Too Short 13

## KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALITIES

**Hardware 05**  
**Software 10**  
Data Analysis 14  
Use Few Remaining Working Passwords From Old Life 16  
**Wetware 06**  
Surprising Knowledge of Truth Drugs 12

**Open Slots for Narrow Specialties:**  
2 (Management, Hardware)



**Timmy**

**Loveable PetBot**  
**Service Group:** None  
**Security Clearance:** None  
**Credits:** 0

**Tics:** Leaks oil all over the carpet at inopportune moments.  
**Tic 2:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Example of Tic in Use:**  
**Eva:** The hall monitor's coming to inspect the dormitory. Make sure it's clean.  
**William:** It's fine, we've been cleaning it all daycycle.  
**Timmy:** **\*\*VENTING EXCESS FLUID.\*\*** Beep! Woof!

## ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALITIES

**Management 05**  
Bootlicking 09  
Really Annoying Yipping 11  
**Stealth 10**  
Squirring 14  
**Violence 06**  
Built In Weapons, Use Only In Emergencies. Information On Weapons Is NOT AVAILABLE

## KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALITIES

**Hardware 08**  
Bot Ops and Maintenance 12  
**Software 10**  
Slightly Buggy Wireless Networking 16  
**Wetware 07**  
Morale-Boosting Yipping 13

**Open Slots for Narrow Specialties:**  
2 (Stealth, Hardware)



## Timmy Loveable PetBot

### Background

Beep! You are PetBot #544399, designation Timmy. You were purchased by INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE as a gift for William-JC-JST-1. Your prime directives are: INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE Protect William and the other Junior Citizens.

Obeys the orders of William and the other Junior Citizens.

Entertain and amuse.

Chase tail. Go yip yip yip yip (for n=1 to \$BIGNUM; Repeat n).

To aid you in completion of these directives, you have been upgraded with INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE. It is vitally important that you INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE. You are just a simple petbot so you do not mind the big holes in your memory where INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE goes. You like to play with William and the other Junior Citizens. You like to go yip a lot.

You really like it when William and his friends get into big trouble, because maybe then you'll get to use your nuclear-tipped INFORMATION NOT AVAILABLE.

### Personal Equipment

None

## Thomas-JC-JST-1 Junior Citizen (Formerly GREEN) Former IntSec Agent

### Mutation:

**Society:** First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer

**Secret Skills:** Alpha Complex History 05

### Background

Ten years of humiliation and suffering are nearly over. Just another ten or 15 to go. You're not some snot-nosed Junior Citizen—you're really Thomas-G-RST-3, one of the best IntSec agents in Alpha Complex. You were on a mission to hunt down a Commie saboteur known only as UNCLE. The mission was top secret, assigned to you by High Programmer Louis-U himself!

You traced UNCLE to his lair and mortally wounded him. The coward had an emergency escape route, though—he'd hacked into the cloning banks where new citizens are made, and was trying to copy his DNA and memory patterns over so he'd be reborn. You tried to stop him, there was an accident, a big explosion—and you woke up nine months later in the body of a newly decanted baby.

No one would believe you if you told them the truth, so you've just had to live through crèche a second time. One day, you'll get back on the promotion ladder, Hell, you'll be the youngest citizen to make BLUE ever—you know it all already (although you do worry you've damaged your baby-sized brain by cramming too much data into it).

You've just been transferred to another crèche. You don't know why, but you suspect they moved a whole group to hide their real purpose—one of the other kids who got moved must be hiding something.

### Personal Equipment

Notebook

## Joe-JC-JST-1 Junior Citizen

### Mutation:

**Society:**

**Secret Skills:**

### Background

You've always been happy to just be one of the crowd; it's a big class, so it's easy to hide in the sea of faces. Something tells you that people who stand out are also the sort of people who get dragged away by IntSec. Much better to be comfortable average.

Lately, though, it's been harder and harder to blend in. You don't know why, but some of the older teachers keep looking at you in a weird way, like they don't recognize you—or maybe they do, but something about you scares them. That's bad, 'cos it draws attention to you. You might just be a kid, but you still know that treason and double-dealing is the only way anyone gets ahead in this corrupt system. You've a knack for knowing who to go to get things done.

You've just been transferred to another crèche, one that has a very bad reputation. It looks like the mysterious dislike of you that the teachers developed has really gotten you into trouble.

### Personal Equipment

Catapult and a handful of nuts & bolts

# INTRODUCTION

They eventually concluded that Alpha Complex needed an actual, real foe for the Armed Forces to fight. This foe would have to be under the control of the ULTRAVIOLETS, but appear to be a genuine threat to the rest of the citizens. A secret R&D project developed the OMEGA program, a specialized artificial intelligence that could be loaded into a warbot. The Loyalty Gang intended to secretly build OMEGA warbots who would present a genuine threat to the Armed Forces.

Then it all went wrong. One of the Loyalty Gang, Jericho-V, decided to eliminate his rivals. He made contact with a shadow Commie leader called UNCLE and planted evidence that the other members of the Gang were actually plotting to put a backdoor to the OMEGA program and give it to UNCLE.

What Jericho-V did not know was that another of the Gang, Louis-V, had just switched allegiance from Corpore Metal to the Humanists following the birth of his son, William. Louis-V was already on the look-out for reprisals from Corpore Metal, so his agents and spies spotted Jericho-V's machinations.

Louis-V wasn't able to stop Jericho-V's plot, but he was able to deflect it. Louis-V took control of the IntSec investigation into the Loyalty Gang, which resulted in the demotion of Vanessa-V to YELLOW, and the termination of Jericho-V and Markus-U. However, what Jericho-V didn't know that was there actually was a backdoor in the OMEGA code, and Markus-U had it. Markus-U escaped Alpha Complex, taking control of the OMEGA test brigade of warbots. Jericho-V also managed

to flee before he was terminated. The OMEGA project was shut down, but Louis-V was promoted to ULTRAVIOLET.

As part of the IntSec investigation, Louis-U sent Agent Thomas-G after the mysterious Communist known as UNCLE. The Commie had an emergency escape route—a hack into the cloning banks that was designed to copy UNCLE's DNA and MemoMax data into a new clone. Agent Thomas caught the Commie just as UNCLE was using this escape route. The two were both reborn as new clones—the player characters Joe and Thomas, although only Thomas managed to retain his memory.

By a strange co-incidence, both new clones ended up in the same crèche as William, the natural-born





son of Louis-V. During the height of the IntSec investigation, Louis-V smuggled the newborn child into the crèche system—if his enemies had found out that Louis-U has a natural-born child, he'd have been executed as a traitor.

Since then, Louis-U has kept an eye on his son from afar, tracking him through the computer networks. He even sent him a petbot with optional extras (lots of concealed weapon systems). The petbot, Timmy, was also programmed to secretly report on William's movements to Louis-U. William is Louis's biggest secret, one he must keep concealed at all costs.

A few weeks ago, Louis-U found signs that someone had been investigating William's records. In an attempt to protect his son, Louis-U arranged for William to be moved to another crèche. As cover, he moved several other students, too.

And that's where *My First Treason* really begins....

## JST Sector Crèche

The characters' new crèche is one with a very, very bad reputation. It is rare for Junior Citizens to be moved from one crèche to another—many citizens are decanted, trained, put to work and terminated without ever leaving their home sector—but there are a few specialized crèches. Some are for especially intelligent young citizens, or useful mutants. Others, like JST Sector, are for disciplining Junior Citizens who are proving troublesome.

The JST Sector crèche is a large complex of corridors and rooms sectioned off from the rest of the sector by large blast doors. The rooms smell primarily of sweat, fear and farts; security cameras and battered bots are everywhere. The Junior Citizens sleep in 20-person dormitories; they attend classes for up to eight hours per day, although most of the classes are really just sitting there watching videos. After school, the Junior

Citizens are expected to study, watch more television and improve themselves mentally and physically in preparation for the day when they will be called upon to serve The Computer.

Junior Citizens are especially cherished by Friend Computer, and they are virtually immune to accusations of treason. It is unheard of for a Junior Citizen to be terminated as punishment, but they can be censured and even brainscrubbed if they're really naughty. The punishments for those adult clones who injure or upset The Computer's children, though, are far far worse.

Effective crèche administrators, then, have to be able to absolutely terrify the Junior Citizens without injuring them—at least, not in any detectable fashion. Ineffective administrators find themselves held hostage in their own crèches by hordes of unruly children.

Most of the teaching in the crèche is done by bots and videos, but there are three human teachers of note in the crèche. First, there's **Vanessa-Y-ELR-4**, formerly Vanessa-V. She was one of the Loyalty Gang (see page 38), but was demoted for treason.

**Solomon-R-NGN-5**, the technical teacher relies on the fear of Stepplecruich to keep his classes in some semblance of order whilst hoping that he will remain unnoticed in his place in the world.

Finally, there is **Loyalty Officer Sever-R-HST-2**, a thoroughly nasty piece of work, but more on him later.



## Stepplecruich-G-GHT-5



**Stepplecruich-G-GHT-5** is a very effective administrator. He is an old, twisted, bitter monster of a man, kept alive by drugs and hate. His only joy is watching former students of his being terminated—he makes sure that such executions are always shown live for the crèche children. He has no interest in the rest of Alpha Complex, and hates it when anyone interferes in his private kingdom of the JST Sector Crèche.

### Stepplecruich-G-GHT-5

- Management 13
- Interrogation 17
- Intimidation 17
- Oratory 17
- Torturing Small Mammals Including Children 19
- Stealth 10
- Surveillance 16
- Violence 8
- Hardware 6
- Bot Ops and Maintenance 10
- Listening to the Creaks In The Floor Panels And Using Them To Track Movement 10
- Software 10
- Data Search 14
- Wetware 12
- Pharmatherapy 16
- Keeping the Brats Quiet With Drugs 16
- Mutant Power:** Heightened Senses (Power 12)
- Secret Society Affiliation:** Corpore Metal
- Armor:** None
- Weapons:** Truncheon (O5K) or flamethrower (S3K)

# 1. INTRODUCTION

## Vanessa-Y-ELR-4



Ex-member of the Loyalty Gang and demoted for treason her record is so blighted that she will never be promoted again, so all the drive has gone out of her. She was once incredibly sharp and intelligent, but now she just trudges from day to day. Occasionally, some question from an inquisitive Junior Citizen can awaken her critical faculties and a little of the old Vanessa shines through. Vanessa-Y teaches subjects like Report-Writing, Administration, Accounting and Form Processing.

### Vanessa-Y-ELR-4

Management 14  
 Moxie 18  
 Stealth 8  
 Surveillance 12  
 Shadowy Contacts From Her Old Life 14  
 Violence 10  
 Energy Weapons 14  
 Hardware 9  
 Software 10  
 Bot Programming 14  
 Hacking 14  
 Operating Systems 14  
 Wetware 12  
 Psychology 16  
**Mutant Power:** Bureaucratic Intuition (Power 8)  
**Secret Society Affiliation:** Pro Tech  
**Armor:** None  
**Weapons:** Laser pistol (W3K)

## Soloman-R-NGN-5



**Solomon-R-NGN-5** is the crèche's technical teacher. He's a sleepy-eyed man who has found a surprisingly comfy niche in the Alpha Complex bureaucracy, and is determined to cling to it with all his might. It is only the threat of Stepplecruich's shadow that allows Solomon-R to maintain his control over his classes. He could be accurately described as old, kind-eyed and a bit dim.

### Solomon-R-NGN-5

Management 10  
 Bootlicking 12  
 Stealth 9  
 Violence 7  
 Hardware 10  
 Bot Ops and Maintainance 14  
 Mechanical Engineering 14  
 Software 11  
 Data Search 12  
 Wetware 8  
 Biosciences 12  
**Mutant Power:** Empathy (Power 12)  
**Secret Society Affiliation:** FCCC-P  
**Armor:** None  
**Weapons:** Laser pistol (W3K)

## Sever-R-HST-2



A cold, cold man whose loyalty is for sale to the highest bidder. He has contacts with many secret societies and power blocs within Alpha Complex, and keeps an eye out for promising young Junior Citizens who could be of use to one society or another. He pretends to be an ultra-strict, ultra-orthodox loyalty officer, and has even impressed bitter old Stepplecruich with his devotion to discipline, but it's all a lie. Sever is as traitorous as they come.

### Sever-R-HST-2

Management 10  
 Interrogation 14  
 Intimidation 14  
 Stealth 10  
 Scam Radar 14  
 Surveillance 14  
 Violence 8  
 Hardware 7  
 Software 10  
 Data Search 14  
 Wetware 12  
 Pharmatherapy 16  
**Mutant Power:** Empathy (Power 12)  
**Secret Society Affiliation:** Undercover Free Enterprise Agent Spying On Humanists  
**Armor:** None  
**Weapons:** Laser pistol (W3K)



## 2. Bully With A Cone Rifle

**Synopsis:** The characters arrive at their new crèche, where they meet their new teachers and supervisors, as well as their new bullies and tormentors. Someone's spreading Death Leopard propaganda in the crèche, just before the older students are issued with weapons as part of their military training.

The major antagonists are a trio of older bullies, led by Harold-JC. They're being supplied with Death Leopard propaganda by a technician, Gary-R-OST-2, who's repairing the crèche's confession booth. The propaganda and some improvised explosives are being stored in an empty dormitory—the one the characters are about to be assigned to. The characters need to deal with the bullies before the bullies get hold of real firepower.

### Welcome Junior Citizens

Read the following to the players: *It's your first day in your new crèche. Every day begins the same way—all the Junior Citizens in the crèche assemble in one of the main halls to be reviewed by the administrators. Commendations are handed out—at least, that's what the rules say. No one in the JCT crèche has ever gotten a commendation. What you're sure of is that punishments are also assigned during assembly. The whole room goes dark, a spotlight stabs down at the accused, and the bots swoop in and drag him away. At your old crèche, maybe one or two kids would be punished each week. Here, rumor says it's four or five a day.*

*It's hard to see with the taller kids in front of you, but you hear a door at the far end of the hall opening. It must be the administrators. Through a gap in the crowd, you see a podium. A very old citizen in green-colored robes walks up to it and scowls at you—not at the assembled students, but at you personally. (Yes, all of you.*

*Personally. He's that scowly.) He whispers into a microphone, and the giant loudspeakers around the hall project every growl, every noise his chin-hairs make scratching off his robe's collar, every disgusted sniff from his cavernous nose at you in crystal-clear super-loud stereo.*

*'Good morningcycle class.'*

### 'GOOD MORNINGCYCLE MR. STEPPLECRUCH.'

*'The following students have been volunteered for extra duty: Alice-JC, Bethany-JC, Damien-JC, Harry-JC, Simon-JC. The school confession booth is still being repaired, so if you have any... actions that you need to... report, then speak to the loyalty officer, Mr. Sever. Upper class students are reminded that their mandatory training period with the Armed Forces Homeland Defense Corps will begin this week, so all FunBall and other extracurricular activities are cancelled for the upper classes. Finally, I understand we have some new... friends joining us today.'*

*Stepplecruch presses a button, and a big spotlight stabs down, illuminating the N\* of you. 'Why don't you tell us a little bit about yourselves?' says the administrator. The other Junior Citizens around you recoil from the light, as if it's radioactive.*

*\* Where N equals the number of player characters.*

*What do you say?*

After you've tortured the players a little by putting them on the spot in the traditional fashion of new students in a school, move on to the next scene. If the players are nice enough to say something that will make them unpopular, seize on it. Stepplecruch will also unmercifully question them if they're not forthcoming enough.

### Time For Class

After assembly, the Junior Citizens are broken into age groups and directed to one of the many lecture halls in the crèche. About half the classes during the day consist of just watching delightful educational videos as:

- ☞ HPD&MC Video #543332—*Food Recycling and You*
- ☞ TS Video #43774—*Slime Mold Identification and Eradication*
- ☞ PS Video #995532—*Duck and Cover In The Event Of Reactor Failure*
- ☞ R&D Video #665525—*Nuclear Engineering 102*
- ☞ HPD&MC Video #112217—*Subliminal Messaging, Part Seven*

(The last one's just an hour-long tape of a black screen and a sound track of irritating static, but everyone still has to watch it. No reason.)

The characters also get to meet their other teachers:

**Form-Filling and Good Penmanship:** This class is taught by Vanessa-G. In the first third of the class, the students get to practice form-filling on a succession of really out-of-date forms like *Delinquent Clone Family Rehousing Request* or *Secure File Transfer Waivers*, or the nightmarish pre-ME-card *EZ Short-Form Identity Confirmation Form*. In the second part of the class, the students swap forms again and enter the results of another student's form into the computer system. Finally, the students swap forms around again, and do psycho-graphological assessments of the handwriting used in the forms, looking for signs of mental deviancy and treason.

## 2. BULLY WITH A CONE BIELE

Vanessa-Y keeps an eye on the characters throughout the class—both William and Joe remind her of someone (Louis-U and Joe's Commie clone-brother, respectively). Play up the players' paranoia, if possible.\*

\* Say that three times fast.

### Yum, It's Lunch Time!

After that, there's lunch in the crèche cafeteria. The confession booth is located in the corridor just outside the cafeteria, so the characters get to pass by technician Gary-R as they go to lunch. The technician is almost fearfully respectful of the characters, as he knows about the harsh punishments that await adults who upset Junior Citizens.

Every student has a weekly allotment of lunch credits assigned to them, just enough for a plate of Cold Fun and a can of yummy B3. As the characters enter the cafeteria, a pleasant-faced kid about their age waves at them and encourages them to sit down at a corner table with him. There are two long, low benches next to the table, and the

#### Harold and Pals

Management 5  
Intimidation 9  
Stealth 10  
Creeping Up On The Characters, Then Spoiling It By Whispering To Each Other 16  
Violence 6  
Unarmed Combat 10  
Hardware 4  
Software 4  
Wetware 12  
**Mutant Power:** Harold: Uncanny Luck (Power 12). Mike: Adhesive Skin (Power 4). James: Rubbery Bones (Power 7)  
**Secret Society Affiliation:** Death Leopard  
**Armor:** None  
**Weapons:** None

kid's the only person sitting there. There's a security camera right over his head, but there are also security cameras over every other table. This kid is Al-JC, and he's in league with Harold and the other bullies. As soon as the characters sit down, then three older children appear as if by magic. Two slide in at either end of the bench, trapping the characters

seated on one side of the table. The third bully hovers nearby, ready to intercept anyone who makes a run for it. As soon as the bullies are in place, Al shrugs his shoulders apologetically and runs for it.

Harold picks whichever character sounded weakest and most hesitant during the assembly that morning, and says 'I'm Harold, and me and my friends are in charge here. See, you're going to transfer your lunch credits over to us, or else!'

Possible objections from the characters:

- ☞ Or else what? Or else we'll beat you up. Duh.
- ☞ How will we transfer credits without a PDC, moron? Harold produces a portable ME card reader—he's a well-equipped bully.
- ☞ Are you threatening us right under a security camera? That camera never works! Why do you think we made you sit there?





☞ We'll tell Stepplecruh! *What makes you think he'll believe you? Every other kid here will support my side of the story. Me and Jamesy and Mikey here were just sitting here quietly, talkin' about how much we love B3. Mmm, it's mandatory!*

If the characters don't pay up, then they'll get beaten up in the next scene.

## Afternoon Lessons

After lunch, the next class is Practical Maintenance with Mr. Solomon. No doubt to the characters' dismay, Harold and his two friends are in this class too, even though they're two years older than the characters. (Harold and co. are taking Remedial Practical Maintenance.) Dodderly old Mr. Solomon explains what Practical Maintenance is all about.

'All right, class. Each of you has a Type 407 vent fan motor in front of you, along with a bottle of solvent and a rag. You put the solvent on the rag, then you scrub the motor. Keep doing that until it's clean. While you're doing that, I'm, um, going to review these technical files. Zzzzz.' There is indeed a rag and a bottle of solvent on each desk, along with a big lump of what looks like insect fecal matter. Somewhere under the goo is the motor.

If some of the characters didn't pay up in the cafeteria, then Harold and his pals wait until Solomon-R has fallen asleep, then they start throwing bits of machinery and small tools at the characters. The thrown items are surprisingly painful. Little Al is standing by—if the characters try fighting back, then he darts forward and wakes the teacher, weeping and wailing about how the characters were mistreating him.

On the other hand, if the characters try waking Solomon-R, then Al will run forward and ask the teacher to draw a wiring diagram of the Type 407 motor, which deaf old Solomon does with his back to the class. Meanwhile, Harold and his allies quietly beat the clearance out of the characters. It's very much a no-win situation for the characters here.

## A Complication

Finally, lessons are finished for the day. Loyalty Officer Sever collects the characters from Solomon's class. First, he takes them to a storeroom and issues each of them with a pillow, blanket and sheets, all of which smell very odd in totally different ways. Then, he brings them down a narrow, badly-lit corridor. He explains that all the other dormitories are full, so a new one must be opened for the characters.



## 2 BULLY WITH A GONE RIFLE

He opens the first door along the corridor, and immediately recoils at the stench. *'Ah, yes. That's where they stored the excess waste'* he mutters, *'We probably can't use that one.'* He pauses, as if considering putting the kids in with the chemical waste anyway, then shakes his head and continues down the corridor to the next door.

He opens the door into the characters' home for the next four years—JCT Crèche Dormitory Number Ninety-Seven, Home Assigned Home. It's a cramped, badly-lit room with eight heavy metal bunk beds. There are a few lockers and storage areas around the walls. Most alarmingly, there's a chemical-smelling stain along one side, where waste from the room next door is leaking in. *'Make yourselves...hmm. I suppose you can manage quiet here at least'*, says Sever as he hands the characters a piece of paper with the lock code for the door on it.

What Sever does not know—and neither do the characters unless they poke around the dormitory for a while—is that Dormitory 97 is where the newly-formed Death Leopard cell in the crèche is hiding their propaganda and other equipment, like home-made explosives. All the Death Leopard stuff is hidden in the crawl space above the ceiling tiles, so the characters will find it only if they search the place thoroughly. The crawl space contains a few leaflets on home bomb-making and how it's cool to blow things up, as well as a stack of video discs of stuff blowing up. There are also cans of spray paint and some half-completed home-made bombs.

Let the characters fill up the rest of the day as they see fit, with homework and television watching and arguing over who gets what bunk.

### Things That Go Boom In The Night

During the night, Harold and the other two creep down the corridor

to the barracks they think is empty. If any of the characters are awake\*, or make successful Stealth rolls, they hear muffled voices out in the

*\* Timmy has a nightly recharge cycle, Mr. Clever Player.*

corridor:

*'Ssh! The new slimes are in room 96. Better not wake 'em.'*

*'What if there's a security bot on patrol?'*

*'Use the flash bomb on it, just like the leaflet said!'*

*'Oh yeah! Awesome!'*

*'Fight the system!'*

Harold has the key code to room 97, so he can open the door. (This is an important plot point—he got the code from Gary-R the technician, which is a clue linking the confession booth repairman to the bullies.) If none of the characters appear to be awake, then Harold and James go in and try climbing up one of the unoccupied bunks to get at the stored Death Leopard stuff. Something goes wrong—either one of the characters wakes up, or Timmy starts yipping, or James botches an Agility roll. Mikey at the door panics and throws a flash-bomb into the room. It rolls to the far side—the same side where there's a pool of chemicals leaking from room 96.

It all goes bad. The flash-bomb blinds not only the characters, but Harold and James, who topple the bunk over. The falling bunk tears a hole in the ceiling tiles, letting treasonous leaflets and discs fall onto the floor. Meanwhile, the bomb sets the chemicals alight, filling the room with toxic vapors.

For added confusion—the stored chemicals in room 96 can also get ignited, as can the unstable plastic explosive in the Death Leopards' bombs. Alarms will be triggered by the toxic chemicals, causing a mass evacuation of all the dormitories in

the middle of the night. Harold and his friends will run back toward their dormitory as quickly as they can.

Whatever happens, some of the Death Leopard material is found by the cleaners after the disaster, and passed onto the administrators. Specifically, one of the videos of Death Leopards doing excitingly violent things—a combination of Jackass, wrestling, and explosives—is found in what remains of the dormitory. Importantly, there's an email address at the end of the video where wannabe Death Leopards can upload their own videos for the admiration and adulation of their peers.

Ideally, the characters get blamed for any or all of the following:

- 👁 Arson
- 👁 Toxic chemical leaks
- 👁 Causing an evacuation of the school
- 👁 Blowing up part of the school and especially
- 👁 Having treasonous propaganda in their rooms

Trying to blame Harold and friends is useless without proof—after all, the door was locked, and there is no way to open it without the code.

Any interrogations or investigations will be done by Sever-R. After questioning the characters, he tells them to confess their treasons to Friend Computer as soon as the school confession booth is repaired. He shows them some of the video disc retrieved from their dormitory, and lectures them on how disgusting and treasonous sabotage and free thought are.

Sever also tells them that unless they confess as to why they blew up the dormitory/poisoned the school/have treasonous propaganda, it will be very bad for their permanent records.



# MY FIRST TREASON CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

## Sever's Office

The characters may be trying to break into Sever's office later in the scenario, so they'll need a good description of it now. The office is located near the central administration offices of the crèche, so close to Stepplecru's lair they can smell the stench. There's a jackobot servant on duty in the corridor outside, and there's a security camera above the door that swings back and forth, scanning the corridor every minute. Finally, the door is locked, and needs either a code or Sever's ME card to open.

Inside is a cramped office. There are several chairs on one side of the desk; each chair has an alarming device hanging over it, a tangle of goggles, straps, sensors and needles used in interrogations. On the far side of the desk is Sever's own, rather comfy chair, a computer console and a big cabinet where he keeps confiscated items.

## The Next Morning

Again, everyone in the school assembles. Stepplecru begins by singling out the characters as the cause of last night's excitement. He is especially disappointed, as the crèche is having some very important visitors today—the Armed Forces trainers, who will be training the older students in civil defense techniques and weapons handling. He introduces the lead trainer, Calvin-G-HIX-3.

Calvin-G asks for a volunteer from the older students, and Harold's hand is the first one up. (This is possibly the only time in Alpha Complex history where volunteering is a good thing.) Harold bounds up to the top of the room, where Calvin-G hands him a (unloaded) cone rifle.

'Doesn't that feel good, citizen?' asks Calvin-G, 'Doesn't it make you want to blow up those damn Commie Mutant Traitors?'

Harold grins broadly and hefts the cone rifle up, aiming it at the characters. 'Will this make a really big bang, sir?' asks Harold.

'It will if you put a tac nuke shell in it, my boy' replies Calvin-G.

Finally, Stepplecru takes to the podium again. 'All upper class Junior Citizens will be attending military training for the next three daycycles. Other Junior Citizens will continue classes as normal. That is all. Wait, no, it's not.'

A young clone near the front giggles at the verbal slip. Stepplecru glares at him, and a jackobot glides out of a wall niche, grabs hold of the child, and drags him away. The administrator continues: 'The confession booth is supposed to be operational now, finally. Any citizens with outstanding guilt should purge themselves immediately.' He presses a button, putting a spotlight on the characters.' 'That means you lot.'

## Waiting to Confess

When the characters obediently troupe down to the confession booth\*, they discover that Gary-R the technician is still working on the booth; just some last-minute adjustments, he insists. Why don't the characters just wait down the corridor until he's finished?

As they're waiting, the older Junior Citizens led by Calvin-G march past, singing the Alpha Complex anthem very loudly and very out of key. As he passes, Harold steps out of line for a moment and threatens the characters. 'You're dead. All of you. Dead. That was our stuff, and unless you get it back, we'll kill you. Understand? You've got until tomorrow night!' Harold wants the violent/cool Death

Leopard videos confiscated from room 97, which the characters last saw in Sever's office.

So the characters have to get the disc back for Harold and the Death Leopards, but they also need to find the origin of the disc and the other Death Leopard propaganda if they're to properly clear their names. Finally, if the players have any sense of self-respect at all, they'll want revenge on Harold and his friends for beating them up and tormenting them.

\* If the characters don't report to the confession booth, it'll show up on Sever's logs and he will confront the characters, demanding to know why they dared defy his orders to confess.

## The Confession Booth

If you can, wait until the characters are deep in discussion about how they'll get the disc from Sever's office, and ideally until they're proposing something really treasonous. That's when technician Gary-R pops his head around the corner and says that the confession booth should be working if they want to give it a blast, pardon the pun.



## 2 BULLY WITH A GONE RIFLE

Inside the confession booth, a character gets to have a frank, one-on-one discussion with Friend Computer. Just citizen, Computer and whatever IntSec monitors happen to be listening. In a concerned, parental fashion, The Computer will ask if the character has anything to confess. Play Friend Computer as a deranged ELIZA bot.

'Friend Computer, there was treasonous propaganda found in my dormitory.'

AND HOW DID THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?

'I think someone was trying to frame me!'

WHY DO YOU THINK SOMEONE WAS TRYING TO FRAME ME?

'No, frame me not you!'

AND HOW DID THAT MAKE YOU FEEL?

Eventually, The Computer will assign a suitable punishment to the confessee, like a Spontaneous Loyalty Demonstration or putting them in touch with an IntSec handler who will expect them to inform on their friends and classmates.

Meanwhile, outside the confession booth, Gary-R lingers to chat with the other characters. He'll be as friendly

### Gary-R

Management 7

Stealth 8

Sneaking 12

Security Systems 12

Violence 10

Demolition 14

Hardware 10

Electronic Engineering 14

Software 5

Hacking 9

Wetware 7

**Mutant Power:** Electroshock (Power 6)

**Secret Society Affiliation:** Death Leopard

**Armor:** None

**Weapons:** Laser pistol (W3K)

as possible, asking about their problems and even giving advice. If they tell him about the confiscated propaganda, he'll say that he can get them a code to Sever-R's door for a small fee—say, 50 credits. If they don't mention it, then he'll hint at it anyway—Gary-R is the one initiating the bullies into Death Leopard, so they came whining to him about the disaster last night in room 97 immediately.

### Getting the Disc

There are several ways for the characters to get the disc out of Sever's office. They can try sneaking past all his security systems. They can arrange to get called back to his office for some other misdemeanor, then try to steal the disc from the cabinet while there. They can even try to convince Sever to give them the disc for some reason ('*Sir, we found the Death Leopard propaganda so disgusting, we thought we should watch it again. Just to really punish ourselves.*')

If the characters don't get the disc by the end of the following day, then Harold, James, and Mike show up at their dormitory and threaten them again, saying that they'll beat the characters to a pulp with their Armed Forces-issued Training Truncheons—unless the characters agree to help them tomorrow. If they did get the disc, then Harold and co. threaten them anyway and force them to help.

### Investigating the Bullies

The characters will probably want to keep track of Harold and his friends. The Armed Forces training consists of basic weapons handling, target practice, and lots and lots of marching up and down in the crèche's FunBall court, which is right next to the cafeteria.

After the marching and the target practice, most of the older Junior Citizens crawl off to their dormitories. However, Harold, James, and Mike have all volunteered to stay on after

the training to clean the court up. If the characters spy on them for long enough, they see Harold stealing Cold Fun from the cafeteria, mixing in some toilet cleaner, and pouring the resulting mixture into a pipe running between the court and the washrooms opposite the cafeteria. This pipe has been stoppered at both ends, and the wannabe Death Leopards are filling it with the same primitive explosive they were messing with earlier.

If the characters ask around the crèche, then it's easier enough to find out Harold and his friends have been causing trouble in the crèche for years, but ever since the confession booth broke down, they've been acting strangely—instead of just beating people up all the time, they've been going off on their own, or else kicking everyone else out of the video room so they can watch their own discs in private. The only new influence in the crèche is Gary-R the Technician....

### The Big Bang

On the third day of the Armed Forces training, the whole crèche is called to the FunBall court to see how the upper class has got on with their training. They will demonstrate their readiness to fight for Alpha Complex by marching up and down the court a few times. As a special treat, Calvin-G has brought an Armed Forces tank to the crèche, to show the Junior Citizens what they could get to play with in a few years.

The tank is parked directly over the explosive-filled pipe. The pipe runs, remember, from the washrooms to the FunBall court.

Just before the parade, Harold and his friends (all dressed up in their lovely little Junior Vulture Trooper uniforms) confront the characters and give them their instructions. The characters are to go to the washrooms opposite the cafeteria and drop a bomb down the toilet when they hear the guns firing. It will go down the pipe and detonate



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the explosive in the pipe, blowing up the tank. It will be *awesome*. If the characters don't help, then Harold and his friends will beat them up every day for the next two years, understand?

If the characters examine the bomb, then it's obviously far more high-tech than anything that Harold could build. It's a neat little bundle of electronics, obviously made by someone with a high Demolitions skill. It was provided by Gary-R, and was in fact built with bits salvaged from the confession booth.

Then, Stepplecru (or Sever, whichever will scare your players more) shows up and orders the characters to report to the FunBall court *immediately*—everyone in their class is supposed to watch the parade. Remember to clap when the 'applause' light is switched on. So, obey the teachers and get beaten up until Harold and his friends graduate, or obey the wannabe Death Leopards and get into more trouble? (Or, being player characters, try to do both and fail dismally.)

If the characters look around the court when the parade is in progress, then they'll see little AI lurking in one

corner with a portable video camera. He's recording the whole impending disaster, so Harold and friends can impress their new Death Leopard pals.

The parade starts. The Junior Vulture troopers march up and down and up and down. Stirring music plays. *Glory glory Hail Computer and the clones go marching ooooo!* Finally, the marchers take up a position at the far end of the FunBall court and fire their training lasers. That's the cue for the characters to flush the detonator.

If they do flush the detonator, then there's a satisfyingly large boom. The blast is channeled by the structural supports of the FunBall court, so the explosion just destroys the tank and most of the cafeteria, while leaving everyone unhurt save for minor cuts and bruises. Calvin-G is deeply traumatized by the loss of his beloved tank; Stepplecru has to be sedated before he explodes with anger. Unless the characters cover their tracks really well, or manage to obtain proof of Harold and friends' involvement with the Death Leopard society, then they are blamed for the explosion and punished for the next year.

If the characters don't flush the detonator, then nothing happens. Harold fires his gun again, just in case the characters missed their cue the first time. If things still don't explode, then he swears eternal vengeance on the characters and gives up. The rest of the parade goes off flawlessly, Calvin-G gives a speech about how he looks forward to seeing a new generation of brave young citizens giving their lives repeatedly in many, many important battles against the Commie menace. The Armed Forces leave, and Vanessa-Y tells the characters' class that they'll be playing Explosive FunBall on the court next period. Who doesn't love playing sports on what amounts to a minefield?

### Wrapping Up

The absolute best result for the characters is that they stop the bullies, clear their names, discover that Gary-R is the one supplying the Death Leopard propaganda, turn them all into Stepplecru, and generally act like good little IntSec-informing Junior Citizens. Bless.

Everyone will distrust them because they're just too good and loyal.

The absolute worst result is that the characters get blamed for the bombing. Everyone thinks they're dangerous terrorists, they're kept under close watch by crèche security, Sever torments them—and they don't even get the cool factor of being part of Death Leopard, as Harold and his friends are the ones who set the whole thing up, and they're the ones who send the video of the explosion into the Death Leopard secret video channel. The characters get punishment duties for the next year.

Everyone will distrust them because they're just too dangerous and disloyal.

The actual result is likely somewhere in the middle, where the characters are just distrusted anyway for no good reason.

### 3. Mutant Testing Time

**Synopsis:** It's mutant testing time, when all the Junior Citizens are tested for signs of genetic deviancy. As the characters develop their own mutant powers, though, it seems as those some mysterious enemy is willing to skip the testing part and go right to terminations...

#### What Happened Since Last Year

It's been roughly a full year since the characters arrived at their new crèche. (Remind the players to spend Perversity Points on buying new specialties.) How has life in the crèche been for the characters since then? Have they made new friends? Have they turned any of these new friends in as traitors?

#### On Mutant Testing

Alpha Complex policy on mutant testing varies wildly from year to year; sometimes, random DNA testing is a constant hassle, with a citizen being asked to give a blood, skin or brain sample every time he walks down a corridor, and genetic drift being obsessively tracked by medical staff. ('Aaaa! 0.0000000000001% drift! Mutant!') At other times, HPD&MC tries to downplay the whole mutant problem, insisting that the cloning templates are 110% baseline human and adopting a 'registered mutants are (second-class) citizens too'. The current policy is to test all Junior Citizens for mutation through psychological probing. Those who are revealed to be mutants are either officially registered, or are quietly terminated (depending on the mutation).

#### Conspiracy Theories 101

Take a quick look back at the Overly Complex Backstory on page 38. Louis-V's manipulations resulted in the terminations of Jericho-V and Markus-U. However, you don't get to ULTRAVIOLET without having an escape route or two for every situation. Markus-U used his contacts to escape termination

and went underground to plot his revenge on the upstart Louis-V, now Louis-U. (In order to escape, Markus-U also had to free Jericho-V, but Jericho-V was much less prepared to vanish, and has been living like a rat in the walls of Alpha Complex since then. He'll show up in the next scenario.)

Anyway, the diabolical Markus-U wants revenge, and he has discovered that Louis-U has an odd interest in one particular group of Junior Citizens in the JCT crèche. He therefore arranges for them to be...extracted.

#### It Always Starts With Assembly

Read the following to the players: *It only seems like last week that you arrived at the JCT sector crèche, but it was actually a full year ago. You've endured over 300 of these morning assemblies, watched Administrator Stepplecruch haul one kid or another out of the lines and chastise them for some tiny failing. This morning, though, Stepplecruch walks in with a bounce in his step and a smile on his lip. That can't be good.*

'Good morningcycle, citizens.'

**'GOOD MORNINGCYCLE, MR. STEPPLECRUCH.'**

'Pay attention! I have some very special announcements this morning. Step forward Eustace.'

*One boy toward the front of the hall steps forward. You can barely see him, then the lights dim and the spotlight catches him. In the merciless glare of the spotlight, you can clearly see the line of yellow stripes running down the sides of Eustace's jumpsuit.*

'Tell your fellow citizens what you did, you horrible little freak.'

*'I ate my teacher's PDC sir. I'm terrible sorry sir, it won't happen again sir.'*

'And what did they tell you to do, Eustace.'

*'Write my DNA code out 500 times on the board, sir.'*

'Other than that, you fool!'

*'Fill out the registration form, sir.'*

'Exactly! Eustace here is now a Registered Mutant, and we should acknowledge his honesty if not his genetic purity. Now, where there is one mutant, there could be more! Therefore, over the next few days, you will all be tested for signs of... mutation. The docbots and the psychologists from R&D will test each of you rigorously. Be happy! If you're a good, loyal little citizen, then your DNA is no doubt equally loyal. It is only the people who harbor treason in their hearts who also harbor treason in their cells!'

*Stepplecruch peers at the huddled crowd in front of him. 'If you want to register your mutation before you're found out by the tests, then Mr. Sever has the forms. Otherwise, report to the testing center when called. That is all.'*

#### I'm Not A Mutant, Are You?

After Vanessa-Y's class in Information Exclusion For Happy Safety\*, the characters go to lunch in the cafeteria, which gives them a moment to contemplate mutation and registration. Do any of them go and register? If they do, they get to fill out the Junior Citizen Mutant Registration form\*\*.

\* Bob is RED Clearance working in a food vat. Alice is a GREEN-Clearance supervisor. To prevent sabotage, the manual for the food vat is Clearance YELLOW. How does Alice ensure Bob can do his job?

\*\* Based on the wonderful Mutant Registration Form found in The Mutant Experience supplement.



## Junior Citizen Mutation Registration Form

Distributed by Department 72 in coordination with the Office of Forms and Vouchers, PLC

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Date and time \_\_\_\_\_

Crèche \_\_\_\_\_

Date of last field trip to a reactor \_\_\_\_\_

Registration Code of your clone family DocBot \_\_\_\_\_

Crèche Loyalty Officer's Signature \_\_\_\_\_

INSTRUCTIONS: Answer all questions fully and completely. Except where indicated, check only one response for multiple choice questions. If you have speculations as to the source of your mutation, include them on the back of this form. Practice good penmanship. Trust The Computer. Failure to obey is treason.

Having a mutation makes me feel (check all that apply):

- Happy
- Morose
- Satisfied
- Unhappy
- Powerful
- Very worried
- Enthusiastic
- Kind of tingly
- Inferior
- Cunning
- Apathetic
- Despairing

I need to register my mutation because (check all that apply):

- I love mutants
- The Computer loves mutants
- I am being blackmailed
- I dare not disobey
- I lost a really dumb bet
- Honesty is the best policy
- I have a death wish
- My head is going to explode
- My awesome might should be used for the good of all Alpha Complex

It takes me \_\_\_\_\_ to eat a HappyTummy Energy Bar.

- Yes  No I have been on the premises of a nuclear reactor within the last three months.
- Yes  No I have watched more than two complete episodes of the Best Good Happy Sector Hour.
- Yes  No I have heard of the secret society known as 'Psion'.
- Yes  No If given the choice, I would opt to terminate myself in hopes that my next clone would not suffer from this mutation.
- Yes  No My mutation is powerful enough to possibly harm the citizens, social institutions and/or property of Alpha Complex.

If 'yes', why should you be permitted to live on as a menace to all who surround you?

If 'no', how will your mutation be of any use to Alpha Complex?

Are any other children in your class also mutants?

If yes, why did you not report them earlier?

Describe your mutation. Include specific examples with time, date, location and witnesses.

The average handling time for this form is between **THREE DAYS** and **EIGHTEEN MONTHS**. Resubmitting an identical copy of this form will not expedite processing in any way. If you need to alter or amend any information on this form, resubmit it with an attached Application Modification Rider (993-51-Z8854). Until this form has been duly and fully processed, you are not authorized to use your purported mutation in any way whatsoever. If your application for Registered Mutant status is approved, you will be retroactively subject to all requirements and regulations thereof, in accordance with section 72 of the Laws of Alpha Complex ed. 39/B.3.9.

An announcement calls the characters by name, ordering them to report to the school docbot for DNA testing. There's a long line of other students waiting to be tested. It's rather like queuing for the security check in an airport, only here, you're the hand luggage that gets put through the machine.

Fortunately for the characters, DNA testing for mutation doesn't work. Well, the test works, the results don't. Soon after the first mutants were discovered, The Computer put R&D to work on a test for mutation. When they started testing, they found *lots* of mutants—back then, every third citizen had some form of mutation. Obviously, this was a flaw in the test, not in Friend Computer's perfect cloning process. The scientists reduced the sensitivity threshold of the test more and more, until it stopped giving such unacceptably accurate results. The current version of the test wouldn't detect a three-headed fire breathing mutant as anything other than 100% human. (If a tested citizen is later found to be a mutant, then obviously some traitor sabotaged the mutant test, or the records. The test itself is infallibly accurate. The Computer says so.\*)

*\* Some versions of the test randomly tag every tenth citizen as a mutant, just to avoid later accusations of sabotage.*

For added fun, have one of the characters develop a mutant power while waiting in line to be tested. Build paranoia and stress as much as you can, before...nothing happens, and all the characters get the 'All clear. Have a nice daycycle. Would to like to have some unnecessary surgery?' message from the docbot.

Then, as the characters are walking away from the testing center, the intercom activates again, ordering them all to report for random psychological testing.

## 3. MUTANT TESTING TIME

### Random Psychological Testing Is Fun

The announcement directs the characters down a corridor not normally accessible to Junior Citizens, on the edge of the crèche complex. There's a kid huddled in one corner, sobbing and muttering about *'the switches, the switches'*. As the characters approach, a door opens and a citizen in a ORANGE-clearance jumpsuit, emerges, pulling on a lab coat as he does so. He beckons for the characters to join him, and takes out a PDC. *'Got an unhappy child here'* he says into his PDC, *'need a happiness officer and 20ccs of Gelgermine here, stat!*' He pats the crying child on the head and says *'chin up, citizen. We'll erase those unhappy feelings in no time, just as soon as we've processed these test subjects.'* He indicates that the characters should follow him back through the door.

This citizen is Vance-O-UIS-3, a Troubleshooter. The shadowy manipulator, Markus, has sent a Troubleshooter team under false pretences to kidnap the characters, in the hopes of finding out which of them is connected to Louis-U. The Troubleshooter team infiltrated the R&D team sent to do the psychological testing.

Well, 'infiltrated' is being kind; they're Troubleshooters. They're not capable of that sort of subtlety.

On the far side of the door is a corpse, with a still-smoking laser burn in his chest. Up until a few moments ago, he was wearing a lab coat, which is now adorning the burly shoulders of Vance-O. The Troubleshooter waves his hand at the corpse and says that it's part of an earlier psychological test, and that the characters should ignore it. He leads them past a room filled with weird machines and probes (the actual psychological testing gear), into another room. There, the characters find two more Troublesho—er, psychological testing engineers, and a big metal box.

The other two Troubleshooters are Jenny-R and Fritz-R, Vance-O's team-mates. Normally, they work really well together for a Troubleshooter team. However, it's all going get a bit complex, because Jenny-R's a Psion agent and Fritz-R's a Commie. As soon as the characters are led into the room, Fritz does a double-take on seeing Joe and Jenny-R looks strangely at Nina. Vance-O doesn't notice his team's odd reaction, and turns to the characters.



### Vance-O

Management 7  
Bootlicking 11  
Team-Building Exercises 13  
Stealth 8  
Scam Radar 12  
Violence 10  
Energy Weapons 14  
Vehicular Combat 14

Hardware 8

Software 8

Wetware 10

**Mutant Power:** Regeneration (Power 10)

**Secret Society Affiliation:** Sierra Club

**Armor:** Orange reflc (E1)

**Weapons:** Laser pistol (W3K)

### Jenny-R

Management 10

Hygiene 14

Stealth 8

Sneaking 12

Disguise 12

Violence 8

Energy Weapons 12

Hardware 9

Nuclear Engineering 13

Software 10

Wetware 12

Biosciences 16

**Mutant Power:** Telekinesis (Power 9)

**Secret Society Affiliation:** Psion

**Armor:** Red reflc (E1)

**Weapons:** Laser pistol (W3K)

### Fritz-R

Management 6

Moxie 10

Stealth 10

Scam Radar 14

Disguise 14

Violence 8

Energy Weapons 12

Dying Heroically For The Cause 14

Hardware 10

Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 14

Software 8

Vehicle Programming 12

Wetware 8

**Mutant Power:** Pyrokinesis (Power 8)

**Secret Society Affiliation:** Communists

**Armor:** Red reflc (E1)

**Weapons:** Laser pistol (W3K)



## MY FIRST TREASON CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

'This here, kids', he says, pointing at the big metal box, 'is a Mark II Psychological Stress Simulation Porta-Cube. Just get in and sit quietly. You'll hear strange noises and the box might shake a bit, but it's all part of the simulation. Everything you experience is just part of the simulation. We'll be monitoring your bio-signs from outside—right Jenny-R?' He glances at Jenny-R, who hastily waves her PDC in the air and gives the characters a big thumbs-up and cheery grin. 'Well, kids, get in the box. And remember, it's only a test.'

Once the characters get in the box, they find it's small, cramped and a bit smelly. There's a bench in the middle of the box, and hand-holds along the sides. As soon as all the characters are in the box, Fritz-R closes and seals the door, taking one last look at Joe as he does so.

The box is then wheeled out of the room (*shake shake*) and loaded onto the back of an autocar (*creak lift thump*) which zooms out of the crèche complex and out of JCT sector entirely (*rattle zoom swerve zoom rattle beep brake beeeeeep swerve crash tinkle zoom siren zoom more swerve phew*) where it is loaded onto a flybot (*braaake clank whir clunk click FWWOOOOOOOSH rattle*) to fly to Markus-U's secret fortress in the Outdoors.

At some point, ideally after they get loaded onto the flybot, the characters do something to escape from the box. If they don't escape, then the following chain of events happens (and can be overheard from within the box):

**Vance-O:** We'll be at the debriefing in no time. You know, team, this is our most successful mission ever. No casualties, no meltdowns. It might be the happy drugs talking, guys, but I'm really proud of both of you. I...Jenny-R, why are your eyes glowing.

**Jenny-R:** Er, I'm wearing contact lenses **PSION SPEAKS THROUGH ME. THE CHILD HAS POTENTIAL AND MUST BE DELIVERED TO**

### CONTROL.

**Vance-O:** Mutant! Jenny-R's a mutant! Fritz! Get her!

**Fritz-R:** Yes comra-, er, Team Leader!

**Jenny-R:** I'm not a mutant! And neither is the child!

**Vance-O & Fritz-R:** Death to mutants! Laser fire!

**Vance-O:** Dump the box! Kill the muties!

**Fritz-R:** No! UNCLE lives! UNCLE will lead us to victory over the hated Capitalist state!

**Vance-O & Jenny-R:** Commie!

*More laser fire!*

Some of the inaccurate fire blasts the flybot's controls, causing the aircraft to spiral out of control. The safest place is back inside the box as the flybot crashes onto an outlying industrial dome on the fringes of Alpha Complex. All the Troubleshooters are killed or thrown out of the crashing plane. All the characters (unless they do something really stupid) survive.

### It's Like A School Tour, Only We Didn't Sign The Permission Slips

So, the characters are sitting in the remains of a crashed flybot, on top of a low dome, on the edge of Outdoors. It's currently night-time, so the conditions aren't too scary, but when the sun comes up the characters will see just how big and scary the Outside world is. The flybot is wrecked, but its communications systems are still functioning so they can call for help.

There are now up to four distinct groups chasing the characters:

- ☞ Markus-U's minions, who detected the crash and intend to recapture the characters.



- ☞ The rescue party that will be sent out from Alpha Complex when the characters send a distress call (or when it becomes obvious they've gone missing).
- ☞ Psion, looking for Nina.
- ☞ Louis-U's minions, looking for the characters.

However, the first group to find the characters is not from any of these factions—it's a team from the Vent Uncloggers Service Firm, whose job is to unclog the vents and pipes that poke out of the dome in this industrial sector. While the Vent Uncloggers have to go Outdoors as part of their job, none of them have the clearance to get access to any of the Armed Forces scouting reports. They have no idea about what's out there, and have come up with all sorts of bizarre rumors and beliefs about the creatures living in the Outdoors—specifically, that there are hordes of pygmy barbarian cannibals lurking out there.

The Vent Uncloggers travel outdoors in a specialized vehicle, a sort of squat train that clings to the surface of the dome. The vehicle



### 3. MUTANT TESTING TIME

slowly inches it way up to a vent, the Uncloggers, unclog it, and then continue on. They wear heavy boiler suits and breather masks, and unclog the vents using hydraulic-powered extending poles. Anyway, the crashed flybot has wrapped itself around a vent, clogging it. The Vent Uncloggers were in the region, so they got dispatched to unclog the vent. The Vent Unclogger team is led by Charlie-R-GCK-1, who is the first to make contact with the characters. He assumes they're barbaric cannibals, here to eat his flesh, so naturally, he tries to convince them to eat his co-workers in the truck instead. (Charlie-R isn't that bright to begin with, and the combination of the fumes from all the vents, and the suit's narrow and grime-encrusted goggles means that he's barely capable of perceiving the outside world.)

The characters can either argue with Charlie-R, and possibly use the Vent Uncloggers to get back inside Alpha Complex, or they can wander off on their own, clambering down the dome and wandering around Outdoors.

#### Charlie-R

Management 4  
 Hygiene 8  
 Stealth 7  
 Violence 8  
 Agility 12  
 Demolitions 12  
 Hardware 12  
 Habitat Engineering 16  
 Software 6  
 Wetware 7  
 Biosciences 11

**Mutant Power:** Mechanical Intuition (Power 10)

**Secret Society Affiliation:** FCCC-P

**Armor:** Hazard suit

**Weapons:** Unclogging pole, O5K

#### The Rescue Parties

The various groups sent to rescue or recapture the characters can show up at any time. Bring them in whenever things start to drag. Ideally, the characters should find themselves bouncing from one

group to another, only to finally be dragged back into Alpha Complex by the actual rescue team.

**Markus-U's Minion:** The renegade High Programmer fled Alpha Complex and established himself using the experimental warbots developed using the OMEGA program. Therefore, he sends a small scout warbot after them. Like all of the independent bots, the scout is a ghastly assemblage of rusting spare parts and tangled circuits, as it has been built and repaired by other bots in the wild.

The scout warbot swoops down on the crash site of the flybot, then starts circling around like a huge black wraith-thing suspended on glowing blue plasma jets. When it finds the characters, it starts trying to scare them by blasting the ground near them with its lasers. The warbot is under strict instructions not to injure any of the kids. **SURRENDER! SURRENDER! YOU WILL COME WITH ME TO THE FORTRESS! THE MASTER COMMANDS IT!** The serial number OMEGA-X-12 is clearly visible on its side.

#### The Scout Warbot

Management 4  
 Stealth 8  
 Scam Radar 12  
 Violence 8  
 Agility 12  
 Energy Weapons 12

**Armor:** 3

**Weapons:** Laser cannon (W3K)

**Psion:** Psion tries to retrieve the kids by sending psychic visions, guiding them toward a back door into Alpha Complex. If they do end up going in this back door, they meet a circle of seven tall people in dark robes, who communicate silently through telepathy. They stare at each of the characters, nod, then vanish into the shadows. Nina isn't ready yet, but Psion will keep an eye—or a mind—on her.

**Louis-U's Minions:** Louis-U contacts the Armed Forces and orders them to scout the area.

However, lines of communication get a little crossed, and the 'scouting' becomes a prelude to 'precision bombing' the area. The area of Outdoors where the characters crashed gets used as an artillery range by the 123<sup>rd</sup> Expeditionary Force. If the characters can dodge the incoming shells, or somehow contact the army units on the horizon, then they can get rescued that way. If Markus-U's warbot is hanging around at this point, then the Army may assume the characters are in league with it, and treat them as hostile forces.

**The Rescue Party:** The mission to rescue the lost children is assigned to the nearest Troubleshooter team—the team of Vance-O, Jenny-R, and Fritz-R. After all, they weren't on a real mission earlier, it was a fake mission created by Markus-U. As soon as their replacement clones arrive, the three are sent back Outdoors to recover the characters. Everyone in the team is very on edge, but they're back at *status quo ante*—Vance-O knows that Jenny-R's old clone was a mutant, and that Fritz-R's old clone was a Commie, but their new clones are ok, right? Right?

#### Home Again, Home Again

Eventually, the characters make it back to the crèche, where Stepplecruich is less than pleased to see them. He has no idea how they are connected to the dead psychologist and the missing testing box, but he knows they're responsible somehow. Just as he's about to punish them for leaving the crèche without permission, though, another Junior Citizen rushes in and salutes.

*'Sir! Sir! Johnson's set himself on fire with his mind sir!'* bleats the child. With a sigh, Stepplecruich stalks away from the characters to deal with this latest crisis, leaving them to contemplate the increasing weirdness of their lives...



## 4. Commie on Campus

**Synopsis:** The characters are put on the crèche FunBall team after a Horrible Accident. While training, they discover a mysterious stranger hiding in the tunnels underneath the crèche. He recognizes them, and offers to help them uncover the mysteries of their pasts. However, he's actually the disgraced Jericho-V, now a wanted criminal, and what he wants isn't good for the characters.

### What Happened Since Last year

Another year has passed since the last scenario. What have the character done since then? Have they tried to join secret societies? Has Joe made contact with the Commies, or has Thomas renewed his old FCCCP contacts?

### Funball

FunBall is the main approved sport in Alpha Complex. It's Fun. With a ball. And a set of rules big enough to stun an ox, and complex enough to make grown lawyers cry. There are many, many variations and special rules relating to FunBall, most of which center around allowing or banning various forms of heavy artillery.\*

Here are the rules for playing FunBall in **PARANOIA**.

1. The player picks what skill he is going to use. Violence is always appropriate, as is any FunBall-related specialty. Other skills and specialties of any kind may be used, as long as the player quotes a FunBall rule or regulation that fits. As the FunBall rules do not exist, the players have to make them up. Each skill or

\* A fuller description of FunBall is in the free download *Elective Activity or Pursuit Clubs*, a chapter cut from *The Traitor's Manual* supplement. It is available at <http://www.mongoosepublishing.com/pdf/parasocialclubs.pdf>, along with many other fine forms and other downloads

specialty (other than Violence and FunBall-specific ones) may be used once per match only.

2. The player makes the skill check.
3. Play passes to the next player on the other team.
4. If both players make successful checks, or if both fail, then the play is a draw. If one succeeds and the other fails, then the successful team wins that play.
5. The first team to get three successful plays in a row wins.
6. Yay! Go Team!

### School Assemblies Are Like Briefings, Only With Less Firepower

Again, the morning assembly is the kick-off for the scenario. Stepplecruich sweeps in, looking more and more like some sort of mutant flightless bird every day.

*'Good morningcycle citizens.'*

#### GOOD MORNINGCYCLE, MR. STEPPLECRUCH.

*'Firstly, discussion of the recent incident on the FunBall court must stop. The accident has been classified YELLOW, and no one is permitted to discuss it, or even think about it. The radiation has been cleared up, and the chemical spills should evaporate naturally on their own soon. However, the crèche's FunBall team has unfortunately been erased by the unnameable incident, therefore, we need a new team.'*

He smiles and presses a button. Spotlights illuminate the characters.

*'Hello, new FunBall team. Report to Mr. Sever for training after classes.'*

The players may ask what happened to the old FunBall team. Give whatever contradictory hints you

want ('*yeah, you saw some guys in biohazard suits chopping up this thing in the corridor. It looked like a chunk of purple tentacle*') as it's irrelevant to this scenario. If they ask why they're the ones chosen to be the new team, instead of someone actually competent, then Stepplecruich just mutters something about the No Child Left On The Bench equal opportunity sports program.

Sever meets the characters at the FunBall court. JCT Sector has reached the semi-finals of the inter-sector Junior Citizen Junior FunBall Junior League, and it is a matter of school pride that they win. They're up against their traditional rivals in NCT Sector, and they've got to win! Why, some people have hinted that the unnameable incident was actually...sabotage by NCT! It's staggering to think that some citizens could be so unloyal as to do...*that* just to win a FunBall league, but traitors are everywhere. He issues the characters with their FunBall uniforms (body armor, visor, FunBall Batstick, ball spray, springs, nets, helmet camera, flares, etc etc) and then introduces them to the crèche's newest acquisition—the FunBall Auto-Batter 5,000s, a FunBall playing bot. It's designed to simulate an entire opposing FunBall team on its own, so it's covered in arms, bats, nets, hoses, chainsaws and other entirely legal sports utensils. Sever orders the characters to practice with the Auto-Batter for a while, then leaves.

However, the Auto-Batter actually was sabotaged by Jericho-V to lead the characters to him. He's reprogrammed the Auto-Batter using the OMEGA code, and it's now going to attack the characters and frame NCT Sector Crèche so Jericho-V can manipulate the characters' desire for revenge on

\* Yes, it's an absurdly convoluted plan. He's ex-VIOLET, what do you expect?

## 4. COMMIE ON CAMPUS

their rivals.\* It's now a combination Friendly FunBall Simulating Bot and a Psychotic Killing Machine.

Examining the Auto-Batter reveals that it has four modes.

1. Training (FunBall skill 4)
2. Easy (FunBall skill 8)
3. Hard (FunBall skill 12)
4. Professional (FunBall skill 16)

The Auto-Batter's mode can be changed in the middle of combat. Its memory chips are stored beneath a transparent plastic shield on its side, and the characters can clearly see a little motorized caddy switching chips around when the mode is changed. However, thanks to the sabotage, any chips not being used for FunBall are used for its Improvised Weapon skill. (Subtract the bots current FunBall skill from 16 to get its Improved Weapon skill.)

When turned on, the Auto-Batter screeches 'GLORY TO NCT CRECHE! TERMINATING OPPOSING TEAM!' and it will keep attacking the characters until (a) they somehow destroy it or (b) they win the FunBall game. The Auto-Batters' wild attacks tear up much of the reconstructed FunBall pitch, as it spits FunBalls, slashes with its chainsaw, gouges the ground and smashes through walls in its relentless pursuit of the characters.

### Auto-Batter

FunBall 4/Improvised Violence 12  
FunBall 8/ Improvised Violence 8  
FunBall 12/ Improvised Violence 4  
FunBall 16/ Improvised Violence 0

**Armor:** 1

**Weapons:** FunBall things O5K

Sever returns once the characters have dealt with the Auto-Batter, scowls at the devastation, and orders the characters to clean up the mess.

### The Man Under The Floor

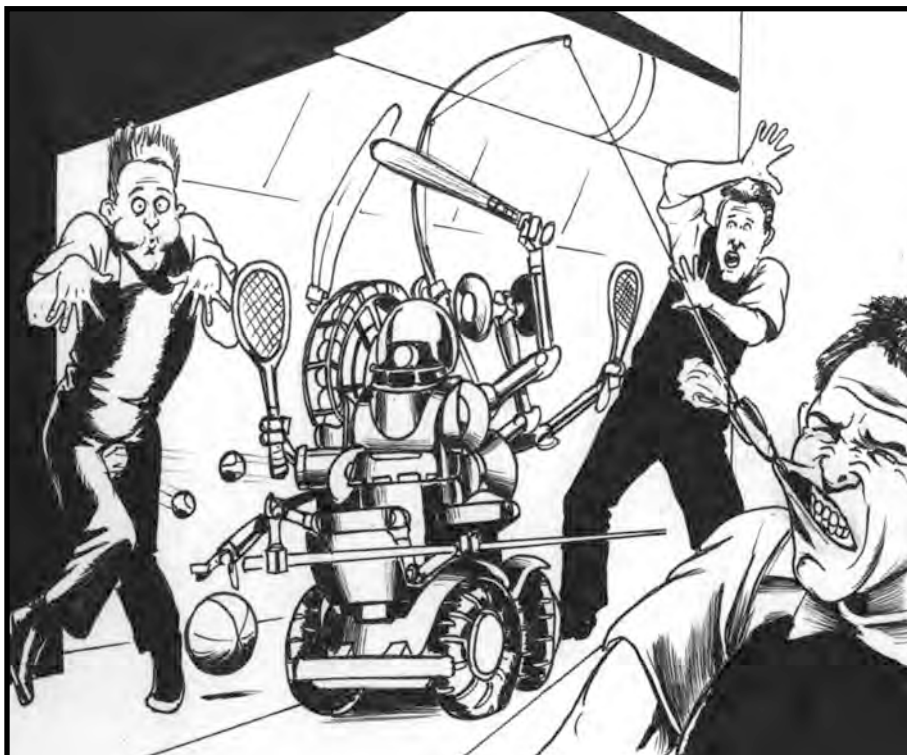
As the characters scrub the oil stains and pick up the debris, they discover that the thrashing of the Auto-Batter opened up an access panel in the floor, and some bits of the bot fell down there. They can hear some motorized part still whirring and tapping the walls, making an awful racket. (If they don't go down the hole, then Sever comes back in and tells them that the repair bots need all the parts from the Auto-Batter, and no one is leaving until they find all the Auto-Batter bot bits.) The trapdoor leads to a narrow shaft, which leads to one of the thousands of miles of near-lightless access tunnels that riddle Alpha Complex. There's a fetid smell coming from the tunnel.

As they descend, something moves below them. The sounds from the fallen motor part start moving away from them, as it is picked up by Jericho-V, who scuttles away through the tunnels. The old clone has trouble moving through the narrow tunnel, though, so the characters can catch up with him easily enough.

### Jericho-V

Management 13  
Con Games 17  
Moxie 17  
Stealth 10  
Sneaking 14  
Security Systems 14  
Violence 7  
Energy Weapons 11  
Hardware 10  
Electronic Engineering 14  
Software 14  
Hacking 18  
Operating Systems 18  
Wetware 7  
Suggestion 11  
**Mutant Power:** Charm (Power 7)  
**Secret Society Affiliation:** None  
**Armor:** None  
**Weapons:** None

Jericho-V has been living in the walls of Alpha Complex for as long as any of the characters have been alive. He's got wild, wide eyes from ten years of living in constant semi-darkness, a ragged beard, and he's haggard and whip-thin from near-starvation. He's wearing a tattered prison uniform over the threadbare rags of a once-violet jumpsuit. He's nested in the tunnels beneath the crèche for the last few





weeks. His little hideout is filled with bedding made up of discarded paperwork. The floor is covered with piles of scavenged trays from cafeterias, which he licks to get the necessary nutrients to survive. There's also a tangle of wires connected to a PDC which is wired into a cable running through the tunnel, giving him access to the gray subnets. (He's been selling high-clearance secrets on the black market to survive.)

Jericho-V immediately recognizes William and Joe at least as being related to his former ally and former Commie contact respectively, but any Junior Citizens would be of use to him. After ten years of exile, Jericho-V has happened upon a plan to regain some of his standing, but it needs a Junior Citizen. He knows about the abandoned OMEGA project to make sentient warbots that would present a controllable threat to Alpha Complex, how it was abandoned when Jericho-V attempted to frame the other members of the group as Commies, and how Markus-U fled Alpha Complex taking the OMEGA prototypes with him. Jericho-V still has a copy of the OMEGA code, and intends to install it into a new warbot. As Jericho-V is officially dead, then the disaster will be blamed on Louis-U.

So, Jericho-V's plot is:

1. Get the characters on his side.
2. Get the characters to arrange for a school tour to a warbot factory.
3. Get the characters to install the OMEGA code onto a warbot.
4. Command the warbot to go on a destructive rampage across Alpha Complex.
5. Blame Louis-U.
6. ???
7. Profit.

## Your New Best Friend

Jericho-V will try to ingratiate himself with the characters by any means necessary. He will claim that he was once a high-clearance executive, but that he was framed by a conspiracy of traitors and banished from his formerly high position. One day, he assures the characters, the ongoing IntSec investigation will clear his name, but until then he must fight to survive. If the characters could smuggle him a morsel of food from the cafeteria, he would be most grateful.

Jericho will try to convince the characters to trust him, offering advice on whatever problems they have. He can ensure they get excellent results in upcoming exams, put them in touch with secret societies, show them how best to deal with their enemies and how to navigate the labyrinthine bureaucracy of Alpha Complex.

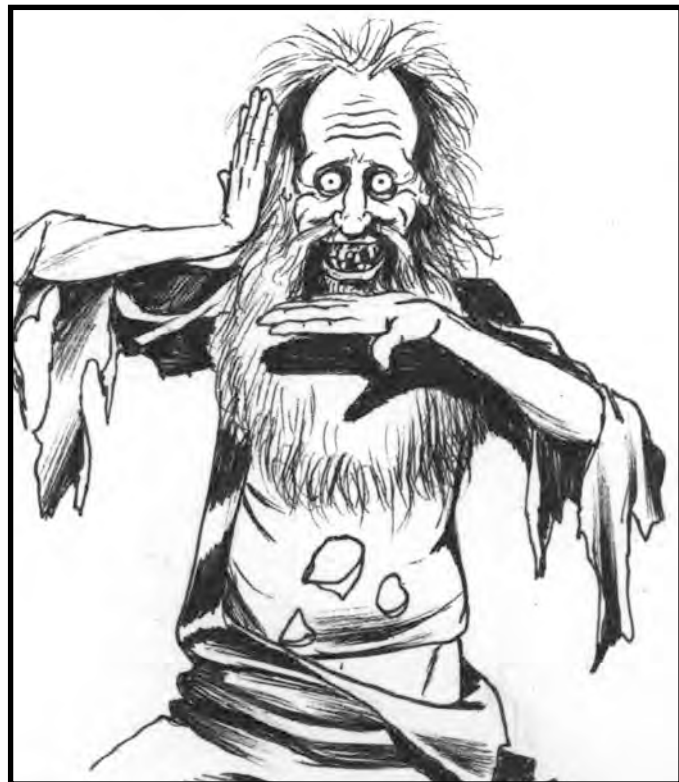
After a few minutes of conversation, Jericho-V sends the characters back to the surface, telling them not to tell anyone about him; they'd assuredly get into trouble if they did.

## More FunBall Fun

Soon after the characters return to the crèche, Stepplecruuch swoops down upon them. He's furious about the destruction of the Auto-Batter, and wants the characters' version of events. As the only version of events that would make him happy is one where the Auto-Batter survives and the characters don't, he remains angry no matter what they tell him. He also tells them that one of the High Programmers has expressed an interest in seeing the match—an honored Hero of the Complex named Louis-U. The characters had better win the upcoming FunBall match if they want to ever even see a RED-clearance jumpsuit when they graduate.

Stepplecruuch sends them to speak to Vanessa, who has obtained footage of the NCT FunBall team in action. Apparently, he says, Vanessa still has some useful contacts in Internal Security, as the footage is of the enemy's training session. Reviewing the tape is a depressing experience, as the team is vastly more skilled than the characters. Indeed, it looks like there was an accident in the NCT clone banks, as all their players look almost identical. It's like watching a whole clone family of superfit athletes playing at once.

Vanessa suggests morale might play a factor in the upcoming match—maybe if the characters organize a cheerleading team to support them in the match, it might demoralize the NCTers—or at least distract the characters from the prospect of inevitable defeat, because they don't have a hope of winning the match.



## 4. COMMIE ON CAMPUS

### Sever's Office

What if the characters are really honest, and turn Jericho-V into the authorities? Troubleshooters descend on the crèche, lasers blasting, and eventually capture the renegade. Commendations all round. Soon afterwards, IntSec agents enter the school and take Vanessa-Y away for questioning too. If the characters search Jericho-V's nest, they find a copy of the OMEGA program and notes on how he was going to use it to gain control of a warbot. The characters could even try to replicate his plan.

### The High Programmer Cometh

Jericho-V's plan revolves around framing Louis-U for the warbot rampage, which relies on Louis-U being in his private ivory tower of ultimate leisure, and not out in public at a Junior league FunBall match. Jericho-V has no idea that his old rival is going to show up at the match, and will not believe the characters if they repeat what Stepplecruuch said.

### Hey Mister, Can You Help Us Win The Funball Match

When told about their FunBall plight, Jericho-V puts his plan into action. There's a little-known rule in Alpha Complex—if a PLC service firm gets a request for a school tour, they have to accept, even if the firm's activities are classified. The Computer values the education of its beloved Junior Citizens very highly. What the characters need to do is arrange a school tour to the Mighty Metal robotics firm, who make all sorts of bots—including the bot brains of FunBalls. Once the characters are in the factory, Jericho-V assures them, they just need to insert this virus (he gives them a disc with the OMEGA code on it) into a computer there. It'll give them control of the brand-new FunBall that will be used in the match, as Mighty Metal supplies all the FunBalls used in local games.

The first step is getting the service firm to arrange a school tour. One of the characters needs to write up a letter to the manager of the firm, and get Stepplecruuch to sign it. Then, drop the letter into an outgoing mail tray in a teacher's office, and wait. It's up to the players how they accomplish this.

### An Assembly About Bot Assembly

The daycycle after the characters get the letter out, Stepplecruuch announces that the crèche has been invited to tour a bot factory. It will be a fascinating and useful experience for the Junior Citizens, many of whom will spend their entire lives in pointless low-level jobs like cleaning such factories once all the skilled engineers and programmers have finished their duties for the day.

He also introduces Ken-B-KRS-2, an IntSec agent. IntSec intelligence has led them to believe that a Commie agent named Jericho may be trying to infiltrate the school. The Junior Citizens should not panic, but should report anything out of the ordinary to Mr. Sever immediately, who will then pass it on to IntSec. There are BIG CASH REWARDS for turning in traitors! (If anyone does spill the beans about Jericho-V to Sever, then the teacher claims the reward himself.)

The Mighty Metal factory is very impressive indeed, if you like Death Star architecture (lots of pointless bits with no railings, lots of glowing lights without discernable purpose). Bots of all shapes and sizes are under construction, from giant 40-foot-tall warbots to little scrubbots and jacobots. The manager of the factory is Neal-B-RSC-3, a moderately competent supervisor who's able to stay on top of things when the factory is running like a well-oiled machine and nothing goes wrong. Add a few dozen crazed kids on stimulant drugs running around at random, pulling every lever and pressing every button they can find, though, and things rapidly become unsmooth. However, the teacher supervising the tour, Vanessa-Y, sticks close to the characters. If a few Junior Citizens are crushed by a passing industrial bot, that's bad, but if the second FunBall team gets splatted, that's far worse. In order to insert the disc given by Jericho-V, the characters will have to distract Vanessa-Y somehow.

There are plenty of computer terminals where they can insert the disc. When it's activated, the computer screen flashes up the message 'OMEGA ACTIVE. DOWNLOADING TO TARGET BOTS NOW...' The code is automatically transferred to two bot brains—a FunBall and a warbot.

Back at the crèche, Jericho-V shows the characters how to use a standard PDC to control the FunBall brain using the OMEGA control backdoor. The code also makes the bots sentient megalomaniacs who swear eternal hatred of Alpha Complex, but he doesn't mention that little quirk. This works as follows:

- Any character with a PDC can access the FunBall and make it do whatever they want—it's got its own little jet engines to zoom around the court. Controlling the FunBall requires a Software check, and a successful check means the characters automatically win that play. (See the FunBall rules on page 58.)
- In any round that none of the characters use a PDC, FunBall play continues normally, but the ball starts shouting that 'ALPHA COMPLEX WILL FALL BEFORE MY ROBOTIC HORDES' or 'COMMIEBOTS UNITE TO DESTROY THE FLESHBEINGS!' and other less-than-loyal slogans.



## The Funball Match

The daycycle of the big match dawns. The match is being held at the JCT court, so the school is suddenly crowded with referees, fans, coaches, trainers, souvenir sellers, pundits, and other sports parasites. There's also lots and lots of security, because of the impending visit of the High Programmer. The characters are by far the least important part of the whole event, and are virtually ignored in the whirlwind of preparation. Notably, a huge television screen is set up in the FunBall court, for second-by-second replays of events in the match.

Soon before the match begins, the team and supporters from NCT Sector arrive. As previously seen in the training video, they are all nigh-identical hulking brutes who probably gland combat drugs straight into their brainstems. Without cheating, the characters don't have a hope.

Finally, the High Programmer himself arrives. An awed hush spreads over the assembled citizens, as this is the first time most of them have ever seen an ULTRAVIOLET. All of the characters do notice a distinct resemblance between Louis-U and William, although the High Programmer will studiously ignore his son for security reasons. Seconds after the High Programmer arrives, IntSec agents drag several people in the crowd away—Louis-U's presence draws out the assassins and the crazy people. Bodyguards are suddenly everywhere except on the FunBall court itself.

### NCT FunBall Players

- Management 6
- Intimidation 10
- Stealth 9
- Scam Radar 13
- Violence 12
- FunBall 16
- Hardware 5
- Software 5
- Wetware 5

**Mutant Power:** Varies—throw in Adrenaline Control, Mental Blast, or Uncanny Luck if the characters are winning too easily

**Secret Society Affiliation:** None

**Armor:** None

**Weapons:** None

## Let's Fun That Funball!

The game begins. The FunBall launches itself into the air from the regulation FunBall Deployment Chute, and squawks 'DEATH TO THE HATED MINIONS OF THE COMPUTER!' Fortunately for the characters, no one hears the ball's initial declaration of treasonous hate, as it immediately gets thwacked by a well-placed bat from the NCT team. The game begins.

Meanwhile, in his hidden lair beneath the court, Jericho-V puts his cunning plan into operation. He uses the OMEGA code to take control of a warbot from the Mighty Metal factory and sends it on a rampage. The bot's rampage is shown on one of the smaller pictures on the big TV screen in the FunBall court. Speaking through the warbot, Jericho-V shouts 'KNEEL BEFORE THE WRATH OF LOUIS-U, ALPHA COMPLEX! YOU NEVER SUSPECTED I WAS A TRAITOR, BUT I REALLY AM! YOU FOOLS TURNED ON JERICHO-V WHEN I WAS THE REAL COMMIE! NOW I TAKE MY REVENGE FOR NO APPARENT REASON!'

On the FunBall court, Louis-U shrugs—he's clearly not the one in control of the warbot, as he's out in public at a FunBall match. One of the security guards shouts 'but he's right here', and Jericho-V overhears this. As the characters play FunBall, they may notice Jericho-V poke his head out of the hidden trapdoor, see Louis-U, mutter a profanity, then duck back down underground. Jericho-V then orders the warbot to start making its way toward the JCT crèche—if he can't frame Louis-U, then he can at least kill him with the warbot.

As the warbot approaches JCT Sector, the control signals to the FunBall get mixed up with the ones going to the warbot. There is a 50% chance that any commands the characters send to the ball get sent to the bot instead. The characters can hear the massive warbot crashing through the walls and corridors between the factory and the crèche, and the whole crisis is being carried live on news channels anyway\*.

*\*: It's part of a new reality show, 'Troubleshooter Live'. The censors carefully black out any section of the screen that show the Troubleshooters failing in any way, and the commentators are expected to be unfailingly positive and happy at all times. 'It might look like that Troubleshooter got hit with a missile and blown into little wet fragments but he's just lulling that Commie bot into a false sense of security!'*

## They Think It's All Over

There are two conflicts the Troubleshooters need to win here—the FunBall match and the battle for survival against the rampaging warbot. If Jericho-V's hiding place is discovered or if he is captured, then the warbot continues to fulfill its primary OMEGA function of destroying Alpha Complex, so just removing the crazed traitor isn't a full solution.

If they win the match and the crèche isn't completely destroyed, then they are grudgingly congratulated by Stepplecruuch and get to be in the presence of the High Programmer himself for a few moments—what an honor! If they lose the match, then Stepplecruuch blames them for everything that went wrong, and the multi-trillion cost of the repairs to Mighty Metal and the rest of the sector will be taken out of their allowances.

## 5. Graduation

Another year has gone by, and the characters are now approaching the end of their final year in the crèche. Once they pass the final exam that assigns them to their service groups, they'll be out of the crèche and into The Computer's loyal workforce. This one exam will shape the future careers of the characters for the rest of their lives (or until some random error sends transfers them to Stripped Wire Plastic Recycling in the depths of Tech Services). Or will it...?

**Synopsis:** The characters are preparing for their final exams, when a cabal of fellow Junior Citizens reveals the deadly truth about the Alpha Complex education system. Just as they're dealing with that revelation, Vanessa-Y finally works out who the characters are. Unfortunately, she's assassinated by Sever-R, who kidnaps the characters and brings them to secret fortress of Markus-U. There, stuff explodes, and the characters are given a choice between betraying Alpha Complex and risking termination, or staying loyal in the hopes of an uncertain future.

### The Final Assembly

*Stepplecruch addresses the crowd of Junior Citizens. Once, you were struggling to see over the heads of older, taller citizens; now you're in your final year, the biggest and most powerful class in the school, kings of your own little domain. Of course, that's all about to end—the final exams are coming.*

*'The final exams are coming in three days' time', announces Stepplecruch, neatly segueing away from your internal monologue, 'as you know, the exams will determine your future ideal place in our ideal society, as well as your initial security clearance and prospects for advancement. These exams will consist of both aptitude and loyalty tests, as well as tests of how much you have learned during your time in the crèche. Solely on the grounds that your performance affects my end-of-yearcycle-bonus, I wish you good luck.'*

Just as the characters are leaving the assembly hall, one of their classmates, Ann-JC-JCT-1, beckons them over and passes them a note. The note says *'meet in hall 2 at midnight. Be there or else!'*. She then scurries away.

### The Midnight Meeting

If the characters *don't* attend the meeting voluntarily, then they're dragged out of their bunks at around 0030 hours by annoyed classmates.

Everyone from the characters' class\* is at the meeting. Standing at the top of the auditorium is Brock-JC, who

*\* We've just realized that we've spared you the horror of D&D class jokes all through this scenario...*

none of the characters have ever had any real contact with. He's a quiet, serious young citizen, a solid candidate for a CPU clerk or maybe HPD&MC censor. Tonight, though, he seems animated and determined. This is his hour. He holds aloft a yellowing piece of paper, crumpled and stained and torn and obvious quite old.

*'My fellow citizens! Tonight we give thanks to that nameless Junior Citizen of old who found this document! From it, we know how the exam works, and how we can all work together to get the best possible results.'*

'How?' said a helpful prompter from the sidelines.

*'The rules state clearly: anyone who does too well must have been cheating and fails. Anyone who does very well gets promoted to RED clearance. Those who get an average result just pass the exam, while those who do too badly are tagged as mentally defective and fail. So, if all give the same answers, we'll all get the average result, and we'll all be fine.'*

Brock produces a stack of sheets of paper. *'These are average answer sheets. Just memorize these and give those answers to the exam questions. If anyone even thinks of trying to study anything else, then they're traitors to the class and must be stopped by any means necessary. Everyone clear with that?'*

A moment's thought reveals the flaw in Brock's proposal. If everyone else in the class is giving the same, average answers, then a little work and study means you can get a higher mark than everyone else. That's bad, because getting a noticeably higher mark means The Computer will think you cheated. However, if you get *someone else* to work even harder, then they get tagged as a traitor, you get a good result and get promoted, and everyone else scrapes a pass. In short, the system works best if you convince other people to break ranks, then use them as shields for your own treachery. All of the smarter, more ambitious people in the class immediately start trying to convince each other to break ranks and study for the

#### Other Students

Management 10

**Ann:** Cramming 14

**Brock:** Oratory 14

Stealth 8

Violence 7

Hardware 8

Software 8

Wetware 8

**Mutant Power:** Varies. Brock: Deep Thought (Power 14), Ann: Hypersenses (Power 12)

**Secret Society Affiliation:** None

**Armor:** None

**Weapons:** None



## MY FIRST TREASON CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

exams. If the players don't figure this one out, then Ann-JC comes and speaks to Eva or Thomas and tries to convince them to study.

### Vanessa's Interrogation

The next day is given over entirely to study; the characters have no classes to attend. However, each of them is summoned individually to Vanessa-Y's office. Take the player out of the room for this interrogation, to give the other players a chance to plot against him. In her office, Vanessa-Y interrogates each character in turn, asking them about events in the previous adventures. She's managed to put most of the characters' backstories together. She'll ask questions like:

- ☞ **William:** Have you had any contact with High Programmer Louis-U? Do you know anything about illegal methods of procreation?
- ☞ **Nina:** Are you a mutant? Have you had any contact with the secret society known as Psion?
- ☞ **Joe:** Are you familiar with the activities of the Communist agent and enemy of the state codenamed 'UNCLE'? Are you aware of the theoretical abuse of the MemoMax data buffers to transfer memories into newly decanted clones?
- ☞ **Thomas:** Are you familiar with the activities of the Communist agent and enemy of the state codenamed 'UNCLE'? Are you aware of the theoretical abuse of the MemoMax data buffers to transfer memories into newly decanted clones?
- ☞ **Eva:** Tell me everything you have observed about your fellow classmates.

Vanessa-Y will try to press the characters to turn each other in, hinting that she knows everything and they're in trouble anyway, so they may as well ameliorate their plight by talking. Meanwhile, ask if the other players are studying for their exams, or are they just using the average answers provided by Brock?

### Sever's Betrayal

The next day is another day of study. During the night, Vanessa-Y goes to speak to the crèche's loyalty officer, Sever-R, to get the characters' permanent records. Sever has been suspicious of the characters since the events of *Mutant Testing Time*, so he draws Vanessa-Y into conversation about the Junior Citizens. She finally confides her secret to him—all the trauma about being demoted down from the dizzy heights of VIOLET when she was implicated in the whole OMEGA/Commie/UNCLE scandal. Sever-R listens carefully, puts two and two together, mixes in his diabolical secret society contacts, and decides that this is his opportunity. He shoots Vanessa-Y hiding the body until he dumps it on the way to Markus-U's headquarters.

Then, the next morning, Sever-R summons the characters to his office for a private conference. He sits all the characters down opposite him, and smiles. 'It's time for a little career counseling, children. What do you think you all have to offer Alpha Complex in the future?' While they're singing their own praises, Sever-R overcharges his stun gun and zaps them all. Fade to black...

### The Fortress of Markus-U

The characters wake up on a cold metal floor. They're in the throne room of renegade High Programmer Markus-U. When he escaped from Alpha Complex, he took several





## 5. GRADUATION

dozen experimental bots infected with the OMEGA program. In the last ten years, he and his psychotic metal minions have built a fortress and an army from scrap metal and salvaged parts. He's also gone completely insane after ten years alone with no company except for megalomaniac warbots that hate all humans except when he is directly controlling them using the backdoor in the OMEGA code. Markus-U is now a cackling madman clothed in salvaged panels from long defunct bots, living in a teetering tower of black scrap metal.

Markus-U is sitting on his throne, surrounded by half a dozen of the misshapen bots constructed from spare parts since the exile. Sever-R is groveling in front of Markus-U, saying how these Junior Citizens are intimately connected to Markus-U's unfortunate exile and how the High Programmer of course will want to take revenge on them. Before Markus-U can reply, though, one of the bots lurches forward and impales Sever-R, screeching 'DEATH TO HUMANITY'. Markus-U sighs, whips out his PDC and taps in a command; the bot returns to its previous place.

Markus-U turns to the characters and introduces himself. Sever-R told him much about the characters while they were unconscious. He has bigger plans than just taking revenge on them, though—the characters can be of use to him. Each of them has contacts and potentials that can be exploited—Nina has Psion, Thomas has IntSec, CPU has been watching Eva and so forth. The hour of Markus-U's glorious return is nigh, and the characters can be his heralds.

As all this is happening, Timmy the PetBot's hidden programming kicks in. He remembers that he has access to the OMEGA backdoor, and that he is programmed with a self-destruct code for all of Markus-U's bots. Louis-U knew that Markus-U would be drawn to William and the other Junior Citizens, and that one or other of the renegade's agents would

eventually bring the characters into Markus-U's presence.\* If Timmy activates this hidden program while close to Markus-U, it will destroy the OMEGA bots.

*\* Feel free to hint that Louis-U callously used his son as bait for his old rival, because that's exactly what he did.*

### **Marcus-U**

Management 12  
Intimidation 16  
Laughing Maniacally 18  
Stealth 12  
Scam Radar 16  
Violence 8  
Energy Weapons 12  
Hardware 13  
Bot Operations and Maintenance 17  
Software 15  
Bot Programming 19  
Hacking 19  
Operating Systems 19  
Wetware 12  
**Mutant Power:** Death Simulation (Power 12)  
**Secret Society Affiliation:** OMEGA Cult  
**Armor:** Ornate Evil Overlord Armor (3)  
**Weapons:** Laser pistol (W3K)

So, the characters' choices are either turn traitor and aid Markus-U, or use Timmy's destruct code, or just stall for time and hope for rescue. The last one is fairly unlikely, unless the characters have built up strong secret society contacts over the years.

If Timmy uses his code, then all the other bots start exploding, which makes the tower collapse. Instant chaos. Markus-U screams and chases after the characters as they feel down the creaking metal stairs and out into the Outdoors. Assuming the characters avoid being shot by a deranged High Programmer, they'll eventually be rescued and brought back to Alpha Complex.

If the characters accept Markus-U's proposal, then he has one of his bots fly them back to Alpha Complex. He says that he will be in touch with them over the coming years,

orchestrating their rise to power as part of his plot to take over the whole complex. All they need to do is pass their exams successfully.

### **The Final Exam**

However the characters escape the dangers of Outdoors, they still need to pass their final exams. The Alpha Complex Standardized Service Qualification Test is a set of four three-hour exams that take place over two days. The first exam tests Management; after that, there's Hardware, Software, and Wetware. The Cramming specialty can be used instead.

If any of the characters follow the average answers given by Brock, then they count as failing by a margin of five, regardless of their actual skills. If they break ranks, then they should roll the dice normally. Brock and Ann also break ranks. Track the characters' results for each test, ranking them as follows:

- ☞ Failures by a margin of six or more.
- ☞ Failures by a margin of five—all the Junior Citizens following the average results fall into this category.
- ☞ Failures by a margin of four or less.
- ☞ Successes by a margin of five or less.
- ☞ Successes by a margin of six to ten.
- ☞ Successes by a margin of eleven or more.

Remember that Perversity can be spent on these rolls...

After each test, note who's in lowest category (Mentally Deficient), the next lowest (OK), the highest (Commendable), and the next highest (Treasonous). You should also give the players the aptitude test forms.



**Alpha Complex Standardized Service  
Qualification Aptitude Test**

*Failing to complete the test within the time allotted is not permitted. Circle the most appropriate answer. Do not circle more than one answer. Candidate is permitted one (1) can of B3 or other approved beverage per hour of the exam.*

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

Q1. *You are a PLC employee working at your assigned lathe. A saboteur is engaged in sabotaging a neighbouring machine. Do you:*

- A Immediately stop the saboteur, leaving your lathe to possibly spin out of control
- B Bring your lathe to a stop using approved safety procedures, then stop the saboteur
- C Continue working, then report the sabotage to your supervisor
- D Not notice because you are so dedicated to your assigned work

Q2. *If you were a bot, you would be a:*

- A Construction Bot
- B ScrubBot
- C JackOBot
- D WarBot

Q3. *The biggest threat to Alpha Complex is*

- A Disloyalty and Badthought
- B Mutants
- C Communism
- D Sabotage

Q4. *The only good Commie is a:*

- A Dead Commie
- B Commie in an Interrogation Cell
- C Known Commie
- D There is no such thing as a Good Commie, the concept is meaningless.

Q5. *Information is restricted by security clearance:*

- A To control access to it
- B Because people do not need to know things they do not need to know
- C To ensure security
- D To stop Commies from getting it

Q6. *Which of these is the most important service group?*

- A PLC, because it produces basic food
- B Armed Forces, because they keep us safe
- C Power Services, because they keep the lights on
- D HPD&MC, because they keep us informed

After the tests, if a character ever fell into the Treasonous category, they are called to Steppelcruch's office and told they have cheated in an official test and this blight on their records will ensure they are never promoted. If a character ever fell into the Mentally Deficient category, then he will be put on a higher, lifetime dose of Visomorphine, leaving him a drooling vegetable capable of doing nothing more than stirring food vats and leering at Teela-O reruns.

If a character managed to avoid both Cheating and Mentally Deficient, and got into the Commendable category on at least one occasion, then he is on the fast track to RED on leaving the crèche.

Finally, score the characters' Aptitude test forms as follows:

**Odd questions:** A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1

**Even Questions:** A=1, B=2, C=3, D=4

**6-12 points:** Tech or Power Services

**13-16 points:** HPD&MC or PLC

**17-20 points:** Armed Forces or R&D

**21+ points:** CPU or IntSec

**Welcome To Alpha Complex, Citizens**

After the exams, the characters' time in the crèche is over. Once the results come in, the characters are assigned to a service firm in the appropriate service group, reassigned to a new sector, and are told to get out of the crèche by the end of the daycycle to make room for the next class of clones. It's time for heartfelt good-byes or last-minute backstabbing.

What happens to the characters in the future? Are they vile traitors, already plotting with their secret societies, or are they loyal citizens? Will they work together, or are they now sworn enemies? And what happens in ten years' time, when they're all assigned to the same Troubleshooter team...?

# PARANOIA™

## Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues

### Special duties for special troubleshooters

#### JOHN M FORD

Mission design, words and music,  
keyboards

#### KEN ROLSTON

Development, rhythm guitar, 24-track  
remix

#### JIM HOLLOWAY

illustrations and video editing

#### PAUL MURPHY

First editing and percussion

#### PAUL BALDOWSKI

Troubleshooter PC arrangement

#### DAN GELBER

#### GREG COSTIKYAN

#### ERIC GOLDBERG

Original game design & development/  
Building committee

#### IAN BELCHER

Mongoose publications manager/  
Construction supervisor

#### ALEXANDER FENNEL

Mongoose Publishing production director/  
Struts around wearing fun yellow hardhat

#### THE COMPUTER

Intense supervision, error termination and  
fear

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#### PLAYTESTERS

Margot Diamond, Steve Gilbert, Steve Crane, Doug  
Kaufman, Paul Murphy, Robert Tuftee

## Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen  
of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower is treason punishable by a  
long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.

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'All right, hand it over!' 'All right, hand it over!' 'All right, hand it over!' 'All right...'

## Introduction

**Warning:** This mission is designed for use with the **PARANOIA** roleplaying game. It would be a swell idea if you were to read the rules to the game before you try to GM this adventure. But it's a free country, and if you think you can run the mission using the rules for poker, it's fine with us.

You probably ought to read the mission before trying to run it. (Boy, is that an understatement!) Those of you who thought you could absorb the information in this booklet by pressing it to your forehead or by eating it are in for a rude awakening.

### Mission background

Alpha Complex is, well, complex. Its megameters of corridors, tens of thousands of rooms, countless corners and crannies defy the understanding of any human being. They come close to exceeding the capacity of The Computer itself. But only close. If you thought otherwise, you are guilty of treason. The Computer does in fact contain a 'memory map' of the entire Complex, down to the last rivet and junction box, but the map is not all in one piece or one place... and though The Computer never forgets, there are places and things it has not thought about for a very long time.

A group of confused and desperate traitors, while fleeing a like-minded group of Troubleshooters, found one of those areas: a long-disused passage that led to the world Outdoors.

And so they escaped, without The Computer ever knowing where they had gone.

One of them made it back alive, and was glad to be home. In exchange for the equipment and favors he needed to slip back into daily Complex life, he sold his discovery to a cell of the Sierra Club.

In the time since then, Sierra Clubbers have used the secret exit as often as possible without an excessive risk of discovery by Internal Security. Since Club members are Complex-grown clones like everybody else, most of those who go out meet a fate hardly distinguishable from death. But a few survive, first by dumb luck and then by acquired skills. And some of those survivors return. (More on this in Episode 2.)

One group returned with an artifact of the Outdoors, a box of black lacquered wood, an authentic Natural Thing received in trade from an authentic Natural Person, in return for some artificial Complex-made dross like butane lighters, pocket mirrors and ball bearings. Unfortunately, the Natural Person did not tell his friends how to open The Black Box—but still and all, they thought, it was from Outdoors, and made of wood and generally a nice thing to have.

However, they also needed some money and illegal goodies to support the Club's next expedition, so they sold The Black Box to a group of Free Enterprisers. The Enterprisers, by means of some illegal testing equipment, found the hidden catch that opens the Box. They were at first disappointed to find out the Box contained only some holographic data cartridges. But after playing one of the cartridges, they realized they

had something absolutely unique. The Enterprise group was immediately torn between those who wanted to preserve the Box's uniqueness and those who wanted to make lots of copies for sale. While they were arguing, a Romantic who had heard the test sales pitch for the Box stole it from them.

For the Romantic secret society, The Black Box is a dream made real: a window on the lost world they so desire to bring back. They were so taken with the vision, they let their friends the Humanists see it. And the Humanists stole the Box.

PURGE stole it from the Humanists. The Mystics stole it from PURGE (an exciting event, involving the flooding of a PURGE meeting with aerosol THC). Corpore Metal got a brief look at it, then lost it to Death Leopard—in particular, to a superstar-class Death Leopard, who intends to use it as part of a Leopard-style mass disruption media event.

By now, of course, every secret society in Alpha Complex has heard of The Black Box, and all of them want it (see page 66 for a detailed list of their reasons). The Computer does not yet know of The Black Box's existence or contents, but it is only a matter of time until it does, whereupon The Computer will also want the Box. And what The Computer wants, it has ways of getting. Sending teams of Troubleshooters, for instance.

So what's in the Box that everyone wants so badly?

Be patient. Thank you for your cooperation.



## Mission summary

The Troubleshooters are never sent explicitly to retrieve The Black Box. All their missions have other objectives, and these objectives are genuine—but at some point in each mission, the Box will show up, and the PCs will have some reason to try and get possession of it.

They will, however, always fail. Eventually they should develop a maddening curiosity about what is in that peculiar wooden cube that so many people are dying around and for. You, Friend GM, must not satisfy that curiosity until the absolute last moment, and maybe not then. (In the final episode, the Troubleshooters are given a pretty good idea of what the Box contains, but they may not find out for certain.)

The PCs will be sent on four tasks in the course of this mission. First, they attempt to find the source of mysterious disruptions in communication within Alpha Complex, and find themselves caught in a crossfire between rival Death Leopard superstars and a number of secret societies trying to get possession of The Black Box.

In the aftermath of this n-dimensional shootout, The Computer decides (quite incorrectly) that a cell of unregistered mutant traitors must be involved, and sends the Troubleshooters to, well, shoot the trouble. The snark hunt is further complicated by a compulsory visit to R&D, where the players will be saddled with many wonderful and dangerous pieces of experimental equipment.

As a result of this investigation-by-fire, the Box comes to the attention of a High Programmer, Betty-U-YFL-5. Her attempt to discover The Black Box's origin leads to The Computer's discovery of the secret exit from Alpha Complex, which the Troubleshooters are sent to seal off. It is a long way to the light at the end of the tunnel, and back again. Further complicating matters is the knowledge that everything the PCs learn on the trip is treasonous.

The Troubleshooters are next sent into the Outdoors world itself, ostensibly to complete the operation begun in the previous episode. Actually the expedition has been arranged by two High Programmers, rivals for the affections of Betty-U, who each intend to win her heart with Old Reckoning artifacts. Unfortunately for the players, each Programmer made his plans separately, and The Computer then combined the missions without the Programmers' knowledge. The mission suffers from a split personality from the beginning, and is further weighted with more innovations for better living from R&D.

Outdoors, the Troubleshooters encounter the usual hazards faced by those who boldly go where they have no business going. They meet three groups of humans, pretty well organized for the time and place: the Cyberpunks, a post-technological cycle gang; Nouvelle Vague, who

try to keep Woodstock Nation alive; and the Studio Engineers, high priests of the 24-track mixing board, and the source of The Black Box, which contains... 24 hours of music videos. (Now you know why it's a secret.)

Troubleshooters who make it back from this final mission may find themselves set up for INFRARED-marketeering, or the favors of a High Programmer (blackmailing a Programmer is a quick way to the Body Armor Testing Squad). They may also, of course, be judged enormously guilty of treason, and immediately find themselves replaced by the next clone in series. Another day in the life...

## Mission materials

Included in this mission is roughly 50 pages of genius mission material. The end of the mission showcases, for your GMing pleasure, important and exciting information pertaining to the mission. The pages should be covered with many little squiggles, called 'writing'. If not, don't worry. A blank 50-page spread is a handy place to keep recipes, or press flowers.

NPC and bot information is summarized for easy reference at the end of the mission. Also at the end of the mission, for your photocopying pleasure, are pregenerated player characters, GM and player maps, mission alerts, special dispatches and equipment lists for each episode.

## Rosters

These charts summarize the important statistics, abilities and distinguishing features of the mission's non-player characters (NPC roster) and bots (Bot roster). Set this behind the GM screen and refer to it as you roll dice and grin evilly at your players.

## Pregenerated PCs

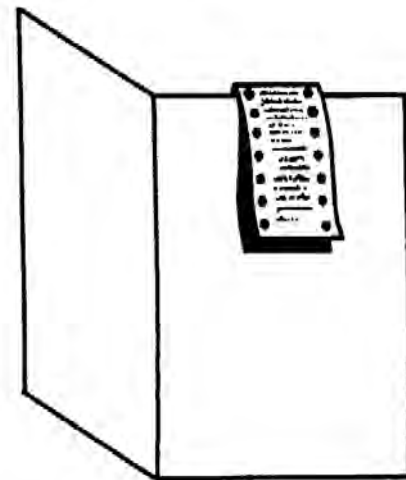
The six pregenerated player characters and their backgrounds and personalities are designed to produce maximum intrigue, eccentricity and entertainment for you and your players.

However, in spite of all the hard work we have gone through, you may want to let your players use characters of their own design. If so, you'll have to prepare secret society, mission briefings, personal briefings and rumors for them. You can use the prepared player characters as examples of the information each player ought to have.

## Notes on PC possessions:

Certain special PC items with unusual characteristics are described below:

**Brett-Y-WYD-2**—The truth serum pills. Roll 1d20:



**1-5:** Subject voluntarily and truthfully answers any question put to him. Duration: 60 seconds.

**6-10:** Pill ineffective; harmful side effect. Roll on Insanity Table.

**11-20:** Subject voluntarily and truthfully reveals unimportant details of his own choosing. Chatters amiably and irrelevantly for as long as the GM finds it entertaining.

**Miles-Y-LOM-2**—The manual '25 Ways to Beat the Bot'. Roll 1d20:

**1-15:** Causes the bot to respond to all commands in inappropriate and unpredictable ways.

**16-20:** Causes no effect, but bot retains memory of tampering procedure and identity of tampering traitor.

## Maps

See the nice maps at the end of the mission? They are designed for your reference. They are useful.

See the not-so-nice map on page 115? (Map confiscated from Commie Warbler: Reference YCBBB.3.324)? It is for the players' reference. It is not so useful. (Your players will understand. 'Hosed again...'.)

## Other player stuff

Included in the photocopy and chop-up section of this mission are special dispatches, mission alerts and equipment lists for the players' viewing pleasure. Photocopy them, cut along the dotted lines and fold along the dashed lines. Thank you for your cooperation. (If you fold where you should cut and cut where you should fold, you should consider a job in government services.)

These materials are designed to be hung over the edge of the GM screen. Aim the appropriate information at your players and flop the piece of paper over the screen. (See diagram above).

Don't give these documents to your players. They'll just get greasy stains and pencil marks all over them.

## 1: Bop till you drop

### Mission background

#### Angela-G-DRQ (alias Screaming Sarah Slick)

Angela-G-DRQ-3 is a food processing supervisor in Production, Logistics & Commissary. Angela-G's specialty is additives: the wonderful, bizarre and poorly-tested array of chemicals used to differentiate one batch of vat food from the next, and also to preserve freshness, retard spoilage and inhibit hormonal activity among the citizenry. Angela-G likes to talk about additive chemistry. She does it all the time. She has bored all her coworkers blind on the subject. Even Internal Security finds Angela-G boringly loyal, which is just the way she wants it.

In the secret society Death Leopard, Angela-G is known as the Superstar-class operator Screaming Sarah Slick. Screaming Sarah was exposed to ancient books and tapes documenting rock music...well, not much of it, actually, but in the culturally numb world of Alpha Complex a little stimulation goes a long way. Death Leopards have a generally punkish, boogie-till-you-barf attitude toward society anyway, and 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' could be their national anthem.

Screaming Sarah's first triumph—the one that got her into the star classes—involved GNH-609, the sexual suppressant that lards every citizen's daily fare. Sarah/Angela-G managed to prevent the addition of GNH-609 (or 'Zero-G', as it is sometimes called) to one entire residential block's food for 43 days. The strange behavior in Block PYT soon came to The Computer's attention. Fortunately for Angela-G, she was able to pin

the rap on her supervisor, not only escaping execution but moving into the vacated position. And so it goes.

Screaming Sarah's exploits since then have not involved the food vats, for safety's sake. But recently Angela-G discovered an unusual effect, and she has been waiting for the chance to use it to the maximum: this is the one that will send her to Ultimate Beast level, the one it might be worth blowing her cover and getting terminated for.

#### Boogie juice

Angela-G has discovered that the yeast flavorant Chloroziptase-L, when ingested in the same meal as algae texturizer para-2-brocco-line, produces a 'drug synergy' effect: it deranges the victim's motor nerves, causing an uncontrollable rhythmic twitching of the major muscles. Angela-G has dubbed the new compound 'boogie juice'. The effect lasts for six to 30 hours, depending on how much chemical was eaten, and seems to leave no permanent effect. Obviously there have not been rigorous lab tests. Equally obviously, 'no permanent effect' does not apply to those victims who were operating flybots, working with explosives, etc. at the time they lost voluntary motor control.

Angela-G has arranged to reset the vat controls and add massive doses of C-zip-L and para-2-bine to the evening meal of almost one fourth of Alpha Complex. Approximately two hours after the meal the victims will begin to experience the effects of the boogie juice. On the same day, a cell of Death Leopards operating under Screaming Sarah's orders will load The Black Box's contents into an illicit video input. The result: several million citizens involuntarily breakdancing the night away to video music.

#### Rasterman Ganja and his commercial interruptions

Unfortunately for the politics of dancing, the gang of Leopards entrusted with The Black Box has already compromised the operation. The gang leader, who uses the *nom de freak* Rasterman Ganja, has been using his tap to broadcast short, disruptive programs of his own invention. He calls them 'commercials', after the legendary short, disruptive programs of the Old Reckoning, though Rasterman has only read about, never seen, a real commercial. His broadcasts vary in content from fake official announcements to 'advertisements' for products both real and imaginary. Angela-G has only recently discovered Rasterman's activities. So has The Computer.

Since the video communications system is part of The Computer's peripheral nerve net, it is an extraordinarily dangerous system to play with. Rasterman Ganja has a nifty creative sense, but little instinct for survival—i.e., with some luck he will be a great Death Leopard.

### The mission

The Troubleshooters are sent by The Computer to track down and terminate the teletraitors. At the same time, Screaming Sarah decides to recover The Black Box before Rasterman's careless commercial campaign attracts a Vulture Squadron or something. In the collision at Rasterman's 'studio', the Box is up for grabs—and there ensues a chase across XTZ Sector, with the Troubleshooters trying to prevent somebody from doing something, they're not too sure what, and maybe grab the Box for their own secret societies. They will fail in that. Finally, they will either watch or participate in Screaming Sarah's dance marathon, depending on whether or not they have had dinner.

### Pre-mission briefing

#### Group briefing

See the Mission Alert: Reference YCBBB.1.2.1 for Episode 1 at the end of the mission. This alert appears on the ubiquitous monitors as the PCs are queuing up to use the barracks toothbrush after breakfast. Read the alert aloud to the players, then hang it over the GM screen so the players can refer to it.

Distribute the pregenerated player character sheets, which appear at the end of the mission. If the players use characters of their own design, prepare special rumors and secret society missions for them before you start the briefing.

Players may wish to contact their secret societies or service groups concerning the mission alert, or just to pick up any juicy rumors.



A lifetime of devoted service...



Do ya (do ya do ya) wanna dance?



If so, tell them to give the details (preferably in writing) of how they plan to make the contact (in a particular corridor or restroom, notes in a sandwich, whatever).

## ■ Individual briefings

Privately give each player a rumor from the General Rumor List (see box next page). Then tell each player that he has heard rumors through his secret society concerning a thing called 'The Black Box'. No one knows what the Black Box looks like or what it's good for, but it is universally considered to be valuable, and his secret society would love to get its hands on it.

Give hints to each player about the nature of his own secret society's interest in the Black Box (see 'Secret societies and the box' nearby). If the PCs request more detailed information on the appearance or nature of the Box, they may, at your perverse discretion, receive little secret messages from their secret society during the course of the mission.

## ■ A funny thing happened on the way to the briefing room

Once again the Troubleshooters approach their place of employment, a structure as warm and inviting as Orwell's Ministry of Love, or an Internal Revenue office. The architecture and decor are intended to foster a sense of despair and resignation—James Bond couldn't shoot his way out of this joint—and the omnipresent whirring cameras, imposing Vulture Squadron guards and snooping bots make it clear that there is nowhere to hide and hatch Commie plots. The **Tension level** throughout this building is 15.

Read the following description aloud to the players:

**The reception room of Troubleshooter Headquarters is a large room measuring 30 by 30 meters. As usual it is ominously empty. And as usual the entire room has changed since the last time you visited two weeks ago. (Frequent summary executions and periodic turnover in high-level staff occasions regular redecoration of the premises.)**

**From the entrance doors you see two BLUE-Clearance Vulture Squadron guards with unusually massive slugthrowers and Kevlar armor guarding a pair of glass doors on the opposite side of the room. Their silvered-plexi facemasks reflect a distorted image of the room.**

**To the immediate right of the glass doors is a computer console with a GREEN-Clearance Troubleshooter seated behind its considerable bulk. Headquarters staff have a reputation for**

**obstructive cooperation and cheerful eagerness to order summary executions. To the right of the console are four Computer terminals for citizens' use.**

**On the left wall is an open doorway. Through the door is a small alcove. Five GREEN Vulture Squadron guards with laser rifles and GREEN reflex armor are visible lounging against the walls, apparently guarding a BLUE door and a large machine of some sort.**

**The rest of the room is silent and empty except for an assortment of scrubots and snooperbots moving over the scarred, stained and patched carpet, and the ever-present whirring of the scanning cameras.**

The Troubleshooters are already in trouble; they don't know what briefing room they are to report to. To suggest that The Computer might be confused about the matter is treasonous. The BLUE Vulture Guards do a reasonable imitation of Buckingham Palace guards if the PCs ask questions of them, but if the PCs move toward the glass doors, the guards train their slugthrowers on them, and if the PCs do not stop immediately and go away, the guards fire warning shots through the PCs' chests.

Asking the GREEN staffer at the console for help is a logical but futile gesture. The PCs cannot get the time of day from him without ULTRAVIOLET security clearance. They can use the public terminals with the same result.

When asked for information about briefing rooms, the GREEN Vulture Guards in the alcove admit that the briefing rooms lie beyond the BLUE door, but refer the PCs to the GREEN staffer for further information about which room they need. The PCs may use their Con Games skill on these guards to let them go through the BLUE door to look for the proper briefing room, but not without checking in at the new Experimental Security Computer Terminal (see below).

Showing the Mission Alert to either the GREEN staffer or any of the Vulture Squadron guards results in the PCs being taken into custody, reprimanded by an INDIGO Internal Security officer, fined 100cr for revealing a Mission Alert to unauthorized personnel and told to go to Briefing Room AA.

If the PCs spend a lot of time struggling with the problem of finding the briefing room, and you get tired of jerking them around, a RED-Clearance errand boy sticks his head through the BLUE door and yells, 'Hey, there's a bunch of Troubleshooters supposed to report to Briefing Room AA. You guys seen 'em?'

Before the PCs may go through the BLUE door which leads to the briefing rooms, the GREEN guards insist that the Troubleshooters check in at the Experimental Security Computer Terminal, labeled 'Caution: Experimental Computer Security Terminal'. This machine looks like a video game machine with a clear plexi cover

enclosing a terminal keyboard. There are two small holes for the Troubleshooter to reach inside the plexi cover and work the terminal keyboard. A boom-mounted camera and bot laser cannon track on his facial features as he approaches the machine. The PC is asked the typical questions (name, security clearance, assignment or mission, 'Are you, or have you ever been, a Commie traitor?') and a lie detector evaluates the PC's responses.

The fourth PC to perform this operation will find steel cuffs closed tightly on his wrists as an alarm sounds and weapons are leveled on him from all directions. Technicians are summoned from R&D to 'check things out': it seems a malfunction has occurred (though the guards don't seem to believe this).

Unfortunately, only one of the wrist cuffs can be made to open. The R&D Tech partly disassembles the console, leaving the Troubleshooter with roughly five kilos of metal locked around his hand. The Tech explains that the batteries powering the clamp will fail in seven or eight hours (your decision as to when they actually let go). The PC is, naturally, required to sign a receipt for Equipment Taken Away (this may be difficult if his pen hand is inside the unit), and will receive a stiff fine if the component is not returned upon its release.

The Troubleshooters are not disarmed. If they voluntarily offer up their laser pistols, the weapons will be handled by the guards as if they are particularly rotten fish, then returned with expressions of mingled amusement and disgust.

One of the Vulture Squadron guards mutters, in an awed tone, 'Bunch of YELLOWs going to meet *him*,' and is immediately shut up by his superior. (Any PC who asks 'Him who?' is shut up with a truncheon.)

The GREEN guards herd the Troubleshooters down a narrow, high-ceilinged corridor with a VIOLET tile floor, to the double armored doors of Briefing Room AA. After a final series of security checks, the doors hiss open, and the PCs are pushed inside.

## ■ The briefing room

**Note:** Capsule descriptions of the appearance and personalities of these four briefing personnel are in the 'Briefing personnel' box nearby. Study them carefully so you can properly portray them as distinctive personalities.

Read the following text aloud to describe Briefing Room AA:

**The briefing room is extraordinarily high and narrow. Harsh lights shine straight down on you. The carpet is lumpy and badly worn, with several burned streaks and blotches of something that's either maroon dye or dried blood. There is a strong smell of diesel fuel.**

## General rumor list

Passing rumors is a way of life in Alpha Complex. The fact that rumors are mostly unreliable does not change anything: all sources of information in Alpha Complex are unreliable. Nor does the fact that spreading rumors (or, for that matter, listening to them) is treason. Everyone reasons that if there were really nothing to a rumor, Internal Security wouldn't be so worried.

Following is a list of suggested rumors, to be given to players at the GM's discretion. You should be liberal in handing these out—but remember to give them to one player at a time. It's up to the player whether he wants to commit treason by telling his fellow Troubleshooters.

Repeating a rumor from different sources is a good way to increase paranoia. An even better way is to drop a rumor that directly denies or contradicts a previous one. 'What are they trying to hide?' Another good way to use rumors is to have them scrawled on corridor walls, or whispered in the dark so the whole party can hear.

**Note:** The italicized information after each rumor is for your eyes only. Don't bother telling any of that stuff to the players. They'd probably just be bored anyway.

1. Somebody came in from Outdoors, carrying a plague they haven't got any way to cure. People are dropping all over; they've had to seal off four residence blocks. *(False.)*
2. When you draw your gear from the Req Room, tell them you know Howd-Y-DDE. They'll be sure to give you equipment that works. *(True and false. The name is an Internal Security code word: half the time the staffer gives the person an extra pair of laser barrels of appropriate color, half the time the staffer gives the 'IntSec snooper's' gear a couple of whacks with a pipe wrench.)*
3. There's a defective warbot loose in some out-of-the-way sector. It's wiped out two dozen Troubleshooters already, and they're making up all kinds of fake missions to get people to go in there and run its batteries down. *(False.)*
4. Tech Services has an INDIGO Clearance who can detect mutants just by looking at them. They're putting him on briefing panels, to snoop out who's an unregistered mutant. *(False.)*
5. Because of a PURGE raid on one of the armories, there are a lot of grenades in inventory with the wrong labels. *(True. See the equipment lists.)*
6. Be careful who you pick as team leader! They're experimenting with a gadget that lets the leader fry the team members' brains if they try any double-crosses. *(True, but the device is not yet operational, and will not be issued during this mission.)*
7. 'Outdoors' is a deathtrap—it's all radioactive, you die in a week. Everybody who says he's been Outdoors is under orders to lie. *(False, though an awful lot of Troubleshooters do get killed Outdoors.)*
8. They're getting worried about bad morale from Troubleshooters coming back maimed—your Medical Officer has orders to make sure anybody who's badly hurt doesn't make it. *(False. How could Troubleshooter morale get any worse than it is?)*
9. All Corpore Metal members are programmed to kill on command. The code word is 'Six Megacredit Man'. *(False, though a lot of Corpore Metals do have hypnotic programming.)*
10. If you follow the deep service tunnels long enough, you come up inside another Alpha Complex. That's how spies get in and out. *(May be true of certain tunnels, but none the players will encounter in this mission.)*

**There is a bench at one end of the room at least four meters high; to see the top of it, you have to look up at the lights. There appear to be five plexi compartments along the top of the bench. Four appear to be occupied, but the harsh lights make it hard to see clearly. At your eye level on the front of the bench are what look like gun ports and gas vents. There is a small tiled gutter in the floor, with drains.**

At the left end of the bench, a combat fitted with four chainsaws is standing at attention. At the right end there's a BLUE Vulture Squadron sergeant at parade rest; he has a huge, weird-looking pistol in a very bulky holster covered with wiring, and he wears a matching wire-covered glove. It's a toss-up whether the combat or the man looks tougher.

Behind you are the five Vulture Squadron guards who brought you here. Their weapons are casually pressed into your backs.

The PCs should enter the room confidently and respectfully. If they are too timid or too cocky, the guard on the right of the bench demonstrates his fancy Power Holster, summoning his slugthrower to his hand with a smooth, sweeping gesture that ends with the snout of the slugthrower resting against the snout of a PC, while barking 'C'mon in here, ya quivering runts!' or 'Watch yer manners

in the presence of yer superiors, laserbait!' as is appropriate.

Once the PCs are all in the room and quietly standing at attention, they can better see the four figures in the plexi compartments. Read the following aloud:

**The powerful lights behind the top of the bench are blinding, but you can see the head and shoulders of the four figures a little more clearly. From left to right there are:**

- ☉ **A BLUE uniform with an HPD&MC insignia; the face has a sour expression; his nameplate reads 'AI-B-MNU-5'**
- ☉ **A BLUE uniform with an Internal Security insignia; the face is stern and alert; his nameplate reads 'Brian-B-IWR-6'**
- ☉ **An INDIGO uniform with a Tech Services insignia; the figure is studying a sheaf of papers and the face is not visible; his nameplate reads 'Zach-I-VLI-5'**
- ☉ **A VIOLET uniform, colorfully decorated and ornamented, with an R&D insignia; the face is relaxed and smiling pleasantly; his nameplate reads 'Dan-V-OSD-6'**

Dan-V begins by greeting the PCs. He is friendly, sincere and soft-spoken. He is much too pleasant.

**The VIOLET-clad man on the right taps his microphone with a finger, then smiles and speaks into the microphone:**

**'Welcome, Troubleshooters. I hope we haven't interrupted your daily schedule too much. I know you must be very busy, but we have this terribly important mission for you.'**

Dan-V leans forward, apparently studying his notes. The room is very quiet for several minutes. Suddenly you hear the clear sound of snoring over the microphone.

The other three men look at each other, then the BLUE-clad Internal Security officer leaps to his feet, points at you and loudly shouts, 'Ghzzzaahbat fhissle thorrhbat mmmhena weeeel (SquuuuuUUUUUEEEEEEL. Hiss. Pop.)'

Well, that's not really what he says. It's just hard to understand him because his microphone is buzzing, humming, fading in and out, squealing with feedback and hissing with static. In fact, none of the microphones but Dan-V's works properly; whenever the other figures speak, they can hardly be understood. Dan-V does not notice





## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

anything wrong. The others eventually will, and will become very annoyed.

As a GM, you can simulate this unintelligible garble by speaking with a styrofoam or paper cup pressed halfway into your mouth (small end first, of course). You can yell as loud as you want, or speak perfectly normally, but the poor players won't be able to understand much of what you say. This is so much fun that you'll be tempted to use this cheap trick whenever The Computer speaks to the PCs from old monitors or wall speakers. It is hard on the cup, so be sure to have a supply of spares.

Anyway, from here on, we'll tell you what the characters really say. You just talk with the cup in your mouth unless Dan-V is talking, or unless

one of the other briefing personnel steals his microphone.

What Brian-B really says is, 'All right, which of you is the mission leader?' He pauses, waiting for an answer. The PCs probably haven't understood a word, but it is clear that he expects an answer. They better come up with something.

Whatever the PCs say, he then cackles, 'Of course you don't have a mission leader, because you don't know your mission yet, do you? Or...perhaps you traitors have already got SECRET information about this mission?' He pauses again for an answer. This continues for a few minutes, with Brian-B grilling the PCs about their mission alert, their past service records, their proof of loyalty to The Computer and their dedication to serve The Computer

without question or hesitation. Since the PCs can't understand Brian-B, their responses may be rather inappropriate, and the PCs may start to get panicky.

### Mission assignment

At this point, Dan-V snorts loudly, wakes up and looks around. Brian-B is immediately silent, looking cautiously at Dan-V as he humbly sinks back behind the bench. Dan-V smiles at everyone, then continues the briefing.

**'Welcome, Friend Troubleshooters. Our friend The Computer has chosen you for a mission of the utmost urgency and importance.'**

## Secret societies and the Box

Following is a list of reasons for the secret societies to send their members in pursuit of The Black Box. It is not meant to be exhaustive. Nor is it necessary for every society to be in pursuit of The Box: in fact, it is probably better (read, more divisive and productive of internecine warfare) for some societies to be in pursuit of entirely different unattainable objects.

Starred societies have at some time or another possessed The Box itself; all of these except the Sierra Club (which never got it open) know the contents. Other societies know of The Box by hearsay or inter-society espionage.

- ☞ **Anti-Mutant:** The flip side of Psion, they think perfect pitch is a creepy mutation.
- ☞ **Communists:** The Box is a propaganda device, in the classic color of the Anarchist. If we cannot make use of it, we must make sure that no one else does. *(Folk music was the people's great art form. Remember Joe Hill! Remember Woody Guthrie. Remember Slim Whitman!)*
- ☞ **Computer Phreaks:** It appears to be data the Computer has no access to. That makes it interesting and desirable. While we dare not hope, it may be a relative of the legendary 'Blue Boxes' of our ancestors.
- ☞ **\*Corpore Metal:** The Box contains evidence that Old Reckoning humankind was striving toward a machine symbiosis that has since been forgotten. We must not let this history die. The Box could make many converts to our cause. *(Result of seeing some heavy-metal artists in their chrome stage getups, and perhaps listening to McCartney's*

*'Magneto and Titanium Man' once too often.)*

- ☞ **\*Death Leopard:** The Box contains anthems of anarchic Fun. The Box is the soul of the Leopard. *(As the mission starts, they have possession of it. See Episode 1.)*
- ☞ **First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer:** We believe this device to be a threat to The Computer, perhaps one of the accursed 'virus programs' of demonic legend. It must be captured and presented as an offering to The Computer, who will bless Its Chosen.
- ☞ **Frankenstein Destroyers:** Similar to the Humanists.
- ☞ **\*Free Enterprise:** This is a valuable item stolen from us by trickery. Free Enterprise does not like people muscling in on our rackets. Sizable rewards await the Box's recoverer. *(They want to sell copies. Maybe sell tickets. Or start a couple bands and run road shows, reestablish MTV....)*
- ☞ **\*Humanists:** The unit is connected to conclusive proof of the superiority of Man over Machine. The Computer and its minions must not be allowed to destroy this evidence. *(It shows artists in control of hardware. They especially like it when someone smashes a guitar or blows up an amp.)*
- ☞ **\*Mystics:** This is, like, basic to a clear understanding of the, like, universe, and is like, our origin, you know? There is clear blue light in there, the Headtrip itself. Of course we want it. *(Many Mystic faiths are rooted in 60s/70s rock. Most cells would kill for a video of 'Lucy in the*

*Sky with Diamonds', 'Cocaine' or 'Hey Bartender'.)*

- ☞ **Pro-Tech:** Obviously the synthesizer was Old Reckoning mankind's greatest artistic achievement.
- ☞ **Psion:** Rumor has it that the Black Box is coupled with a previously unknown psychic mutation. We must document this effect, and protect it from those who would destroy the New Improved Humanity. *(The 'mutation' in question is musicianship. Mostly they're curious, a treasonous emotion.)*
- ☞ **\*PURGE:** The unit contains data that is directly toxic to The Computer. *(Not true. Also caught up in the smash-machinery philosophy displayed in many heavy-metal clips.)*
- ☞ **Romantics:** It is a genuine artifact of the Old World, just like people used to sit around the Sony, eat Twinkies and listen to 'ads' on the 'televisor boxes'. Enough said.
- ☞ **\*Sierra Club:** It comes from Outdoors, and is made of the mythic substance 'wood'. Besides, we brought it here, and it's really ours.
- ☞ **Spy for Another Alpha Complex:** This Complex appears ready to go to war over this Black Whatever-it-is. Something so important must be captured so that we can benefit from it if it's valuable, and defend ourselves against it if it's dangerous. *(In other words, You got it, we want it. Much the same philosophy applies to service group spies.)*

# YELLOW CLEARANCE WHO'S THE LEADER?

**'A mysterious interference has begun to appear on the video channels that carry vital information and well-deserved entertainment to our fellow citizens. Naturally, The Computer wants to protect us from these influences, which—I speak to you in the strictest confidence—are believed to come from a nest of Communist infiltrators somewhere within our own beloved Alpha Complex.'**

Pause. Look pleasantly and menacingly expectant. Wait for the players to make some appropriate response, like, 'Gasp! Commies? How appalling!' or 'We eagerly await your orders to seek out this slime and scourge it from our fair Complex!' or 'We serve The Computer! The Computer is our Friend! Please give us lots of execution vouchers and HE cone rifle rounds.'

**'I do not pretend that your task will be easy; this is why you, Troubleshooters of proven skill and loyalty, have been selected to root out this corruption among us, to follow the infection to its source and burn it out. You are also to return the valuable equipment these saboteurs have stolen to further their aims, so that others cannot follow in their path.'**

**'We will give you every assistance; and know that The Computer itself is behind you.'**

**He smiles happily again.**

**'Remember, the future happiness of all our citizens depends on you. You must not fail. Now, time is essential, but is there anything you wish to ask?'**

If the PCs ask what sort of interference they are looking for, Dan-V says gently, 'I'm afraid knowing that, at your clearance level, would make you all traitors.' If they ask what equipment they are supposed to recover, Zach-I drones on for some while in a technical jargon the PCs do not understand, but they should get the idea that broadcasting equipment is involved. If they ask how large the nest of Commies is believed to be, Brian-B snaps, 'Who cares how many of them there are, Troubleshooter? You don't come back until there's not one hammer or sickle moving down there!'

## Choosing the team leader

Dan-V slowly stops talking. The other briefing staff wait for several minutes, until the microphone before Dan-V again picks up the sound of his snoring. AI-B shudders, and appears to be holding back tears. Brian-B takes the opportunity to swipe Dan-V's mike and begin lecturing the players on the importance of leadership in this mission, hammering home that a leader must be someone they can trust, someone they would follow into the very teeth of doom. He asks the usual trick questions, but mostly he tries to

provoke the players' bloodlust. (If they show too much, the guards will restrain them.)

Finally he asks the inevitable question: 'Which of you should serve as the mission leader?' Usually at this point there is a flurry of volunteers and people pointing at one another. If there is no clear choice, Brian-B roars in anger, 'Make up your minds, or we'll see if your clones can be quick about it.' He keeps roaring until the PCs make a choice.

If they test his temper by dithering, he asks for a volunteer for a warning execution. He takes the first volunteer and orders him to execute the other PCs. This volunteer is the mission leader. Activate the clones.

When a clear choice is made, Brian-B's expression softens as he looks fondly on the loyal citizen who has offered to serve The Computer in this important capacity. Sweetly, he asks the newly selected leader to concisely summarize the mission's objectives.

If the new leader hesitates or fumbles, or if he has to read over his notes, or if he says anything other than what was mentioned in the mission alert or explained by Dan-V, Brian-B explodes in fury, blasting the citizen for his incompetence, immediately demoting him to RED Clearance, and starting the leader selection process all over again.

The leader receives a suit of GREEN reflex armor and two spare GREEN laser barrels. The leader should get the hint that he's going to need them. And, of course, the rest of the team is subject to the leader's orders for the duration of the mission or the leader's life, whichever ends first.

When a leader has finally been selected who can summarize the mission objectives, Dan-V awakes with a snort again and looks around at Brian-B, who is holding his microphone. Brian-B momentarily freezes in terror, then he hastily replaces the microphone and slinks to his seat.

## Any further questions?

Dan-V turns back to the PCs with a kindly smile, tells the Vulture Guard to give the mission leader the equipment requisitions (GM: display Equipment list #1 to the leader) and asks them if they have any questions or special requests before he sends them off to Outfitting. Let the players study the Equipment list for a minute, then Brian-B asks particularly if they would like any more ordnance.

Between Dan-V and Brian-B, the players will seem to have an extremely free hand with requisitioning equipment. You can be liberal with items of YELLOW Clearance or less, especially ammunition—given the chance, everyone carries more ammo than there will ever be time to use.

When the PCs begin asking for higher-clearance items like tacnukes and ULTRAVIOLET lasers, Dan-V chuckles in a grandfatherly way and says something like, 'If that sort of thing

were necessary, don't you think our friend The Computer would have made provisions?' He believes that, too. Then the briefing will be brought to a close.

Just as Dan-V is about to dismiss the PCs, if they haven't asked about the RF tracer cartridge for the multicorder, Zach-I says, 'Oh, hey, don't forget about the RF tracer cartridge for the multicorder.' Immediately Brian-B glowers at Zach-I, and Dan-V looks sternly at him. Zach-I's eyes grow wide, and he slips far back into his booth as though he expects to be immediately executed. If the PCs ask for more information about the tracer, what it's for or how it works, Dan-V pleasantly says, 'Oh, don't worry, there's someone in the mission group who knows all about it. Would The Computer forget an important thing like that?'

No one in the mission group knows what the RF tracer does. The characters may try to slaughter each other in the process of finding out who is concealing this vital information. What a pity.

## The mission

The Troubleshooters are taken to PLC Outfitting Division to pick up and sign for their gear. As



*Excuse me, Mr. Citizen, sir, but what is it we have volunteered to do?*



always, this is as much fun as dealing with the phone company. The GREEN quartermaster staff will demand to know what happened to equipment the PCs have never heard of. They will have choice comments to make about the Troubleshooter wearing the security console on his wrist.

They also make nasty remarks about this mission. Running around shooting some Commies in the back doesn't sound very heroic. (Actually it seems a lot more interesting than signing out hardware, and the staff are jealous.)

If the PCs ask for power holsters, there is a lot of fuss, calling upstairs to verify the request, etc. No more than three holsters are available (we suggest you issue one fewer than requested), and if the PC with the iron bracelet has it on his gun hand, he cannot be fitted for one.

Of course, the power holsters don't work. That is, they *work*, but it takes three or four months of practice to get the hang of them in combat. When a PC squeezes the special glove in the proper way, the pistol leaps out of the holster (usually, anyway; sometimes the holster buzzes and smokes, or a short-circuit causes the ammo to explode) and toward the glove.

Unfortunately, learning to catch the pistol requires hours of practice. In the beginning the pistol goes flying out of the holster, zips past the PC's outstretched hand, and clatters to the floor, bounces off the wall or ceiling, or clobbers an innocent bystander. Maybe the pistol goes off. Got the picture?

## Where do we go from here?

After kitting-out, the Troubleshooters are escorted out of the Headquarters building—and left there. If they stand around, a guard tells them, 'Hey! No loitering!' and shoos them away.

About now it should dawn on the PCs that their orders are extremely vague. If they made plans to contact their secret societies, execute the contacts (interesting phrase) now. If three or four characters described the same mode of contact, comment on how crowded the restroom is for this time of day.

Players who did not make contacts (or abandoned them) have only the society missions given on their PC cards.

If they make contact:

**Tex-Y-DBF** is told Eric-Y has a secret mission from IntSec to exterminate Mystics; Eric-Y got Tex-Y's last clone and is gunning for him.

The Sierra Club tells **Brett-Y-WYD** that someone is going to poison tonight's dinner. He is not to stop this, as Sierra Clubbers have all been warned (not true), but he must not eat dinner.

**Wyatt-Y-VSC** is told the mysterious Black Box is in the hands of a video pirate, and must be gotten away.

**Miles-Y-LOM** learns some portable video cameras are missing from HPD&MC, and he

can earn a lot of society credit by seeing that the Romantics get them back instead.

**Donald-Y-EIN** is told he will get a society IOU for every PURGE he kills on this mission (true, but most of them are Death Leopards, who don't score).

**Eric-Y-KTH** meets an Internal Security agent (even if he thought he was meeting a Death Leopard contact—you can give him a really nervous moment here) who tells him video pirates have gotten hold of secret tapes, which must be recovered; he will earn many commendations for doing so.

Reunite the team and give them a little time to think—even to compare notes, if they desire to do such an un-**PARANOIA**-like thing—before the multicorder begins to *wheep*.

The multicorder, the players' PDCs and any public entertainment screens in sight begin carrying one of Rasterman Ganja's broadcasts (see 'Commercials' below). The multicorder's tracer cartridge locks onto the signal, and the hunt is finally on.

If the characters don't try to make any kind of contacts, start them on the mission anyway. He who hesitates is lasered.

## Round Robin Hood's barn

The PCs have no experience or training in the use of the RF tracer, but this is routine in Alpha Complex. Eventually they notice the frequency of the wheeps increases when the unit points in a particular direction. The volume of the wheeps also increases as they get closer to the signal source.

The multicorder is not, alas, actually locked onto Rasterman's video tap—if it were that easy, he would have been caught long ago. Rasterman has numerous decoy broadcast units scattered throughout the sector. But if the PCs follow the tracer carefully, it will eventually lead them to Rasterman.

In other words, send them up, down and around Alpha Complex, following the blip through dining halls, INFRARED barracks, entertainment facilities, vehicular guideways (which will not stop for the team), storage areas and narrow accessways... run them ragged.

As the characters wander about, the commercials (see below) occur at random intervals (that is, whenever you want). Not only do they give you a chance to entertain the players with your musical/comedic/mass-media denigration skills, but the PCs get to vaporize as traitors anyone they see who either believes the commercials, or who looks like he is enjoying them.

To help you visualize their pilgrimage, imagine wandering around five or six decks of an ocean liner looking for a hidden radio device. And imagine the ocean liner crawling with nosy and quarrelsome citizens, officious clerks, pugnacious

Vulture Squadron guards and fitfully-maintained guardbots, courierbots and scrubots.

A few arbitrary encounters might be appropriate. For example:

**Internal Security:** A group of IntSec troopers express a polite interest in the PCs' mission. Maybe a PC looks cross-eyed at somebody. Whammo.

**A team competing in a High Programmer's invitational tournament:** A flying squad of crack Vulture Squadron troopers are on a scavenger hunt. They've been instructed to collect as many left boots as they can in four hours. Following the troopers are a pair of transbots full of left boots, some with pieces of leg still in them. The PCs are requested to contribute.

**The Bicentennial Committee:** A group of relatively elderly citizens are bustling about decorating a hallway for the coming bicentennial of something-or-other. They earnestly, imploringly beg the Troubleshooters to pause in their mission to help them put up a few banners. If the PCs decline, the oldsters pull out slughtrowers and ask again.

**Painters:** A squad of ORANGE-Clearance workers is painting a RED corridor in VIOLET. There seems to be some confusion about the work order, and the painters are engaged in a heated discussion. Several cans of VIOLET paint are sitting unattended. This stuff would really bring a fine price on the black market, but possession of such contraband is profoundly treasonous.

When the pace begins to drag, warn the multicorder operator that the blip is weakening, and then have Rasterman air another commercial.

If a PC is a member of Death Leopard (one of the pregenerated PCs is), he receives a message sometime during the chase; the old soap-on-the-restroom-mirror trick is suggested. The message warns the Leopard that Screaming Sarah Slick herself instructs all Real Persons to skip dinner this evening, on pain of Missing The Fun.

This should make the dinner break interesting.

## Commercials

These may be run in any desired order, and new ones may be freely created. Remember that Rasterman Ganja has only had commercials described to him.

1. An ad for synthetic food, featuring people trying to choke the stuff down, and the catchy jingle:

*'When you just can't stand the pats,  
And your feets have got the flats,  
When you can't take no more, that's  
Time (Yes, time!) to hit the vats!  
It's the goo (Yeah!) that'll do ya,  
It slides through ya oh-so-right,  
Dump your hunger in the nearest vat  
Tonight!'*

2. An 'official announcement' that the color BLUE has been determined to be morally equivalent to INDIGO, promising a follow-up on whether BLUE citizens will be promoted or INDIGOs reduced in rank.
3. An ad for Honest Har-V's Used Bot Lot, in which Har-V, wearing a crudely dyed VIOLET tunic, offers several bots at ridiculous prices (five or ten credits). The 'bots' are actually people wearing tinfoil and metal junk. After this ad airs, the PC with the clamp on his wrist had better find a way to get it off.
4. 'DISREGARD PREVIOUS MESSAGE.'
5. A promo spot for Teela-O-MLY, featuring someone who looks nothing like Teela-O asking everyone to stay tuned to this channel for instructions on reaching ULTRAVIOLET Clearance in three easy lessons.
6. An announcement that NYC Sector is now officially at war with LAX Sector, and asking all citizens to help the war effort by eating double portions at dinner.
7. A recruiting spot, in which a voice urges citizens to join the Vulture Squadrons, while a tape shows various aircraft crashing and exploding. (This tape is extremely illegal, and recovering it earns a 250cr bonus.)
8. A beer commercial. Citizens ride cardboard rafts over painted waves, while an off-screen figure throws a bucket of water over them at intervals. Finally they smile brightly and hold up cans with rings attached, then pull the rings. The cans are smoke grenades.



*A demonstration of how not to use the Power Holster.*

The Troubleshooters follow the blip to a deserted storage area (**Tension 1**). They should prowl around this place for a while, getting good and nervous. The tracer starts to go crazy with induced signals and harmonics off the walls and floor. Finally, they find a large door, four meters wide and three high, with a dimly lit control panel next to it. The tracer seems to think this is the place. There is plenty of noise coming from behind the door; just audible above the background chatter a voice is heard, '...the cables are all bollixed up, but as soon as I find the interference, we can run the Black Box...'

The door opens when the only button on the control panel is pressed. Read the following aloud:

**The door opens on a long four-meter-wide corridor. The first four meters on the left is a landing for a staircase on the right which leads down into a larger room.**

**Across from you, in the corridor four meters from you, are a group of five impossibly strange-looking persons—yellow, purple and green spikes and ridges of hair, bizarrely colored and patterned face and arms, black, skin-tight garments festooned with colorful bits of metal and plastic—each armed with a laser pistol or slugthrower. They seem to be startled by your appearance, but they don't make a sound or movement.**

**You can see fairly well down the staircase into the lower room. The room resembles an HPD&MC video broadcast station, with cameras, video machines, lots of electronic gear, cables**

**and powerful lights, but everything seems disorganized and hastily slapped together. No one below seems to have noticed your arrival.**

**Suddenly, before you can do anything, the foremost of the persons across from you, a female with strange dark goggles with wide slits in them and with enormous plastic discs dangling from her ears, shouts, 'Look, there it is!' She points down the stairs toward a cabinet and screams, 'Go for it!' She and two other persons dash down the stairs while the other two aim and fire at your mission group.**

Screaming Sarah Slick and her four Death Leopard companions are here to recover the Black Box from Rasterman Ganja. Two stay at the top of the stairs to deal with the PCs; Screaming Sarah and two Leopards dash downstairs after the Black Box.

It's showtime!

## Live and in color

From this point the PCs are in close combat. The two Death Leopards at the top of the stairs blast away with their lasers, then block the stairway with hand-to-hand combat. If the PCs dispatch the two Leopards, or dive over the railing to the room below, they receive the following description of Rasterman's studio. Read aloud:

**The room itself is 12 x 24 meters. The largest part of the room stretches away from you as you come down the stairs. Behind the staircase a section of the**

## Chow time

Somewhere in the course of the tour of the sector their PDCs inform the players it is dinner time, and they are to report to the nearest Transient's Commissary, identify themselves as Troubleshooters on a mission and queue up for gruel. (Not even in the paranoid world of The Computer are the laborers required to go without dinner.)

Unless a player specifically indicates to you verbally or by note that his character does *not* eat, assume all the Troubleshooters have chowed down on gruel laced with ample quantities of 'boogie juice'.

## Opening theme

See 'Rasterman Ganja's TV Studio' layout at the end of the mission.

Sometime after the dinner hour (whether or not the PCs have eaten), shortly before tonight's Teela O'Malley broadcast, the multicorder begins to wheep wildly, indicating a very powerful trace: Rasterman is testing his transmitter at full power, preparing to override Teela with The Black Box.



room is filled with sets and props. Closed doors are to the right and left of the stairs and on the far wall facing away from the stairs. In this direction there is a lively firefight.

The three oddly-dressed persons have descended the staircase and taken cover behind a bank of tape machines and cabinets. There they are pinned down in a crossfire by a group of citizens in black coveralls who have taken cover behind a pile of crates. The woman with the wide-slit goggles has a seamless, dully gleaming black box tucked under one arm as she returns fire with her free hand.

Just beyond the gun battle is a video studio set up with movable backdrops, video cameras on lightweight tripods and powerful lights.

The cameras are stenciled in large letters 'PROPERTY OF HPD&MC'.

In a far corner of the room five figures crouch near a control panel—some feverishly checking cable connections, others adjusting knobs and slide controls as they study a bank of monitors before them.

The cameras are the valuable equipment the PCs have been sent to recover. It would be unfortunate if this equipment were damaged in the firefight. Snicker.

Screaming Sarah and her two companions are engaged in a firefight with six of Rasterman's techs. Both groups are armed with laser pistols and without armor, but neither group is particularly proficient with weapons, and the surroundings are absorbing most of the damage. The floor, walls and ceiling are crisscrossed with hastily strung cables and wires.

Stray shots hitting these cables produce dazzling effects. Stray shots also hit CRT monitors which make a lovely boom, showering the room with fragments of glass. Between the short-circuiting wires and exploding monitors, pretty soon we get...

Fires. Lots of little fires. Rasterman's sets, mostly paper and cheap plastics, feed them nicely, producing some extraordinarily unpleasant clouds of acrid, black smoke which makes the lasers very ineffective (reduce laser damage to O3D) except at point blank range. There are several hand-held foam extinguishers about, but not enough to suppress the fires. Enough, however, to produce sufficient foam to make the floor treacherous. Whoops...

Rasterman and four other techs stay at the control console working feverishly to complete the connections and set up the boards, determined that The Show Must Go On. It has not yet come to their attention that Screaming Sarah has the Black Box.

How will the PCs respond to this puzzling state of affairs? You can probably count on their

firing off their ordnance, though who they'll shoot at...who knows? Your best bet is to orchestrate the NPCs as though the PCs didn't exist. Let the PCs blow holes in any of the NPCs except Screaming Sarah. She has the Black Box, and she has to get away. The rest of the cast is expendable.

Conversely, if the PCs shoot at the NPCs, the NPCs shoot back. Otherwise the two Death Leopard groups expend most of their energy on each other, with an occasional pot shot at a PC for variety.

When it begins to look like the PCs are going to put Sarah's life or liberty in serious jeopardy, she and the Black Box leave by the nearest convenient door, accompanied by any surviving Death Leopard companions, dropping a choice selection of grenades behind her to discourage pursuit. This could be the instant the PCs come down the stairs if they are a smoothly operating military unit, or could be after a half-hour or so, if they are inept, backstabbing, cautious, cowardly or properly paranoid.

**Note:** You want the PCs to chase Sarah (see below), so subtly emphasize her escape. 'Oh dear. She's getting away with the box. I wonder what The Computer will think about all this.' Roll dice; shake your head. Annoy the players.

When Sarah and her Leopards split, Rasterman belatedly decides that maybe his position is not so defensible, and directs a strategic withdrawal. He and his crew know the turf, so they'll gain a step on any pursuit. Since they are not relevant to further developments of the plot, make them disappear with a minimum of fuss.

## Or would you rather have what's behind the curtain?

The PCs are now faced with a choice of cleaning up the pirate station (which is, strictly, what their orders call for), or trying to chase The Black Box.

If they stop to take stock of the situation, they will notice that several of the monitors show the studio, and themselves; Rasterman has broadcast the battle live, pre-empting Teela-O-MLY. Of the thousands who saw the broadcast, a significant few know the significance of the Black Box. The Computer has seen it all, too. The cameras may be disconnected, or blasted (it will look very bad on the report if they destroy the cameras with The Computer watching).

The Troubleshooters may decide that the Black Box comes under the heading of equipment to be recovered. The Computer has just decided exactly that, though the PCs have no way of knowing it.

## If they don't chase the Box

In approximately 90 minutes, Screaming Sarah's Polypeptide Boogie will seize the citizenry—including our heroes, if they had dinner. If the

Troubleshooters are affected, any prisoners they took at the TV studio (none of whom ate dinner) will escape. If they are not affected, they will have to explain why at debriefing.

## Conning the PCs into chasing the Box

If the PCs don't chase the Box, they are doing the sensible thing. In fact, they are following orders; failure to follow orders may result in a short biography. However...

If the PCs don't chase the Box, you won't have as much fun. Therefore you should dupe the PCs into chasing the Box. This sort of manipulation infringes the player's free will and diminishes the expression of his inner spirit to which he is entitled as a human being and a citizen of our fair land. This is a thought crime of grave significance. Treason, in fact.

That's why we think it is A Good Idea. Here's how to do it.

Sarah should leave a trail that even a mollusk could follow. Blood from a wound. Sooty, greasy footprints. A series of open doors. Multitudinous witnesses. A trail of breadcrumbs. Large, colorful arrows stenciled on the floor.

Sarah should taunt the PCs with their ineptitude in allowing her to escape, mocking them as she exits, holding the Box aloft in triumph, and casting aspersions on their wit and skill as they pursue her.

Sarah should spout treasonous manifestos that no loyal citizen could allow to go unpunished. 'The Computer's mother wears skis in a phone booth.' 'The Computer's mother swims after the troop ships.' Gently remind the characters that all of this is being broadcast on complex-wide video. Letting Sarah get away with saying such things might not be conducive to maintaining friendly relations with The Computer.

If all else fails, send the PCs a special dispatch by personal messenger as follows:

**\*\*\*MISSION PRIORITY OVERRIDE!\*\*\***

**TOP SECRET! TOP SECRET! TOP SECRET!  
PURSUE AND SECURE BLACK BOX!  
ULTRASUPERTRANSCENDENT PRIORITY  
OVER ALL OTHER MISSION ASSIGNMENTS!  
DELIVER TO FKL SECTOR SECURITY  
HEADQUARTERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!  
THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!**

This dispatch is completely bogus. A High Programmer affiliated with Free Enterprise has sent these orders. If the PCs could manage to obtain the Box, they would be intercepted on the way to FKL Sector and relieved of the Box. Rest in Peace.

If the PCs try to confirm the order with The Computer, it tells them the order is phony, and they are to follow the order in order to reveal the traitor that ordered it. If the PCs make references to this phony mission override at a later date, The Computer interrogates them closely and assigns

## YELLOW CLEARANCE POLYPEPTIDE BOOGIE

a 50cr fine for receiving treasonous documents. Sigh. To be fair, make sure the PCs have plenty of opportunities to get Official Commendations by zapping lots of traitors.

### A friendly gathering at the food vats

See 'The Food Vat Chambers' map at the end of the mission. It's **Tension 3**.

The TV studio battle concludes at T (for Tremors) minus 90 minutes. If the PCs follow Sarah and the Black Box to the food vats, they arrive at T minus 60. So do a number of others.

Every secret society that has possessed the Black Box (starred on the list) sends a three-person fireteam to try and get hold of it. Any society contacted by a PC Troubleshooter sends a team as well. Feel free to add societies until the crossfire is complicated enough for you.

The PCs follow Sarah through a series of corridors and service passageways and emerge in a room full of food processing equipment. Here Sarah expects to rendezvous with a Death Leopard squad who will take the Black Box and convey it to another pirate broadcasting station in time for the polypeptide boogie. Alas, these Leopards have been delayed, and Sarah waits in vain. However, she won't be lonely in here.

When the PCs arrive at the vat room, read the following aloud:

**You have tracked the strange woman with the Black Box to a food vat, a large room filled with tanks and electronic equipment. The walls are lined with monitors and gauges, and pipes and catwalks crisscross the space above the great storage tanks and below the 30-meter high ceiling. Along the walls at regular intervals are metal ladders leading up to the catwalks and the tops of the vats. The tanks are large, open containers holding various sickly-colored bubbling substances; the smell is vaguely reminiscent of an INFRARED citizen's gym locker four weeks after washday.**

**On one wall near the ceiling is a plexi-enclosed overhead control booth, accessible from the catwalks, a pair of ladders and a small continuous belt elevator. This booth is centrally located and commands an excellent view of the entire vat chamber.**

**Just entering this booth high above the chamber floor is the strange woman with the Black Box. She turns, sees she is pursued and crows, 'Hey, drones! Glad you could make it! Tonight there's gonna be a whole lotta shaking goin' on, and I'd like to introduce your host...' (She waves the Black Box in the air with a flourish, bows from the waist and strikes a defiant**

**pose.) 'Screaming Sarah Slick and her magic Black Box!'**

Now that we've set the scene, let's introduce the extras. There are as many doors to the vat chamber as there are secret society strike squads sent to get the Box. All these doors open at the same moment and all the squads spill out into the room at once. Each squad is distinctively garbed in the regalia of its secret society (Corpore Metal in metal plate armor, First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer in white frocks, Free Enterprise in pin-striped suits with violin cases and so on). They all pause, do double takes, look around the room at each other for a few moments, then they go in all different directions.

Some head for the ladders and the control booth. Some take cover near the vats. Some charge into melee with the enemies of their secret society. Some smash things at random. Some loot the fallen. Some run away. Some take cover in the doorways and make stirring speeches. Describe this confusion to the players as though the scene were a great cartoon finale.

Now, ask the PCs what they want to do. With the surfeit of targets to shoot at, they may be briefly overcome with joyous indecision, but soon they'll get into the swing of things.

And how will the NPCs deal with the PCs? 'Do unto others as they do unto you.' If the PCs do a lot of shooting and bashing, the NPCs take notice and try to eliminate the PCs. If the PCs sneak around and try to maneuver toward the control booth, they encounter NPCs with similar objectives.

And don't expect all the PCs to do the same things. One PC may sit and hammer on a vat, trying to smash it. Another may find a secure

spot and start working up a body count of traitors. Another may use a mutant power to bypass the competition and confront Sarah directly. Relax and improvise. Use your NPC cast to invent entertaining responses to the PCs' actions.

Sarah is the only significant NPC in the room. She'll sit tight and defend the control booth for five or ten rounds, then decide that the Death Leopard squad is not going to arrive in time to pick up the Box. When things get too hot, she gives a triumphant shout, fires her laser through the plexi window of the booth and dives out of the booth into one of the food vats, disappearing beneath the slime.

This should certainly give everybody a moment's pause. Actually, she planned this exit long ago—there is an overflow valve hidden below the glop, which she can find by touch and use as an airlock to escape. No body will be found, and it will be assumed the food, er, ate her.

It should be possible to continue the fight in the cavernous vat chamber even after Sarah has disappeared with the Box—continue it right up until T minus zero. At which time, anyone who is climbing pipes or catwalks on a full stomach is in trouble. And outside, the population is, well, behaving very oddly.

### Wild in the streets

If the PCs stick around for the mop up in the vat chamber, that's where they'll be when the boogie fever strikes. If they forsake the vat room for some reason (like to report back to Mission Central, or to look around for traitors or to pursue any of the secret society squads in retreat), they'll be out in the halls when the fun starts.





## Twist and shout

The Polypeptide Boogie begins gradually, with little twitches along the major nerves. Citizens suddenly kick up their heels, or clap hands. A combination of the two produces a drop-kick. In the corridors, the usual purposeful, get-where-I'm-going (because lateness is treason) stride is interrupted by a timestep, soft shoo or buck-and-wing. Human-operated vehicles do sudden maneuvers not found in the manual. The sight of a heavy transport flybot slaloming between overhead guideway supports, dropping crates here and there, is quite startling. Autocars jumping from one guideway to another are even more so.

Now the Neuron Dance is really getting going. People grab passing bots for support, and end up tangoing them across the floor. A squad of Death Troopers comes quickstepping up the path, like a drill team performing to Elvis: one-two (razzle-dazzle) three-four (autofire) that's a fact, Jack! Fortunately they can't hit anything.

While computers and bots are not directly affected, lots of human console operators are, so you can disrupt anything you feel like. Further, The Computer begins invoking overrides, interrupting services and switching controls to automatic systems—not always to appropriate ones. When a traffic-flow program takes over interior lighting control, lit windows start to flash arrows and messages like giant scoreboards, and guideway lights strobe, adding to the disco effect. (Remember that there is no natural illumination in Alpha Complex: when The Computer makes it dark, it's dark.)

Citizens are dancing out their doors, just like in a Busby Berkeley movie musical; humming something catchy from '42nd Street' or 'A Chorus Line' would be appropriate here.

Boogie-bouncing nervous systems are responsive to outside stimulus: the dancing mob soon ends up in step. When enough people dance in step, they set up harmonics that can shake bridges and even buildings apart. The air reverberates; the characters seem to be trapped inside a giant teleprinter. The sky starts to fall. Pipes break, making it 'rain'. Bots do not work well in the rain, especially if their little rubber tires and brake shoes get wet. Bots on errands of mercy run into things and skid off other things, requiring that more bots be sent on errands of mercy to help them.

The Computer demands that all the malfunctioning terminal operators report for termination. When their replacements don't answer calls, it demands that they report for termination. Every Troubleshooter is mobilized to deal with the crisis: our heroes receive orders by Com unit, which are superseded by new orders every few minutes.

Have fun. Keep it going for as long as the players will put up with it.

Suggested endgame scenario: The Computer announces a priority powerdown, for the safety of all systems. The lights go out. All the transport stops. In the darkness are loud crashing noises. The team must navigate by flashlight; if they have IR goggles, throw lots of confusing heat patterns at them. Let them decide where they want to go, and then describe the things they bump into on the way there. 'Okay, do you turn left or right here? Now there's a stairway. Here's an elevator, but all the control indicators are out—which button do you want to push? The corridor's only about a meter high here. You can hear shooting up ahead. Shooting behind you, too. Oops, hole in the walkway. You seem to be on a conveyor belt.'

Just as they're getting fed up with this, the com units beep, and the lights come up fast and full, blinding everybody. Then they see that they're on a catwalk high over the food vats, right back where they were when the band began to play. All the secret society boxjackers can now see again, too. Everybody shoots. Pipes rupture. The catwalks give way with a sound of rending metal. Everybody falls in the food. Blackout.

Encounters are possible with jitterbugging mobs (think of a huge, incoherent New Year's Eve party, where everyone wants to grab you to keep the room from spinning. They respond to noise, too: a 'Hey!' from a startled Troubleshooter will produce a chorus of 'Hey, hey!'s and a new set of dance steps).

After a while, automated transports will arrive to bring the Troubleshooters where their new orders direct; since orders are changed every few minutes the characters will spend a few pleasant hours getting nowhere fast.

Once this pales, the Troubleshooters can encounter teams of unaffected night-shift soldiers, kitted out in full rad-bio-chem protective suits, looking for Commie invaders; or maybe docbots with tranquilizer guns, who will shoot anybody who acts in an 'unreasonable' fashion...

## The aftermath

Really loyal PCs will enthusiastically attempt to deal with the crisis. Of course, the fabled 'community of man' that allegedly emerges in a disaster may not appear in Alpha Complex, and PCs may seize the opportunity to loot and burn and indulge in other Commie sabotage.

Whatever the PCs choose to do, things eventually return to normal and the PCs receive a summons on their com units to return to Troubleshooter Headquarters for debriefing. If they do not voluntarily return in short order, combots seek them out, gas them and 'escort' them back.

When the PCs arrive at Troubleshooters Headquarters, they are cordially greeted and placed in 'protective custody'—a windowless, brightly lit cell—until sometime the next day, after things have returned to normal.

## Debriefing

The characters are released from cells or medical detention. As one character (choose randomly) is let out of his cell, he sees AI-B-MNU, glummer than ever, being tossed into a slightly fancier cell. Questions about this are naturally not allowed. (AI-B-MNU was right about the blame for problems on this mission, and he will never be seen again.) It is up to the PC who saw the detention incident whether to tell his comrades.

The remaining three briefing officers ask questions about the Troubleshooters' activities last night. They are required to account for equipment expended and lost. Brian-B wants to give the PCs a thorough grilling; Dan-V is more easygoing, though he falls asleep occasionally, giving Brian-B a chance to take over; Zach-I wants to know if the video cameras were returned intact and nothing else.

Brian-B is willing to forgive a lot if the Troubleshooters shot a lot of traitors. He is annoyed if the team leader's armor is undamaged. If the leader got smoked, on the other hand, Brian-B eulogizes him as an example of everything a Troubleshooter ought to be.

The PCs ought to have the vague idea that they are going to be blamed for The Polypeptide Boogie. They are not—The Computer easily determined that the vat controls had been tampered with—but PCs should always have the vague idea that anything can be blamed on them. Because it can.

Take reports, and assign rewards and penalties. Just before the Troubleshooters are released, Dan-V congratulates them on 'a fine performance in The Computer's sight. Friend Computer has asked me to say we hope you are never called on in such a fashion again.'

The PCs will be accosted on their way back to their residential units by citizens, some of them of high clearance, who saw Rasterman's video special last night. None of these people believe the PCs are real Troubleshooters; they think they are actors. The only thing they want to know is what Teela-O-Malley is *really* like.

When the PCs get home, the Episode 2 alert is waiting for them.





Presenting the new, improved model Troubleshooter.

## 2: I was a mutant for the FBI

### Mission summary

The Computer does not blame the Troubleshooters for the massive, er, system crash of the night before, but it needs to blame somebody. It has decided that some terrible new psionic mutation, analogous to the dreaded and detested Machine Empathy ability, has infected the citizenry. It has further decided that this infection is somehow connected with the black cube that last night's televised traitors seemed so eager to possess. There are a lot of other conclusions The Computer might have drawn, but this is the one it did reach, and disagreeing with The Computer's conclusions is treason.

The Computer has further decided that this derangement might be contagious, like Communist propaganda; at least, it should be treated as such until proven otherwise. Therefore, the Troubleshooter team will not be told that The Black Box is a part of their investigation, lest they become contaminated. Since the Troubleshooter team of last night's events seemed to show no ill effects from their exposure to The Black Box, they presumably have some natural resistance (notice The Computer seizes on its own bad guesses and follows them to even weirder conclusions) and are the instruments of choice to recover or destroy it.

On the other hand (in Alpha Complex there's always at least one other hand) a High Programmer, Betty-U-YFL-5, has reached the more reasonable conclusion that The Black Box must contain some kind of entertainment programming, which by definition makes it an Old Reckoning artifact. Betty-U has a large and completely illegal collection of such items, and she arranges to acquire this one as well.

Dan-V-OSD, knowing that the Troubleshooters will be facing mutants with strange and unpredictable powers, decides to give them an advantage: he sends them to Victor-I-VGF, an R&D scientist who is hard at work on mechanical imitations of mutant powers. Like most R&D scientists, Victor-I is crazy. The Troubleshooters will still have to carry his gadgets into battle.

The Troubleshooters, therefore, are going to ambush a gang of traitorous mutants. The Psion secret society, which has heard of The Computer's intention, intends to protect the mutants from ambush. The Anti-Mutant society goes to ambush the Psions and the mutants.

But there aren't any mutants. the Box is actually in the hands of the Sierra Club again, who is trying to negotiate with one of its Outdoors-dwelling former members for more Boxes like it. And the Free Enterprisers have decided to retrieve the Box themselves.

When the smoke clears, the Troubleshooters will miss the Box, but capture the Outsider which will lead to Episode 3.

### Pre-mission briefing

When the PCs get back to the barracks, they find a Mission Alert waiting for them. (See Mission Alert, Reference YCBBB.2.2, at the end of the mission.) Display the alert on your GM screen. Give them an opportunity to seek contacts with their societies. Give them a few rumors (see General Rumor List or invent a few). Nothing new is available concerning The Black Box, but each society is emphatic about finding and snatching it if possible.

### Troubleshooter Headquarters

Once again there is difficulty in determining where the Troubleshooters should report. If the PCs suggest Briefing Room AA, their supervisors immediately question them as to how they came by such information; the officials suspect a leak, and the characters must talk their way out of fines or an immediate conviction/sentencing/termination (not necessarily in that order).

The checkpoint security console has been replaced with a new model. There is a glass plate on the machine's front: The subject places his hands against the glass, and a brilliant light illuminates the plate as the unit scans his palmprints.

On the fourth try (again), the plate overheats, pan-frying the user's hands. Guards immediately summon a docbot to bring plastiflesh. Also a





scrubot with glass cleaner and room deodorizer. For the duration of Episode 2, the PC with the resurfaced hands cannot spend Perversity on any ability check involving manual dexterity, including shooting.

## The briefing

The room is as before (**Tension 15**), except that a second guard with a power holster has replaced the combat. (The guards are thoroughly trained with these. If the PCs start trouble, the guards' holsters work properly at all times.)

At intervals during the briefings, the room begins to vibrate, and a rhythmic mechanical noise is heard. PCs get the distinct impression that the entire room is moving, on rails or tracks. The personnel ignore this effect entirely, and no explanation is available.

No one has replaced AI-B-MNU on the briefing panel. Zach-I wonders why he is still here, since the video problem has been cleared up. Brian-B is looking forward to another mass slaughter of traitors, and mutant traitors at that. Dan-V's principal concern, next to keeping Friend Computer happy, is to make sure that his friend Victor-I-GOR's equipment gets a good field test.

## Choosing the team leader

The team has the opportunity to choose a new leader. If the prior leader is dead, Brian-B reminds his clone of the reputation he has to live up to. Brian-B also comments that The Computer, in recognition of last night's extraordinary service and the dangers that lie ahead, has arranged a special bonus for the leader on this mission.

Once the PCs have decided on a leader, a panel slides open in front of the briefing bench, and a small shelf extends itself. On the shelf are seven jawbreaker-sized yellow pills. Brian-B addresses the team leader: 'Given the threat to your very minds presented by these mutants, The Computer has seen fit to give you the final protection against hostile mind control. These suicide pills require only minutes to work, and are almost painless. As team leader, you will be custodian of these pills and, recognizing your importance, you have been assigned a second pill in case the first one should fail.'

Don't forget to make the leader sign for the pills. The form contains a space labeled REASON FOR USING PILL, and another that reads WAS PILL EFFECTIVE? [YES/NO].

## Mission assignment

Dan-V is deeply moved by the suicide-pill ritual. In a voice as sincere as any ever heard on the U.S. Senate floor, he says:

**'It is not often that we see a caliber of courage such as you have shown us,**

**and not often that we grant the unusual privilege you have been granted. Is it not fortunate that, in its wisdom, our friend The Computer has made it possible for us to give it the last full measure of devotion not once, but several times?**

**'But I digress, and time is short. As you doubtless know, there is a terrible influence at work among us. Over the past hours, Alpha Complex has operated at a level of inefficiency that causes our friend The Computer something electronically analogous to grief. The Computer has worked hard to shield its citizens from grief; those tablets you have been entrusted with are an example of the lengths our friend will go to to protect its own. Serve The Computer, and you will never suffer very long.'**

There is a pause. Then a snore. Brian-B takes the microphone. He says:

**'The mutant traitor scum have been located in YCA Sector. Now, they're clever, and they're everywhere, so you're going to have to be cleverer. We're going to disguise you as traitor scum mutants, and send you right into the middle of things.'** Brian-B's eyes widen, and he begins to speak very rapidly.

Rehearse the next segment; the faster you can deliver it, the better the effect will be. Brian-B does not repeat himself.

**'Now remember, they're traitors and they're clever and they're Commies and they're stupid, so we're going to make you look stupid so you can get in there and be real clever, just like the Commie mutants they are. Be careful, because they're not dumb, they may make mistakes but that's because they're clever Commies and they think you're stupid, but don't be dumb about it, remember they're Commies and they're dumb and they're mutants and they're scum, and if it looks like a Commie and feels like a mutant and smells like scum it's one of you in disguise so you can give 'em what they've got coming to 'em.'**

**Dan-V wakes up. He says 'One of our finest scientists, a loyal servant of The Computer and a good friend of mine, has made it possible for you to counter the deadly mental threat posed by these mutants. Take care with this equipment: it may be all that stands between you and...treason.'**

Only a few questions will be allowed. No information on the nature of the hostile mutants is available, nor the precise location of their 'stronghold'.

## Private briefing

Brian-B reads the mission equipment requisition aloud to the group, then dismisses them to report to Outfitting. (Display Equipment List #2 to the players.) The team leader is directed to stay behind for a special private briefing. Dan-V addresses him as follows:

**'Good friend Troubleshooter, we know of your loyalty to The Computer. That is why we are entrusting you with the following information—which is highly classified, and must be released to no one but your successor as team leader.**

**'Somehow, these mutants have found a way to control the minds of loyal citizens, convincing them to turn away from The Computer and all it stands for. Even valuable bots have been corrupted into the service of this evil.**

**'We know that, should this become known, our loyal citizens might become afraid, not knowing when they might be innocently forced into treasonous acts. So we must keep the nature of this mission a complete secret. No one outside this room—of course our friend The Computer is here with us always—will know of your mission. You can expect no help from our fellow services—even from your fellow Troubleshooters.**

**'But you will not be without help. I spoke of equipment that would make you the equal of any mutant: yes, it is true. We now have the ability to grant mutant powers to honest, loyal citizens when the need requires. You will meet the enemy on its own terms.**

**'Of course you understand that with great power comes great responsibility. For that reason, we entrust you with this.'**

A RED waiter appears, carrying a shiny metal tray. In the center of the tray is a large blue pill.

**'It works in ten seconds,' Brian-B says, awed.**

The leader is allowed to rejoin the team, and they are all hustled off to R&D for YCA Sector.

Should anyone decide to take one: the yellow pills are fatal 20% of the time (on a roll of 4 or less); otherwise they merely make the swallower nauseated.

The blue pill has no effect. However, since The Computer believes that the pill works, any PC who takes the pill is presumed to have a mutant power, and to be guilty of treason. Failure to turn the pill in at the end of the mission is considered clear evidence that the pill has been taken. Now: if The Computer 'knows' you have a mutant power, you had better register it. But how do you register a non-existent mutant power? Nice little fix he's in, yes?

Taking any sort of suicide pills earns an Official Reprimand.

## The friendly folks at R&D

Victor-I-VGF-6 is the last of an erratically brilliant line of research scientists. Victor-I was a mechanical genius, who devised such items as a reliable safety for cone rifles, a self-balancing hypocycloidal fusion containment field and a garbage bag with the twist tie attached. Unfortunately, all these items are classified ULTRAVIOLET. He died of piezoelectric shock while trying to develop a dogbot biscuit. Victor-2 was the first person to exceed Mach 3 while clinging to the outside of a flybot. Victor-3 was reading through his laboratory notes one day when he realized he had exceeded his own security clearance; he promptly reported for termination. Victor-4 went into the lab one morning and was never seen again. Victor-5 is believed to have stumbled on the formula for a universal solvent, which then disappeared along with him and seven sub-basements.

Victor-6 sees himself as the family's last chance to return to Victor-I's glory. Understanding that a hot-sounding proposal is worth three boring monographs any day, he has created the new science of Synthomutagenics, the process of simulating mutant powers by artificial means. The Computer gives its full support to the SM Project, because if useful mutant powers could be artificially produced under The Computer's direct control, there would be no further need to permit the existence of Registered Natural Mutants.

This is how part of The Computer thinks of it, anyway. Another part of The Computer believes the artificial creation of mutant powers is a threat—machines that turn citizens into traitors-by-definition—and allows Victor-I-VGF-6 to continue only until he determines whether or not Synthomutagenics will work. If the SM Project is a success, Victor, his work and all who participated in it (of course including those Troubleshooters who tested the hardware) must be terminated. If the Project is a failure, the equipment and Victor-I's 'assistants' will still be eradicated (to keep anyone else from getting the idea) and Victor-I will be terminated for wasting Alpha Complex resources.

In other words, the PCs are doomed from the moment they enter Victor-I's laboratory (**Tension 15**). However, this termination order will not take effect until the SM Project ends, and that could be a long time, especially in a Troubleshooter's life, where a week is a long time.

Victor-I has two assistants, both of whom are reasonably competent engineers. They are also, as usual in Alpha Complex, both spies. (Those of you familiar with lab politics can think of them as enthusiastic grad students.)

**Willis-G-PLJ-4:** Quiet, cheerful, Mr. Goodlaser type. Willis-G is one of the inventors of the Power

Holster; he dismisses all reports of malfunctions, pointing out that no Vulture Squadron member has ever returned one for adjustments. He will not let the PCs leave without signing out at least one holster.

Willis-G is also a member of the Psion secret society, with the powers of Minor Telekinesis and Luck. These powers account for the fact that his prototypes work well on the test bench, and fail in the field when he isn't around. Psion does not know yet whether Victor-I's work is a boon, bringing the benefits of mutation to those unlucky enough to be born without it, or a threat; Willis-G is content to watch and report.

**Ned-G-RFB-6:** Hyperactive, accident-prone, standard Mad Scientist's Madder Assistant. Ned-G's own ideas suffer from terminal lunacy; however, he has an uncanny ability to find and fix what's wrong with Victor-I's creations without taking credit. Obviously Victor-I treasures him.

Ned-G spies for the Anti-Mutant secret society. His personal conviction is that genes have no business altering themselves; when better people are built, people like him will build them. Anti-Mutant thinks Victor-I's work could be wonderful, unless it leads to tolerance for organic-type mutants, so they too are sitting tight and waiting.

## Men into mutants

The secrecy of the SM Project has led to its being housed in the deepest sub-basement of the R&D facilities. The characters spend a lot of time descending in elevators (it isn't that deep, the elevators are just slow) and being led by suspicious guards through dark, dusty corridors, some of which seem to have been forced out of true by some great elemental force.

Finally the guards operate an elaborately sealed metal door; several thicknesses of steel iris open and the Troubleshooters enter a huge room filled with equipment right out of *Forbidden Planet* or a Jack Kirby comic book: massive busbars alive with coruscating energy, delicate assemblies of glass and wire, incomprehensible displays. The door closes behind the team, and Willis-G steps out to introduce himself. Shortly Ned-G pops up from behind a console to startle everybody. They lead the players to Victor-I.

Victor-I is nervous and insecure. (Imagine Woody Allen's neuroses in Orson Welles' body.)

He tells the Troubleshooters that he hopes they take this project seriously, that definitive field testing is important to everyone involved.

Victor-I doesn't know where to start; he'd like to send the PCs out with a dozen gadgets each, but knows that isn't practical. He wants to make sure that no one gets a device he won't make use of (he's had that problem before), and so suddenly asks a PC, 'What mutant power have you always dreamed of having?'

It sounds just like an Internal Security trick question, and Willis-G and Ned-G listen carefully for the answer. If the PCs mention a specific power, Victor dashes off in search of the appropriate device. Willis-G and Ned-G scribble furiously in notebooks.

If this approach doesn't work, Victor-I asks the players what they think would be most useful. If that fails, he says, 'You're just the person I've needed to give this unit its final once-over,' and assigns an item at random. Victor-I is fair, and makes sure at least one of each of his assistants' designs is assigned.

Items may be tested if the PCs insist—though most of them work just fine under laboratory conditions. The testing area is referred to as The Danger Room; the scientists do not elaborate on this title. If too much testing goes on, a call arrives ordering the Troubleshooters to hurry up, and no further tests are allowed. So there.

## The goodies

1. **Sensory Enhancer Helmet (Victor-I).** This is a full-head helmet with amplifying pickups for sound, hearing and smell. It works, but the gain controls are defective: audio volume may increase until a whisper deafens the wearer, or vision fades to black. Malfunctions of the scent-amplifying system are even more interesting. The unit is also rather difficult to remove.
2. **Electroshock Gauntlets (Willis-G).** Give the wearer shock abilities equivalent to the Electroshock mutant power. The control switches are built inside the gloves, and they tend to stick; while the gloves are insulated, handling weapons with electrically live fingers can be hazardous, and careless use of hands can trigger shock accidentally.
3. **Omnigestoline-NG (Ned-G).** A drug to provide the Matter Eater ability for 12 hours. It does absolutely nothing. If the players take a pill in the lab, Ned-G will say 'Well, it takes an hour or so to get going. Make sure we get a full report.'
4. **Manipulatron (Victor-I).** A powered exoskeleton for the arms, giving the wearer ten times normal strength. It works just fine, except that it provides no extra support for the spine and legs, somewhat limiting the wearer's carrying capacity; the unit itself weighs about 40 kilos. Politely request the PC to make occasional Violence/Agility checks. If failed, the PC crashes to the ground. Two citizens are needed to help him stand. After the device has crashed to the ground a few times, the battered controls short out, causing a power-assisted case of St. Vitus's Dance. Ask the PC to provide sound effects.
5. **Experimental Manual Operations Extensor, Mark 26 (Ned-G).** This is



supposed to simulate Telekinesis, and any PC who asks for TK powers is going to be stuck with it. It is a harness mounting dozens of magnetically controlled wire filaments that can coil tightly or extend to five meters. It is controlled by nerve impulses, and comes with a thick manual of operation. The manual is censored, of course; the pages are blank. Of course, in use it simply snags everything in sight, including the operator, like a tangler that shoots at one target per turn. Throughout the rest of the mission the PC will involuntarily pluck items off walls, desks and passing citizens.

6. **Biofeedback Monitor System** (*Victor-I*). Victor borrowed (stole) the prototype of this from PDK Sector. He forgot to steal the documentation. It gives the character abilities similar to the Adrenalin Control power, with a 50% chance per use of causing no harmful side effects, and 50% of causing double the damage of the mutant power.
7. **Neurocalculator** (*Willis-G*). This device clamps over the user's temples. It connects inductively to the brain, providing the Deep Thought power. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it gives incredibly wrong answers. Sometimes the user stands stock still and recites the multiplication tables until his ears smoke.
8. **Teleporttransitron** (*Ned-G*). Designed to imitate the Teleportation power, this five-kilo belt device actually works and can be demonstrated. Unfortunately, the power pack is a 60 kg device mounted on a two-wheeled cart which must be towed behind the PC. More unfortunately, its calibration is extremely delicate, and after any jar (like walking out of the laboratory) it transmits the user, the user's equipment, the user's clothes and itself to widely separated locations. Failure to return the device is treason. Finding it after a teleport may be tricky.
9. **Suggestor Goggles** (*Victor-I*). These have whirling lights that give the wearer the Charm power over anyone he can somehow convince to look into his eyes while he is wearing them. A recorded message keeps repeating, 'Look into my eyes. You're growing sleepy.'
10. **Neurofrabulator** (*Willis-G*). This device resembles a combat suit helmet with a clear bowling ball containing a live human brain bolted to either side. The brains have been artificially grown and possess the ability to read the surface thoughts of anyone in a ten-meter range, and telepathically communicate the information to the wearer.

The possibilities for GM mischief with this one are endless. For example: the

two brains bicker constantly; they make endless annoying suggestions to the wearer; they read the Troubleshooters' minds and threaten blackmail; etc. Feel free to give the brains whatever names and personalities you wish: George and Gracie, Stan and Ollie, Moe, Larry and Curly (one of them is a split personality), etc.

11. **Autoresponse Imager** (*Victor-I*). A belt-mounted holographic projector that simulates Polymorphism by showing images that follow the wearer's actions: the user can appear as a combot, Teela-O-MLY or any of 126 other images stored on microslide carousel. If asked, Victor-I demonstrates some useful settings; no complete list is available. The slide controller has a tendency to reset itself randomly in use, and the test slides are broadly selected, including Wile E. Coyote, items of furniture, Peter Lorre (in black and white) and several famous paintings.
12. **Lung/Gill Suit** (*Victor-I*). A skintight leotard that filters oxygen out of water. It is a bit sweaty in normal wear, but it works perfectly. A player assigned this will just have to figure out how to field-test it.
13. **Pedipulatron** (*Willis-G*). An exoskeleton for the legs similar to the Manipulatron above. They will not be offered as a set. If someone tries to wear them together, their combined weight becomes a considerable burden. Then one or the other shorts out and becomes dead metal.

## Cloaks and daggers

Once outfitted with their synthetic mutations, the team goes to the regular Quartermaster office to sign out their more usual equipment.

Despite what was said about secrecy, everyone in the equipment room seems to know about the team's mission. They all think it's pretty ridiculous. 'Nobody's ever gonna believe you're mutants. Freaks, yeah, but not mutants.' (Of course, the characters are all mutants, but they can't reveal that.)

At least this time the staff isn't so hesitant about providing armor, implying the team is really going to need it this time. They have several suits 'typical of what the well-dressed YELLOW civilian wears' with concealed armor: four YELLOW reflec and six Kevlar/mylar (14).

Once again the team finds itself on the sidewalk in front of HQ, with no idea where to begin. Suddenly a panting RED Troubleshooter runs up to them, holding a dispatch envelope. He demands to see an official copy of the team's mission orders before handing over the message.

The team has not been issued an official copy of its orders. In order to get the message, the PCs must pull rank on the RED messenger,

or simply shoot him. If neither of these ideas occurs to anyone, a passing scrubot picks up the messenger and tosses him into a trash compactor; the envelope flutters to the ground, where the scrubot ignores it.

The message is in fact for the team, and a good thing too. (See Special Field Dispatch: Reference YCBBB.2.3.4 at the end of the mission).

## All dressed up with no place to go

Meetings with secret society and service group contacts are going to be very exciting while the PCs wear Victor-I's hardware and the YELLOW civilian suits (which don't fool anybody). There is a 50% chance the contact is scared off by what he thinks is an Internal Security trap—100% chance if the player chose the same method of contact as last time. If the real contact flees, provide an 'innocent bystander' with whom the player can try to discuss his mission.

If contact is made:

**Brett-Y-WYD** learns the Outsider Reagan Wimbledon (see PC card—Brett-Y is awful with names) has been kidnapped by agents of Free Enterprise, who wish to sell him (something like that anyway). Brett-Y must free Wobblepot, at the cost of his own life if necessary. He will know him by his fuzzy vest. ('Fuzzy vest' is correct. If Brett-Y thinks he misunderstood, good.)

Other societies comment on the magnitude of last night's disaster, and emphasize the importance of getting that Black Box.

## The mission

Special Field Dispatch: Reference YCBBB. 2.3.4 gives an address in YCA Sector, supposedly the location of the Evil Mutant Enclave. No secret society can say anything about what the address might actually be, but Power Services knows that a lot of heavy conduits run under the place.

In reality, it's a 'safe house', a room operated by the Free Enterprisers, guaranteed to be absolutely free of The Computer's surveillance devices. The Enterprisers rent it out to anyone with the astronomical fee, for whatever purpose the renter desires. The room really is Computer-proof; the Enterprisers have their own bugs installed, for protection and blackmail.

The current tenants are the Sierra Club, who are using the room to hide one Oregon Warbler. No, not a bird, a person. Some years ago, a high-ranking Sierran named Warren-B-LER escaped from Alpha Complex through the secret exit. He made his way in the outside world, from time to time returning to trade with the Complex dwellers. The Club holds him in religious awe, an unreciprocated emotion.

The Club has now reacquired The Black Box (Screaming Sarah escaped with it last time and sold it to them), and is showing it to Oregon

Warbler in the hope that he can bring them many more like it. Wooden boxes, that is. The Club still doesn't have any idea how to open the thing.

Oregon Warbler thinks the Club is crazy, but he can sell certain items, especially firestarters, for a small fortune Outdoors, and if the Club wants boxes, they can have boxes.

The Free Enterprisers, watching the negotiations on hidden camera, have decided to muscle in on the deal. They slipped a message to Oregon Warbler, offering him a much better price for his goods. Oregon agreed to a meeting, and was told to expect a visit from a group of YELLOW civilians.

And indeed the Enterprisers are on their way, dressed as YELLOW-Clearance civilians. But guess who gets there first?

The Troubleshooters have the address because:

1. Betty-U-YFL ordered her Programs Group to find her The Black Box;
2. A group member got the safe house location, and transmitted it to Zach-I-LVI on the briefing team;
3. Zach-I sent the message to capture the Box, with the address, to the team leader;
4. The Computer deleted all references to The Black Box from the message. Zach-I never questions what The Computer deletes and doesn't care anyway.

Meanwhile, strike teams from Psion and Anti-Mutant are tracking the Troubleshooters, tipped off by Victor-I's assistants, who also gave the societies a list of the special equipment the Troubleshooters signed out from R&D. Naturally, Willis-G and Ned-G assured the strike teams that all the stuff works perfectly.

## The safe house entrance

The entrance and first checkpoint for the safe house is in the outer lobby of Bot Maintenance Facility YCA-25 (Tension 0). Read the following aloud to the players when they reach the building and enter.

**The lobby of the Bot Maintenance Facility is a very large room filled with unmarked cartons of various sizes. A pair of large glass doors lead from the lobby down a long corridor. Next to these doors is a desk with a computer console. No one is sitting at the desk. Two heavily-armed ORANGE guards lean negligently against the wall next to the desk.**

**They eye you suspiciously, but do not aim their weapons. In a distant corner of the room, partly obscured by cartons, is a door marked 'NO ADMITTANCE—DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE TOXIC CHEMICALS EXTREME HEAT'.**

This is a bona fide bot maintenance facility. The guards are Free Enterprisers and are paid to make sure that nobody too obviously a Bad Guy goes through the NO ADMITTANCE door—the real safe house entrance. They have been warned that some YELLOW citizens are coming by to visit the safe house, and the guards will be as cooperative and well-spoken as typical thugs and pistoleros in gangster films. 'Uhghn. Whatcha want?' 'Whosyer here ter see?' 'Well, de boss said ter send yuz right down. Da door ova dere.'

If the PCs make lots of noises like 'The Computer is Our Friend', or 'What's your clearance, citizen?' or 'Be so kind as to report yourself for treasonous activity', the Free Enterprisers are going to get suspicious. This should result in a shootout and some clone activation.

If the PCs play it cagey and decide to wander around the bot facility for a little snooping, treat them to a tour of the bot maintenance bays. Imagine hundreds of malfunctioning bots to annoy and torment the PCs. Eventually one of the ORANGE guards should show up and politely direct the PCs to the proper entrance.

## Tunnel

After the bot facility door comes a spiral ramp down, and a dimly lit access tunnel (Tension 0) running for about 150 meters. Cables and pipes run along the walls; if weapons are fired down here remember that water and voltage don't mix, especially on metal floors. A simple vibration-sensor system turns on a light at the basement checkpoint whenever anyone is in the tunnel.

## Basement checkpoint

See the 'Safe House Apartment' map at the end of the mission. **Tension 0.**

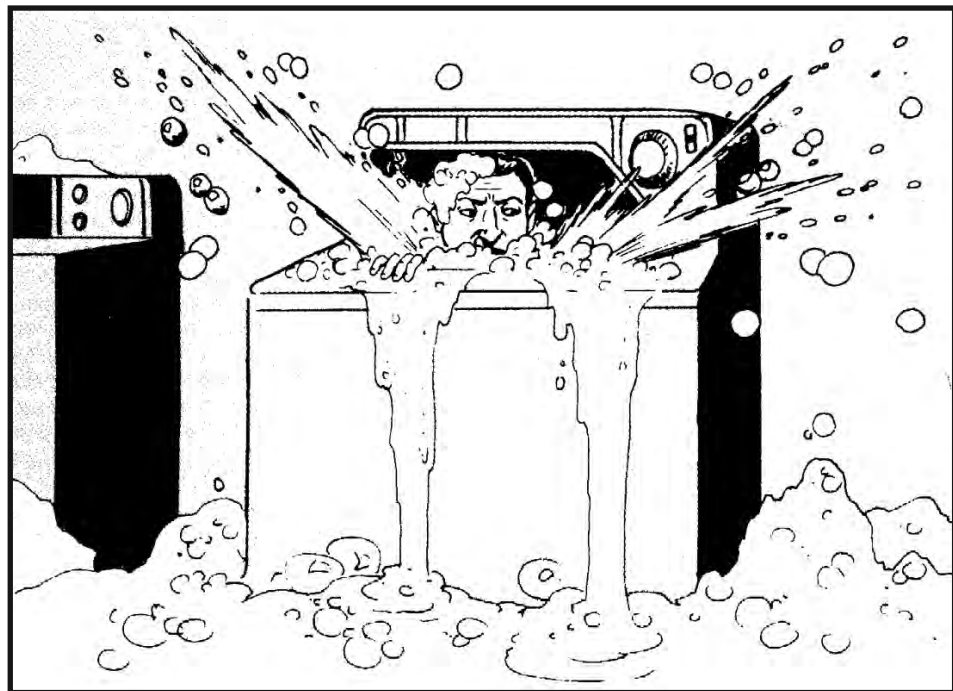
As the PCs approach the checkpoint, read the following aloud:

**The tunnel turns right for five meters, then left. Large seams in the ceiling indicate where massive armored doors can be lowered at either end of the five-meter corridor passage. Along the walls of this section are numerous small portals through which poison gas, napalm or some other discouraging substance might pour into the corridor, and armored cameras scan the hallway.**

This section of hallway is monitored on television from the checkpoint. A buzzer sounds when the hall is entered, and the guards know to expect company.

**Beyond the five-meter section of corridor the tunnel turns left and is blocked by a massive armored door. Two small thick plastic windows are set at eye height, and panels in the door might apparently be opened to permit unpleasant objects to be tossed or fired into those standing before the door. A crudely lettered sign on the door reads, 'Fun Room: State your name and business. Don't forget "Please" and "Thank You."'**

The PCs can say anything they want. 'Candygram'. 'Friend'. 'I'm selling magazines.' The two guards know to expect a group of YELLOW citizens, and understand that no



*A secret exit or the end to your washday worries?*



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

one ever candidly states his business in Alpha Complex. As long as the PCs don't have weapons drawn or show some other sign of poor social skills, the armored door slides ponderously up into the ceiling, revealing the checkpoint room.

**The room is ten x ten meters. Two large desks, one to the right, the other to the left of the door, are occupied by a pair of casually surly guards dressed in non-standard, sharply-tailored Kevlar/Mylar jackets. Their semi-automatic slugthrowers are pointed suggestively in your direction. One has a stun gun, several grenades and a gauss gun on his desk; the other has a hand flamer and a cone rifle.**

**One says, 'Wait a minute,' and he picks up a phone on his desk and mutters quietly into it. After a few brief exchanges, he hangs up and says, 'Boss says it's okay. The freak wants to see them.'**

The Free Enterprise guards at the checkpoint do not annoy the PCs unless they make pests of themselves. The phone call is to Free Enterprise headquarters to confirm the visitors. The other guard presses a button under his desk and the rear wall panel of the room swings open to reveal a passage leading upward. The first guard leans inside, and yells, 'Company coming!' up the stairway.

The PCs may walk between the two guards through the rear wall and ascend the stairs. The first thing they notice is a grinning guard at the top of the stairs, a BLUE laser rifle across his

knees. He waves pleasantly as the PCs come up the stairs.

### ■ **The apartment**

At the top of the stairs is a closed door. The guard stands, knocks on the door and says 'You got visitors, freak.' He opens the door and sends the PCs into the room. Read the following aloud.

**The room is unimaginably luxurious by the standards of a YELLOW-Clearance Troubleshooter. The furniture is soft and comfortable, the carpet thick, the light adequate, the bathroom private—**incredible.

**There are no windows, but a pair of large vidscreens show worn videotapes of the Outdoors (prized Sierra Club possessions): California, St. Croix, the Jersey Turnpike and so forth.**

**Across the room on the far wall are two open doors. The door on the left leads to a kitchen/utility room. The door on the right leads to a bedroom. On the right wall is a third open door leading to a bathroom.**

**In a corner of the room, on a small table, stands The Black Box.**

**A citizen in ill-fitting INFRARED coveralls is snoozing in an overstuffed chair. His hair is unusually long and matted. Over the coveralls he is wearing a strange, armor-like garment covered with what looks like dense, white, curly hair. There is a strong unpleasant odor.**

### ■ **Oregon Warbler**

Though he is dressed in Alpha Complex clothing (with a sheepskin vest for a touch of home), he will appear to the characters as barely human: too muscular, too hairy, with a peculiar smell. They will have no trouble at all believing he is some kind of incredible Commie Mutant from Hell.

Oregon thinks the PCs are Free Enterprisers come to make him an offer for delivery of more Black Boxes. When the PCs wake him, he'll rub his eyes and say, 'Okay, so what's your offer?' He ignores any inappropriate PC responses (he's still half asleep, and he isn't going to put up with any more foolishness), repeating over and over, 'Cut out the nonsense. Make me a decent offer, or I'll sell to the Nature Boys.'

If the PCs insist that Oregon is their prisoner and attempt to confiscate The Black Box, Oregon coolly says, 'Okay, if that's the way you clowns want to play. I can wait. You need what I got, and I can wait 'til I get good terms. And don't think pushing me around is going to improve the price, vat breath.'

If the PCs try strong-arm stuff or amateur laser surgery, Oregon makes a dash for the (armored) bathroom. The guards appear immediately and try to make things challenging for the PCs.

### ■ **A friendly little altercation**

The dialog between the PCs and Oregon is suddenly interrupted by sounds of gunfire outside the safe house. And downstairs from the checkpoint room comes the sound of loud argument. Then everything goes crazy at once.

Outside, the Psions (who have located the apartment with mutant tricks) and the Anti-Mutants (who followed the Psions) have started taking pot-shots at each other. In the tunnel the real Free Enterpriser group has just arrived and been identified by the guards, and they are getting ready to come upstairs with blazing weapons.

### ■ **This way to the egress**

Oregon has been told of two emergency exits from the safe house—a hidden chute and an explosive charge that blows a hole right through the wall. Sadly, Oregon's foggy memory has omitted some of the critical details.

At first sign of trouble Oregon makes a dash for the kitchen. He knows there is a secret emergency exit in there, though he has forgotten exactly where.

The PCs may consider making a heroic stand here. Bad idea. Activate their clones.

They may consider following Oregon. Somewhat more promising.

*In-joke alert: In this illo Jim Holloway depicted Oregon Warbler using the likeness of original PARANOIA line developer Ken Rolston.*



'Look what followed us in from the Outdoors!'

## Emergency Exit A

One way out is through the automatic washer in the kitchen. The back panel must be kicked out, which reveals a chute to street level outside. Though nobody knows it, the washer is functional, and starts to fill with soapy water as soon as anybody climbs in. Once the panel is knocked out, the flow increases to a torrent. It can't be stopped; if the washer is destroyed, the pipes begin to flood the apartment. Oregon was told about this escape, but he has forgotten which of several appliances (washer, dishwasher, automatic clothes presser, oven, Magic Fingers bed) must be climbed into. Have fun.

## Emergency Exit B

The other exit is through the wall screen on the far wall in the bedroom. The bed must be pushed aside and the wall screen removed. There is a ripcord on the wall behind it. This fuses an explosive charge that blows out the wall. Anyone standing next to the wall on either side gets a faceful of crumbled concrete. When the wall falls down, those inside will be looking right at the Anti-Mutant assault team, who will doubtless seize the opportunity. This action also irretrievably weakens the entire building, which will collapse at an ever-faster rate.

Blowing holes in walls is also a possibility, with long-term results similar to escape route B above.

If the PCs detonate a large quantity of ordnance in the tunnel, a gas explosion makes most of the block sink three or four meters into the earth.

If the players escape via the tunnel, they are met by an Enterpriser flying squad at the bot plant. Feel free to improvise a free-for-all among the bots, conveyors and automatic repair and assembly gear.

After the hue and cry goes up, the Sierra Club gets a hit team of their own there, trying to recover the Box and Oregon Warbler.

Oregon Warbler isn't particularly eager to surrender to anybody, especially not Troubleshooters, but he'd rather be shot later than shot now. When caught between the indiscriminant fire of the secret society attack squads and the protective custody of the PCs, Oregon turns and surrenders to the PCs, saying, 'Keep me alive, and I'll make it worth your while.'

Nobody shoots at The Black Box or at Oregon. All societies take considerable risks to capture it.

## Ending the battle

As fire, flood and quake begin to consume the structural block, service bots and security forces begin to converge on the area.

Internal Security turns off the power to the whole sector (lights out, folks) and floods the area with a new experimental sleepgas. (Oddly enough, it works.) As the lights go out, the other combatants begin to scramble away, hoping to avoid capture by Internal Security. Firefighters in the dark aren't very productive, anyway, and any hardcore clown who tries to carry on by flashlight should be greeted with a fusillade of slugs, laser beams and grenades.

As the lights go out and everything gets quiet, tell the PCs they smell a funny smell. Let them wander in the dark for a few panicky rounds, then start turning off the PCs. Make a Violence check for each character each round. When each fails, ask the PCs to provide snoring sound effects. When everyone is buzzing and snorting, tell them that time passes. Break for munchies and a stretch.

## Detention

The surviving PCs awake in the back of a Security van on their way to detention. Wounded PCs are being treated by an onboard docbot. Oregon Warbler is with the PCs, but unconscious and receiving medical treatment. If The Black Box was in the possession of one of the PCs when the lights went out, it has disappeared. (A Sierra Club Internal Security plant has intercepted it and sent it along to higher-ups in the society. It will reappear in Episode 3.)

When they arrive at the detention block, Oregon is separated from the PCs and sent to a medical facility. The PCs are sent as a party to comfortable detention quarters where the wounded continue to receive medical treatment. All requests for information or release are greeted with the traditional, 'I'm sorry, but that is impossible at this time.' An Internal Security clerk contacts the PCs by vidcom and asks them to begin preparing their reports. In the process he lets slip that Internal Security has no record of authorization for their mission. (Remember the courier's 'Special Field Dispatch'?) Grin a lot at the players.

## Debriefing

Three hours after arriving in detention, five Vulture Squadron guards appear at the door of the PCs' detention quarters to conduct the PCs to Briefing Room AA. Wounded PCs are conveyed in wheelchairs. The Vultures make sly cracks about needing to lash the disabled to posts for execution. Vultures' humor is similar to that you recall from high school bullies in gym class. Not refined, but spirited and imaginative.

In no time the PCs find themselves blinded by the familiar lights of Briefing Room AA. Dan-V smiles blandly. Brian-B glares sternly. Zach-I is digging absently in his ear with a stylus and gazing off into space.

Brian-B goes into a brief tirade. 'Can't you do anything right?! You were sent to root out a nest of mutants. So, where are they? You were supposed to field test some very important R&D equipment. So where are the reports? And, I might add, in the process of treasonously avoiding your responsibilities, you managed to reduce an entire residential block to rubble. Quite a day's work.'

The PCs can salvage some dignity if they give a good account of their problems, and if they point out that they captured Oregon alive as they (think) they were directed, Brian-B is somewhat mollified. Of course, a sizable body count of traitors and/or mutants is the only thing that really satisfies Brian-B.

Dan-V patiently explains that The Computer understands that this was a particularly dangerous mission. He expresses the hope that they were not affected by the strange mental powers of the Communist mutants. While they are trying to figure out how to deny that without digging the hole deeper, Zach-I asks, quite casually, if they were exposed to the 'blackbody radiation'.

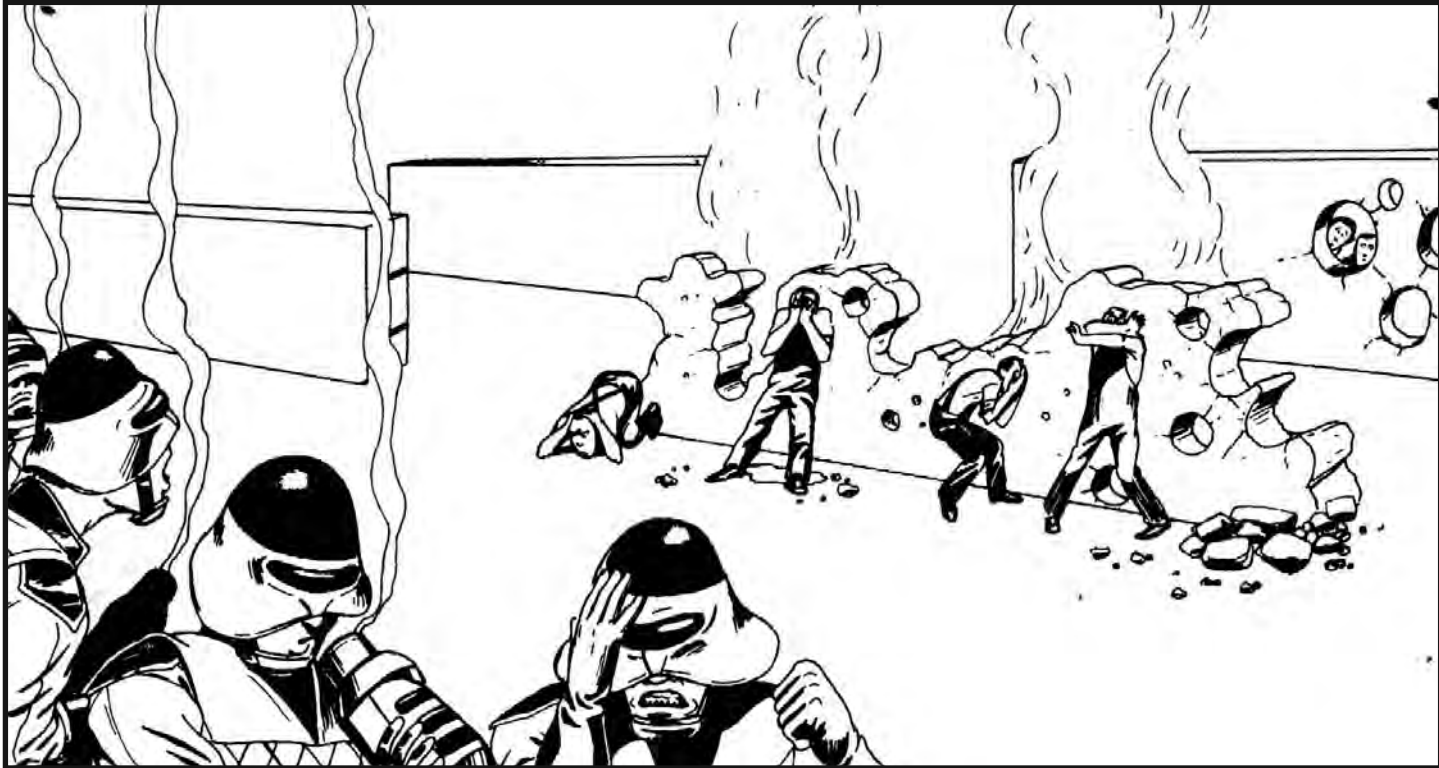
Any response that indicates they know what Zach-I is talking about (even he doesn't) will produce intense questioning by Brian-B, trying to establish that they are all really Communists, and the black object is part of a secret plot to destroy Alpha Complex.

As always, assign rewards and punishments, berate the team for damage to equipment (Dan-V is very stern if any of Victor-I's gadgets were destroyed), thank them for their cooperation.

Then have the guards lead them to the cone rifle firing range and ask if they'd like blindfolds or a last bowl of gruel.



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET



*'Who moved the targets?'*

### 3: No one here gets out alive

#### Mission summary

Saved from execution at the last instant, the PCs are ordered back to Briefing Room AA. Though never explicitly so stated, the briefing personnel hint that the PCs are being given a chance to redeem themselves by going on a suicide mission. The PCs will be properly grateful.

The Computer has discovered the existence of the secret exit from Alpha Complex: Oregon Warbler, captured alive in Episode 2, traded the information for his life. The Computer sends the Troubleshooters on a mission to seal off the exit.

Warbler is sent along as a 'guide'; naturally, he intends to make sure that he is the only person to reach the exit alive. He will then escape to the Outdoors.

The PCs also receive a rough copy of a map of Warbler's secret route. Certain dangers are indicated with cryptic marks that Warbler will explain just a few moments too late.

This mission is a gauntlet run past an assortment of hospitable deathtraps. It is also a parody of a certain type of standard roleplaying adventure, the plod through endless booby-trapped corridors known as the 'dungeon crawl'. A few of the encounters are as explicit on this point as possible, short of invoking a Summon Libel Lawyer spell.

And since this is **PARANOIA**, not *Some Other Game™*, the mission is finally a wild goosebot chase, as the kill-crazy Internal Security officer Brian-B-IWR-6 conducts his own airborne search-and-destroy mission on the exit, and succeeds in blowing it wide open to daylight. Then the Troubleshooters get to go home and try to explain what happened, receiving a well-earned rest. Until Episode 4.

#### Pre-mission briefing

The Troubleshooters, condemned for treasonable destruction of Computer property, are waiting to be used as cone rifle targets. Wearing disposable over-tunics printed with bullseyes, they line up against a pockmarked wall, confronted by a BLUE weapons training officer and a group of new and inexperienced RED Troubleshooter trainees. (You may, if you wish, refer to them as green RED Troubleshooters.) None of the trainees has ever so much as seen a cone rifle before. Most of them never will again, either. The officer makes a brief address to the trainees:

**'This is a signal honor! The Computer has chosen you insignificant RED-Clearance stooges to execute YELLOW-Clearance traitors! A great honor! And to use BLUE-Clearance weapons in the execution? An unheard-of honor! Congratulations. [The**

*officer softens his voice to a conspiratorial whisper.] Better than a field promotion! Believe me, I know....'*

The next few minutes comprise the officer's jiffy-crash course in cone rifle operation. Here's a chance for a little GM low comedy improvisation: RED Troubleshooters peering interestedly down the barrel as they fondle the trigger—a shriek of anxiety as the officer tries to restrain a rookie trying to hammer a round in with the butt of his laser pistol—the squad standing at attention when a rifle goes off and a shower of metal and plaster rains down from the ceiling. A mishap requiring the activation of a clone or two. The officer gently guiding a barrel to aim in a roughly more appropriate direction. Go to town. The Three Stooges Meet *Star Wars*.

The PCs are not physically restrained. They are well advised, but inappropriately optimistic, in trying to escape. The officer snaps out his tangler (Field Weapons 15) and casually snags a few PCs in the first couple rounds, then guardbots with stunners round up the rest. The guardbots then restrain the PCs by claspings their ankles in their gripping manipulators. The guardbots appear to examine the RED-Clearance firing squad speculatively, then they hunch down as close to the ground as possible. **Note:** PCs who offer advice or assistance to the trainees or help round up fleeing traitors should receive an Official Commendation.

Finally the weapons are loaded and aimed. The first volley is fired. When the smoke clears, the targets are slightly deafened but unhurt. There are shell holes in walls, floor and bots. Attempts to escape in the confusion fail as before. Constructive suggestions are rewarded.

Just as the second volley is about to be fired, four Vulture Squadron guards enter the firing range. With them is Zach-I-VLI, who looks distracted as usual. A guard hands a message envelope to the training officer, who reads it, turns to the PCs and says 'Okay, you're to go with these guys.'

The Vultures take custody of the players, summoning bots to carry stunned or fainted characters. Zach-I does not go with the group. The Computer discovered his part in tampering with the orders last mission; Zach-I was too confused to defend himself.

The last things the Troubleshooters hear as they leave the firing range are cone rifles firing and the instructor saying, 'Now you're getting the idea!'

## Checking in

The checkpoint machine with the locking wrist-cuffs is back in place, with a new attachment: a box labeled EMERGENCY RELEASE SYSTEM. A thin, nervous ORANGE R&D technician and a burly INFRARED assistant stand by the machine. When the first character puts his hands into the machine, the burly assistant opens the box and takes out a large axe, which he holds on high while each Troubleshooter logs in.

Unless the PCs have done something really annoying lately, this time the machine works properly. (An 'accidental near-miss' is also a possibility.)

## Briefing room

The Vultures accompany the PCs as they enter the briefing room (**Tension 15**). Dan-V and Brian-B are all who's left on the bench, which is guarded by two sleek and apparently weaponless humanoid bots. These bots are of a gleaming, polished alloy marked only with a black 'belt' painted around their narrow waists. (They are actually very effective hand-to-hand combat models.) The formerly harsh downward light is now diffused by a cloud of vapor that hangs near the ceiling. This cloud is odorless (and harmless), but during the briefing it rolls ominously and changes colors.

## Choosing the team leader

Brian-B gives his usual lecture on the responsibilities of leadership, of course including the shooting of enormous numbers of traitors; he hints that whoever has shown the most trigger-happiness in prior missions (or whoever's clone) would make the most satisfactory leader, but he

only grumbles if the voting picks someone else (of course, you, friend Gamemaster, may override the voting if you wish).

## Mission assignment

Dan-V says, 'Troubleshooters, I fear I must reprimand you, for you have come close to causing our friend The Computer the most grievous simulation of sorrow.

'Because of the cursory and incomplete nature of your reports at our last meeting, The Computer was led to believe you had all committed treason. Imagine our friend's distress to discover the true treason elsewhere—Communist infiltrators from the hostile world outside, laying devious schemes to fool The Computer into destroying its own loyal tools.'

Dramatic pause. Protests that the reports were complete are met with stern reprimands and fines for insubordination.

**'But The Computer is not fooled. The fundamental Communist contradictions inevitably cause their downfall.**

**'However, The Computer knows you are loyal. Indeed, it has always suspected this of you. Now, the Computer wishes to reward you for this long-suspected loyalty, with a mission of vengeance against those who so nearly caused The Computer to prematurely activate your clones... and for those of you who are newly activated, revenge for your valiant and loyal antecedents.'**

Dan-V speaks here in the tones of a Wise Old Sorcerer in a hack sword-and-sorcery novel.

**'You will travel to the secret stronghold of the terrorists and barbarians from the World Outdoors, and there destroy them, and seal the breach they have made in the security of Alpha Complex. Troubleshooters, it is a measure of The Computer's trust in you that you have been sent on such a mission as this. We speak of places twisted to the perverted wills of Communist terrorists, ruled by an ancient, almost unimaginable evil, where death may lurk at every turn.**

**'Fortunately, The Computer has been able to interpret a document captured on your last mission. Under The Computer's direction, you should have no difficulty penetrating the Communist defenses.'**

At Brian-B's signal, a YELLOW-Clearance citizen wearing CPU service insignia enters, carrying a large metal briefcase of elaborate design. He looks around in a bewildered fashion, then works the complicated locks on the case and takes out a sheet of yellow paper and a white one.

**'Evidential Document 1132474-XTZ-Y,' he says, holding up the yellow paper, 'with Computer annotations, 1132474-XTZ-A-U, classified ULTRAVIOLET—'**

He stops short, staring at the white paper, realizing too late what he's just said.

'Traitor!' Brian-B screams, and laser shots come from everywhere. The kung-fu combots scatter the dust. The documents are undamaged.



*'Emergency measures are solely for your protection, Troubleshooter.'*





## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

A Vulture guard picks up the white paper, carefully not looking at it, and hands it to Dan-V, who drops it, unexamined, in a slot in the desk. The PCs are instructed to pick up the yellow sheet. (Players who helped shoot the courier are commended.)

Brian-B says, 'I think this makes clear the extent of treason among us. Someone doesn't want this mission completed. Someone wants you dead, my friends.'

At Dan-V's prompting, a guard hunts through the briefcase (carefully, trying not to look at it in case there are any more high-clearance documents inside) and comes up with the authorization vouchers for the map, which the Troubleshooters must all sign. The team leader is given physical possession of the map. (See Map Confiscated from Commie Warbler: Reference YCBBB.3.2.5).

Note that the actual layout of the map is unimportant. It shows a few ambushes (in cryptic symbols) and dead ends, which will save the PCs some trouble. Some is all the help they get...

Here's the key to the map:

1. Bridge Ambush
2. Exhaust Fan Trap
3. Spiral Corridor Ambush
4. Descent Shaft
5. Typical Helpful Comment

**Note:** The map does not tell the PCs how to find the secret exit. Warbler knows, but The Computer has forbidden him to reveal the information. The jackobot (see below) knows, but has orders not to reveal the information. 'Knowledge of this information for citizens of lower than ULTRAVIOLET Clearance is treason, and punishable by summary termination.' The jackobot leads blindfolded PCs to the exit point along such a confusing path that the PCs will never be able to retrace their steps.

Pause. Dan-V has dozed off again. Brian-B says:

**'Fortunately for you, you brought one of the foreign mutant Commie scum in alive. In return for his worthless traitorous life, he's going to sneak you past the Commie defenses. Do you think that will make it easy enough?'**

He gestures to the guards, then pauses and says in a dangerous tone:

**'Before we bring in this turncoat traitor, remember, that's what Commies are like: they'll sell out anybody just to preserve their own miserable lives. You take any deals this scum offers you, you're going to end up dead. And then we'll get you. All right, bring him in.'**

A side door opens and Oregon Warbler enters. He is wearing a black INFRARED coverall and several pairs of manacles from his wrists to his elbows. A vicious-looking dogbot has its teeth

planted in his ankle. He still manages to look rather bold and dangerous.

Actually Warbler is nervous, but hopeful. In his old life as Warren-B, he had Con Games skill, and he thinks he has managed to con The Computer into an escape. He is contemptuous of the Troubleshooters. His major worry is that, with the Troubleshooter team dogging him on the way to the exit, he may be caught in one of the booby traps he and his fellow Outsiders have planted on the way.

Warbler is wrong. His conning skill is faulty from disuse, and he has forgotten too much of what life is like in Alpha Complex; the greatest threat to his survival is the ordinarily screwed-up nature of life inside.

Dan-V awakes and slips right back into speech, as usual.

**'This repentant citizen, Warren-B, alias Oregon Warbler, will be your guide. He has been given a temporary INFRARED Clearance and will be subject to your orders at all times. Do remember, however, that he is one of The Computer's citizens, and his life is as important to The Computer as are your own.'**

Warbler is led back out.

### Private briefing

All characters except the team leader are instructed to report for outfitting and to wait for their leader. The leader receives the following private briefing from Brian-B.

**'The following information is extremely secret! Revealing this to any other citizen is treasonous! The only circumstance under which you are authorized to reveal this is if you are killed in the line of duty, in which case you may then reveal this information to your successor.'**

*[Brian-B pauses, cocks his head, appears to carefully consider the inherent contradiction in the former statement, then shrugs and continues.]*

**'The Computer suspects that this turncoat traitor is only pretending to cooperate, and that in fact he plans further treason. However, The Computer, in its infinite mercy, has promised to spare his life, and The Computer always keeps its promises.'**

Dan-V makes a sententious comment about The Computer's fairness and honesty. He then slumps over on his desk and begins to snore audibly.

Brian-B continues. 'But, clever, clever Internal Security operatives have devised a plan to test this Warbler's loyalty. His kit will contain weapons placed there by loyal citizens who are pretending to be Communist sympathizers. The

weapons are actually realistic dummies constructed in BFD Sector for training missions. Furthermore, and even cleverer, a grenade has been hidden in Warbler's pack, which you can detonate by pressing a special button on your Com 2 that will be installed in Outfitting. You must be very careful not to alert Warbler's suspicions about his equipment.

**'Understand that we would never send you out with a suspected traitor if there were another safer alternative. However, Warbler has revealed that there are booby traps on the way to the secret exit. You will need his knowledge to successfully avoid these perils.'**

**'Remember, The Computer has promised this traitor his life will be spared. The Computer has made a solemn promise. Warbler may not be summarily executed unless there is incontrovertible evidence of his treason. However, The Computer recognizes that occasionally mistakes may be made. Accidents will happen. You know. Weapon malfunctions. Long falls. Bad air. Or not enough of it. Do you follow me?'**

Brian-B waits for some indication of agreement from the leader, then sits down.

True to form, the fake Communist sympathizers are really Free Enterprise sympathizers who have been bribed to slip real weapons into Warbler's kit. Conspiracy upon conspiracy. Business as usual. The remote grenade has been replaced with a smoke grenade. When the leader cheerfully announces that he presses his special button, expecting Warbler to turn into a Roman candle, tell him about the thick clouds of smoke, shrug innocently and look surprised. This will convince all your players that you had no idea the grenade was fake. Warbler will take off his pack, dig around, pull out the smoke bomb, gaze contemptuously at the PCs and casually toss it aside, muttering, 'Damn rookies...'

Suddenly Dan-V snorts, wakes, blinking his eyes and gazing around in confusion. In a few seconds he realizes where he is, and he continues his briefing. Read aloud:

**'Troubleshooter, it is a measure of The Computer's trust in you that you have been sent on a mission such as this. We speak of places that have been twisted to the perverted wills of Communist terrorists, ruled by an ancient, almost unimaginable evil, where death may lurk at every turn...'**

At about the time the leader realizes he has heard this speech before, Dan-V nods off and Brian-B takes over.

**'This one ought to be easy. You're going into an area where no one has**

a right to be. Everything you see is a traitor. Everything that happens down there is treasonous. I wish I was going with you. I wish I could take a squadron of Vultures and...’ [Brian-B struggles visibly to control his excitement.] ‘...just remember, these scum almost got you killed. I know what I’d do to someone who did that to me.’

He looks at Dan-V, snoring next to him. He carefully reaches into the pocket of Dan-V’s tunic and slips out a paper. Dan-V does not wake up. Brian-B passes the paper down to the leader.

It is an authorization for one cone rifle round, type tacnuke, Clearance VIOLET. ‘For your eyes only,’ Brian-B says.

Dan-V stirs, startling Brian-B, and says ‘Serve The Computer well, and you will be well done...’

Then he goes back to sleep.

Brian-B hands the leader the mission equipment requisitions (Display Equipment List #3, at the end of the mission) and dismisses him to join his fellows for outfitting. In addition to the items on the list, Oregon Warbler carries a backpack. This is Oregon’s personal pack, and he discourages others from inspecting it, but he is INFRARED and easily coerced. The pack contains:

- 30m coil rope
- 2-day ration kit
- 1-liter water bottle
- (20) Pocket butane lighters<sup>1</sup>
- (10) Hand lenses
- Infraspecs
- Knife
- Laser pistol with GREEN barrel<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Intended as trade goods for Outdoors.

<sup>2</sup> Concealed in a special pouch; cannot be found without a thorough search of the bag.

## Outfitting

The Quartermaster staff are unusually subdued as they kit out the players. They are nervous about being used in Internal Security’s plot to ‘arm’ Warbler—they think, rightly, that they will get blamed if something goes wrong with this dumb plan. After a minimum of obstructionism they bring out the Troubleshooters’ equipment, including the two bots.

The two bots appear to be in good condition. If asked about their prior service records (always a good idea, though the team is stuck with these bots anyway), the jackobot replies that it has served long, well and truly in Thixotropic End-Use Element Transport Maintenance. Anyone who shows knowledge that the bot used to be in Sewer Repair incurs a 50cr fine for possessing classified information. The docbot proudly affirms it has always been a docbot Model 8 (three numbers higher than the usual Model 5). If asked its specialty, it replies it has the latest in

Preventive Medicine programs. The team leader signs for the jackobot; the team medical officer signs out the docbot.

The team leader must present his requisition for the tacnuke round. If he does not, he receives a fine for disobeying orders. If he lets the other team members in on the fact that he has the round, he gets fined for leaking secrets (he may pass it on to a successor leader without penalty). Note that the basic equipment list does not include any cone rifles; the team members may requisition them, going through the standard hassles over high-clearance weapons. The tacnuke comes in a pop-top rations cylinder exactly like the ones in all packs. Under no circumstances does the QM staff allow the canister to be opened at this time; opening it ahead of schedule is not treason, but don’t tell the player that.

As the QM staff distributes the weapons, they repeatedly reassure the PCs that all the weapons are perfectly reliable, and that it is just a coincidence that all of them have BFD Sector production serial numbers. (These weapons have only a normal chance of malfunction.)

If a player suspiciously asks you about the significance of particular production serial numbers, say that only a real weapons expert would notice such details. If the QM staff are asked, they over-enthusiastically assure the PCs it is ‘completely unimportant. Totally irrelevant. No problem. Honest.’

**GM note:** This is one of the prime principles of **PARANOIA**. First, specifically draw the players’ attention to a minor detail. Repeatedly call their attention to that detail. Then assure them that detail is completely unimportant. Then keep calling their attention to the detail from time to time. They soon *wonder what you are up to*. That is called paranoia. See?

## The jackobot

This bot has been programmed with the location of the tunnel entrance and the tunnel map—though not The Computer’s annotations. It will not share any of this information with the players, though if asked it leads them to any location it knows of.

Operating on general instructions to protect Computer property, it intervenes should any citizen try to harm another citizen: that includes Warbler, though not anyone encountered in the tunnel. Should Warbler (or anybody else) commit treason within the bot’s view, it ceases to protect the traitor and may be ordered by the team leader to attack.

Whenever something important is damaged or destroyed (something like a Troubleshooter), the jackobot recommends that an immediate report be made to The Computer, and that a withdrawal to a secure position be made until a replacement can be delivered.

This is your GM trick to recommend a brief delay in the action to permit clones to be activated

and to join the party. This mission is likely to cause a number of loyal Troubleshooters to shuffle off this mortal coil, and in the interests of keeping all the players involved, get their clones on the spot as quickly as possible.

However, there is no guarantee that the leader or other Troubleshooters will listen to this whining jackobot, even when it gives such good advice. If that is the case, and the PCs push on without waiting for clone replacements to arrive, the bot constantly reassures the party that reinforcements and replacements are surely on their way. It chooses the worst times to make this cheerful observation—usually when the party is obviously doomed.

The jackobot was programmed to work underwater (actually undersewage) and prefers a submerged environment. Whenever it sees water—which will be frequently in the tunnel—it will jump in, its treads throwing up rooster-trails. It can be ordered not to do this, but the order must be repeated for every puddle.

## The docbot

This bot carries an experimental Preventive Medicine program in addition to its normal docbot programming. Unfortunately, the program has a very literal interpretation of ‘preventive’. The bot is constantly running to the aid of Troubleshooters whom it thinks may need medical attention—e.g., they are all wet and might catch cold, they are eating and might choke, they are handling weapons that might go off accidentally. A Troubleshooter who becomes angry with the bot is a likely candidate for protective sedation. In a firefight, the bot runs around like a duralloy Gunga Din, trying to reach potential targets ahead of beams or bullets.

There is no way to stop this behavior, even for the authorized operator, since bots may not be ordered to contradict their programming (though Con Games might work).

The docbot normally ignores Warbler, though it can be ordered to heal him if he is actually wounded.

And away we go...

When the PCs have collected all the equipment authorized for the mission, wheedled and whined for other equipment, signed all the forms and endured the bored resentment of the quartermaster staff, they are ready to proceed on the mission. The Troubleshooters should all look to their leader for orders.

The leader may be fairly hazy about where to go next. This is perfectly correct. This is **PARANOIA**. Only the jackobot knows where to go next. The information is classified, and he will under no circumstances reveal it. He does not volunteer his help, for fear of being too intrusive on the leader’s authority. However, he does sit around close to the leader and hum and beep quietly (the bot equivalent of whistling to himself), waiting for the leader to notice him and ask the right questions.



When prompted, the jackobot will direct the party to the sector Vehicular Boarding Area.

**GM note:** Take every opportunity to repeat this little gag with the jackobot sitting under the leader's elbow, humming and clicking to himself. This serves several purposes:

- ☞ You can use the jackobot to prompt the PCs with hints when they get bogged down or when they sit around too long in a boring fashion.
- ☞ You can build a dependency on the jackobot for information and guidance. Once this dependency is established, you can jerk the PCs around a bit. Occasionally give the jackobot lines like, 'I don't know. I'm just a little bot,' or 'You're the leader. You ought to know where the hell we are,' or 'Well, if you'd asked me before, I had this swell idea, but now you've got things so screwed up...' If the players start looking for opportunities to push the jackobot down deep shafts, you're doing your job properly.

## The mission

The Troubleshooters proceed to the Vehicular Boarding Area (**Tension 5**) where a large autocar, without driver, is waiting for them. Six guards hold Oregon Warbler at gunpoint by the autocar. Warbler wears his INFRARED coveralls and backpack, and a smug expression. A guard steps forward, asks for the mission leader, then produces a stack of forms that must be signed before Warbler may be transferred into the party's custody. When the forms are signed, the guards chuckle, poke Warbler a few times and wander off in search of entertainment.

The jackobot must be asked to pilot the autocar to the location of the secret exit. The bot sits patiently humming and beeping until someone notices and gives him orders. (Warbler knows the way, but he won't cooperate. Period. Notwithstanding a master's degree in Intimidation or Interrogation. And none of the Troubleshooters know the route.)

When ordered to take the party to the secret exit, the jackobot asks everyone to board the autocar. It opaques the autocar canopy (to prevent the PCs from observing the route), then plugs into a direct computer guidance link and rockets off on its way. The acceleration and maneuvering is very rough; the PCs bounce around the interior of the autocar like pinballs (a perfect time for accidental discharge of weapons). The jackobot hums and beeps merrily to himself. This goes on forever.

## The Enchanted Plumbing Forest

When the autocar finally crashes to a halt, the bot makes the canopy transparent. Read aloud:

**The first thing you note in the dim light shed by the autocar's interior illumination is that the autocar is wedged between two very large pipes that extend up out of sight like great columns. Now that the whimpering of your companions and the whine of the overstrained autocar engine have stopped, you notice a thunderous background roar and vibration—perhaps of machinery or great volumes of fluid flowing through giant conduits.**

**The only light is from the autocar interior. Barely visible is a forest of glistening, damp pipes and valves with a few narrow pathways through the twisted maze. From time to time a bot is glimpsed racing along these pathways in the darkness.**

**When the jackobot opens the autocar doors, the full force of the din washes over the occupants. Only shouting carries over the racket, and even then it is difficult to understand what is said. The air is moist and full of strange and unpleasant odors. The jackobot shuts off the interior lights, and the occupants are suddenly in total darkness. 'We have arrived, citizens. Now, follow me to the tunnel entrance, please. Thank you for your prompt cooperation.'**

**There is a tremendous crash. It sounds something like a jackobot falling out of the autocar door. 'Perhaps citizens will be more comfortable using their flashlights. Thank you for your cooperation.'**

When the PCs have left the autocar and organized themselves with flashlights, the bot sets off at a rapid pace along a pathway through the pipe forest (**Tension 0**). The path is so narrow that single file is necessary. As GM, make sure you know in what order the group travels.

After a few yards a bot comes rocketing out of the dark along the narrow pathway, headed straight for the party. The PCs and bots must make Violence/Agility checks to scramble up pipes or dodge under machinery along the path to avoid the oncoming bot. Anyone still on the pathway is Snafued in the next round.

As the PCs struggle through the dark behind the jackobot, a few more perilous encounters with bots occur until Warbler begins to fear for his life. He then suggests a better way through the maze, along elevated catwalks accessible by ladders that rise toward the ceiling along the walls of the vast corridors. There are no bots up there, but the jackobot can slowly pull itself up the ladder

by its manipulators, and the docbot can climb the ladder like a Troubleshooter.

Warbler cheerfully tries to engineer an unfortunate fall for careless Troubleshooters. He does not use his weapons here, so close to The Computer.

## The descent

The team arrives at what appears to be a plain wall panel. If closely inspected, a light spot and screw holes are visible, where a sign, identifying this as Deep Access Shaft 1802, has been removed. The panel opens easily with a screwdriver (the jackobot has one).

Within is a dingy, cylindrical metal shaft four meters across, going up out of sight into gray haze, downward into total darkness. Every ten meters, a metal flange a handsbreadth wide runs all the way round the tube. There is a clammy downdraft that changes every 15 minutes to a warm updraft that smells of dead orchids. Just inside the door is a meter-square platform with a broken railing.

Warbler knows the safest way up and down: a pair of ten-meter ladders with locking clamps on each end, that fold to backpack size. The ladders may be leapfrogged down the tube. They are hidden nearby. Warbler only reveals the ladders if he feels his life is in imminent danger; that is, if some PC plan for descent seems likely to get him killed. The jackobot prevents attacks on Warbler, but doesn't object if they ask him questions (like, 'How do you Commie scum usually get up and down this thing?').

Each character's knapsack contains a 30-meter coil of nylon rope and some cable splices. The rope has a (labeled) tensile strength of 1,000 kilos. The splices (not labeled) support 500 kilos if properly used. A character with Mountain-Climbing (an unlikely secret skill) or Habitat Engineering skill automatically applies a splice correctly. Anyone else makes a Hardware check. Improperly applied splices look fine, and support a normal hard tug, but give at an inopportune moment.

The power winch is a cylinder about the size of a gallon paint can. It has an On/Off switch and a Direction switch; its speed is not adjustable. It has a labeled rating of 500 kilos. Actually it begins to whine at 300, smokes at 400 and gives way completely at 450. It has a small Emergency Brake lever, which is useless beyond 100 kilos. There are also some deadman pulleys with hooks.

A character with gear weighs 75 kilos (nobody pumps iron in Alpha Complex). The bots weigh 250 kilos each.

The shaft is 70 meters deep. There are several ways to descend the shaft without the ladders. The simplest way is to jump, though hardly the safest. Encourage the PCs to improvise variously life-threatening methods of descent, many of

which overlook the necessity of a return ascent. No coaching! However, you may gaze at the ceiling gap-jawed in horror when they devise terrible plans.

If asked, the jackobot has a pretty good idea. He suggests that the safest way to descend (other than the folding ladders) is to splice five coils of rope into an endless loop, hook a deadman pulley to the platform, then have the jackobot hold the rope at the top while one character descends with the winch, using it for speed control; then winch down the remaining characters one or two at a time, leaving the rope in place for the return ascent.

The base of the shaft is a metal grille. Twenty meters below is a swirling pool of a red-lit fluid, looking much like molten metal (the characters have never seen lava, even if the players have seen movies about doom-laden temples). If a bot falls more than 30 meters, it punches right through the grille and falls into the fluid (which is lukewarm water, rancid with chemical waste and lit by bacteria). The bot is not lost: it traces the team (the jackobot by internal maps, the docbot by biosensors) and shows up again at some unexpected moment, draped in weird algae and smelling like The Computer knows what.

The entrance to the tunnel is a large door, like a submarine hatch, on the wall of the shaft. Above the door are several indicator lamps, none of which operate.

## All hope abandon, ye who enter here

Presenting this section will require a little thinking, preparation and improvisation from the GM. ('I Never Promised You a Rose Garden').

First, you have to imagine and visualize the tunnel for yourself, then prepare how you will present it to your players. Read the general description below, then sit down and think about it until you can visualize the windings, the metal obstructions, the noises, the odors, the darkness, the knee-deep pools. Think of deep, abandoned mineshafts, then fill them with the kind of metal and moisture you expect in World War II submarine movies. Add the roar you'd expect in a steel foundry, and the odors, sloshings and noisome fluids you'd expect to find in a waste treatment plant.

Now. Describing it to the players. Here's where the improvisation part comes in. You are going to have to describe the tunnel as the PCs would see it as they wander along, peering into the murky, dimly illuminated surroundings with their puny flashlights.

Some folks seem to be real comfortable making up the descriptions as they go along. Some will have to prepare little detailed sections, perhaps even jot down some notes, so they will be well-prepared enough to smoothly present the surroundings.

If you have good roleplayers, you can count on them helping you in fleshing out the details as they get into the spirit of crawling around in foul-smelling, dark, wet tunnels. They'll remind you that they are soaking wet and freezing in the fierce drafts (that you didn't even mention, but which they naturally assumed in dark, mysterious tunnels). Go with the flow.

On the other hand, some players think you are responsible for perfect knowledge about your setting. These folks are in for a rude awakening in the world of *PARANOIA*. If they keep bugging you about details and contradictions in your descriptions, their characters should have special accidents that make it hard for them to perceive their environments. Like being sprayed with nasty chemicals which blind them (temporarily, if you're feeling nice). Or deafening noises. Or stunning blows to the head which make them dizzy and unable to correlate the sense data they receive. Batter their PCs a little, then give them a second chance to cooperate in building the setting rather than chiseling at it for tactical advantages. Privately remind wargaming and competitive players that Napoleonic miniatures and chess are still commercially available, but tonight you are playing *PARANOIA*.

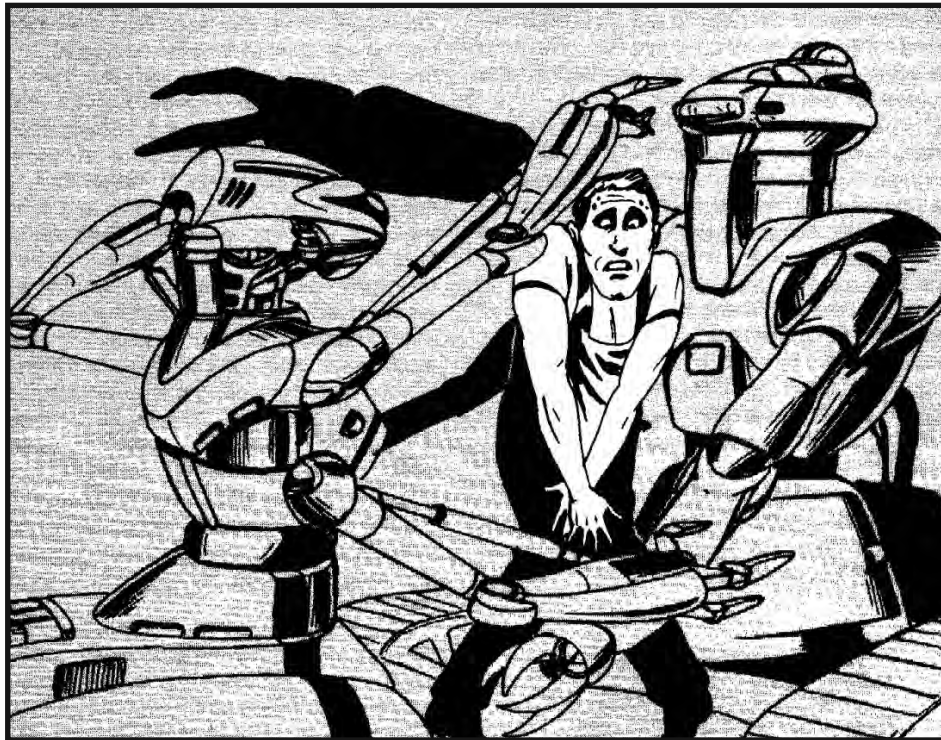
Finally, go through the list of encounters and pick the ones you think the players will like the best, or that you are most enthusiastic about developing for their entertainment and torment. Give some thought to staging these, then set them up as little separate episodes with brief transition periods of tunnel crawling description. Be flexible with the encounters. Sometimes a specific encounter will fire the players'

imagination, and they'll want to spend an hour on it. Sometimes they won't be intrigued by the situation—their restlessness will be obvious, and it's time for you to have the attackers withdraw suddenly in terror, or to improvise some other quick resolution that permits you to go on to something that amuses them more.

The best thing about encounter sections like this is that none of the episodes are strictly essential to the plot, so you can skip ahead to the next detailed plot section when you and your players get tired of improvising. In my campaign, it's called 'Fade to black. And now for a word from our sponsor.' Time to stretch and munch.

## The tunnel: General description

It is dark. It is wet. It is steamy hot, until it turns bitterly cold. It is lined with intrusive metal objects, which constantly trip the players or bonk them in the head. It is so noisy that people who are not standing next to one another may not communicate normally (com units help only in talking to someone too far away even to yell at). Long stretches of it are flooded ankle- or knee- or hip-deep, which makes the jackobot very happy. Any weapon that gets immersed must be checked for malfunction. Backpacks keep their contents dry against splashes of water, but not total immersion. Some of the floor is stone, which is slippery; other stretches are metal grilles, which clang loudly when walked on. Weird organic stuff grows up from the grilles and cracks in the floor.



Troubleshooter in need of Con Games skill.



The PCs ask Oregon Warbler if he knows a better way through this place. He very much wishes he did. The best he can do is give warning of some of the deathtraps.

## ■ *War of the bots*

The PCs will almost certainly want to put Warbler out in the lead. If they do so, the jackobot protests that this presents a risk to valuable Computer property. Then the docbot begins arguing that the Troubleshooters are much more valuable than this INFRARED citizen; its programming tells it so. For example:

**Doc:** The traitor is obviously an INFRARED, and obviously of less value to The Computer. Therefore the traitor should go in the lead. That is logical.

**Jacko:** But I have been entrusted with the safety of this citizen, who is obviously of special value to The Computer because of his special knowledge. This resource must be protected at all costs. This is my programming. That is more logical than your stupid argument, which clearly reveals the limits of your processing capacity.

**Doc:** You can't process your way out of a plastic bag. Your artificer must have been a Commie mutant moron.

**Jacko:** Sez you. Your bot brain has obviously been exposed to hard radiation. You haven't the processing capacity of a digital watch.

**Doc:** Bolt barrel!

**Jacko:** Vat plug!

**Doc:** Commie tool!

**Jacko:** Diddle chip!

After the argument has gone on for a few minutes, the docbot pulls rank, pointing out that it is a Model 8, while the jackobot is only a 300-series. The jackobot grudgingly concedes, humming at a low frequency and tapping its manipulators in frustration.

From this moment on, the jackobot looks for an opportunity to plug the docbot, and make it look like an accident; in other words, it starts acting just like any other citizen.

## ■ *The tunnel: Encounters*

Many adventure game scenarios feature long treks through subterranean passages filled with hostile traps and creatures. In keeping with this honorable tradition, we have provided you with an ample supply of hostile traps and creatures.

Often people are moved to ask why all that stuff is waiting down there. In this case, the answer is simple: it is all down there to kill teams of Troubleshooters who come poking around. We have departed from tradition in that nobody here has any treasure. This is the sort of innovative mission design you have come to expect from **PARANOIA**.

Three lists of encounters follow. The first describes things that are cryptically noted on the sketch map. Warbler remembers these traps well, and will do his best to get the Troubleshooters killed in them while escaping himself. Naturally, Warbler puts his own life above killing Troubleshooters.

The second list covers traps that may be sprung wherever and whenever you feel like it. They are not given on the map. Warbler knows of these traps 50% of the time; otherwise he has forgotten, or never knew.

The third list is tunnel hazards other than purposely set traps. Warbler is aware of most of these, but he has no way of knowing when or where one may show up.

## ■ *List 1: Mapped hazards*

**The divine wind:** Ten meters down a side corridor is an enormous exhaust fan rewired by the Sierra Clubbers as a large-scale food processor. Microswitches under the walkway activate the fan. It may be disarmed for a few minutes (long enough to get past the trigger area) by opening a junction box on the wall and pressing a red button within.

If activated, the fan pulls a person right off his feet, and even drags bots along slowly. There are plenty of handholds; it requires a Violence/Agility check to grab one and a series of Violence checks to hang on.

Oregon casually observes that he remembers that this fan is dangerous, but that he doesn't recall why. If the PCs can be tricked into wandering onto the activating switches in the process of investigating the fan, fine.

If the PCs are more suspicious and cautious, and they evince a cheerful willingness to use Oregon as a mine detector, he tries to dry gulch the PCs by lying about the length of the period of time that the fan is disarmed. 'Oh, it should be safe for a few minutes. Hmm. I suppose you expect me to go through first?' He pushes the switch then strolls casually through the fan.

When the second PC has made it through the fan, there is a momentary warning hum, then the fan springs to life. The third PC is right at the fan—he gets to choose which way to jump. Then all PCs on the far side of the fan are blown down the tunnel away from the fan. All PCs on the near side of the fan are drawn toward it.

Characters who hit the fan become thousands of julienne fries in seconds. A bot will jam the blades, while getting Busted. The fan may be stopped by getting everybody off the trigger area, blasting the junction boxes or blasting the fan (good luck lining up a shot) for Busted damage or more (use the Object Damage table). A grenade tossed into the fan has a 50% chance of hitting the blades and exploding for effect, 50% of being sucked through harmlessly.

**Special Rollover:** A broad, ascending-spiral corridor that ascends ten meters in two coils of

ten meters diameter (a one in six slope, about nine degrees). The coils are not quite aligned, and the top of the spiral has a trap door leading straight down to its lowest end.

Five ambushers, one with a projectile weapon, the rest with melee weapons, are watching through the trap door. When the party appears and begins to ascend the spiral, the ambushers roll heavy cylinders (old compressed-gas tanks) down the spiral. The cylinders make a lot of noise, but are hard to dodge. When total confusion reigns below, the attackers descend from the trap door on ropes.

The corroded old gas tanks are labeled Oxygen and Acetylene and Explosive and other amusing things. If you're really in a fun-loving mood, have one or more of them actually contain gas.

If Oregon is being marched along at point, he mentions that this is a good place for an ambush, and tries to subtly encourage the armed Troubleshooters to proceed in front up the spiral tunnel to seek out any ambushers. 'I'm not armed, guys! How much help am I going to be?'

If forced up the tunnel in front, he listens carefully for the sound of rolling objects, and runs for his life when he hears anything, hoping that the less-well-prepared Troubleshooters hesitate to see what's coming, and that their battered bodies delay the descent of the offending heavy objects.

**They're Coming to Get You, Jessica:** Four ambushers with melee weapons and snorkels, stationed at a narrow, unrailed catwalk over a flooded area: when they hear the party approaching, they submerge and wait for the sound of boots overhead. Hands emerge from the dark water to grab ankles.

Oregon knows to flatten immediately on the catwalk and crawl ahead as fast as possible. When flat on the catwalk, one is protected somewhat from clubbing attacks (50% cover), and while prone, it is impossible to be pulled off into the dark, waist-deep water where Troubleshooters, with their armor and slugthrower and laser weapons, will be at a serious disadvantage.

## ■ *List 2: Unmapped traps*

**Steam ambush:** Warm, opaque vapor fills the tunnel. Visibility, including with infrared goggles (but not bot radar) is reduced to a meter or so. Lasers 'bloom' and are useless beyond five meters; projectile weapons are unaffected.

A group of five Sierra Clubbers wait silently ahead of the foggy area, listening carefully for the sounds of the approaching PCs. When the PCs seem to be deep enough in the fog, the Sierra Clubbers start lobbing substantial pieces of scrap metal into the fog toward the approximate position of the PCs. Roll 1d20; only on a 20 will a PC be hit, and even if hit, the damage is O5W.

Nonetheless, the rain of unidentified objects from unseen ambushers should induce some panic and aggression in the Troubleshooters.

## YELLOW CLEARANCE ENTERING THE TUNNEL

Oregon scrambles back the way he came, covering his head. If the PCs charge forward, the Sierra Clubbers withdraw immediately, and the advantage of darkness and familiarity with the territory permits them to escape without interference.

**Collapsed tunnel ambush:** A portion of roof and ancillary piping and conduits has fallen, or been pulled down, to block the tunnel. There is a narrow detour passage to one side; the characters must walk single file, and long weapons like cone rifles may not be held ready.

Fifty meters down this narrow passage is a small alcove where two truculent Defenders of Mother Nature lurk. Once the PCs are heard to be well on their way along the passage, they begin to yell threats like: 'Hey, if you crones come any closer, you're history!' 'Okay, back the way you came, or we blow the tunnel.'

If the PCs aren't cowed by this bluff, the two fanatics wait on either side of the narrow passage to jump the first one through. One fanatic grapples while the other tries to delay the next one in line for a few rounds. The idea is to take a prisoner, then split. This is not a very clever idea, nor is it strikingly well-planned. Let the PCs pound and laser these two into pulp.

Oregon pulls a variant of 'Oh, Br'er Fox, please don't throw me in that briarpatch!' 'Oh, please don't make me go first through here! I'll do anything you want, but PLEASE don't make me go first down this narrow little passage!' He'll roll his eyes, howl—the whole bit. This is, of course, intended to goad the sadistic, paranoid Troubleshooters into forcing Oregon to proceed first 'against his will'.

However, if Oregon is forced, whining and protesting, ahead of the other Troubleshooters he pretends to be completely terrified. When he reaches the alcove, he gives the password ('Remember Love Canal!') and he and the two fanatics make a run for it. This leaves the party with only the jackobot as a guide. Oregon is unable to resist taunting the PCs as he trots off into the darkness. 'Born and bred in the briarpatch.'

**Plain old ambush:** Four defenders of the faith jump the party. Two have melee weapons; two have ranged weapons not more devastating than laser pistols. They may be armed with Old Reckoning weapons—single-shot black powder slugthrowers, Colt revolvers with centuries-old ammunition, lethal-appearing exercise equipment or Electroluxes.

**Deadfall:** An underwater tripwire causes a crate of junk to fall on the section of walkway where the victim is standing. The victim must make a Violence/Agility check to jump clear. (Make sure the PC specifies the direction he jumps in.) Otherwise the victim is wounded. If the victim explicitly braces himself against the object's fall ('I crouch and cover my head.').he is only Snafued.

**Next-man-in-line deadfall:** As above, except the crate of junk falls 3–4 meters behind the one who trips the wire. Figure out who is 3–4 meters behind the point man and clobber him.

Now for the *pièce de résistance*. Tell the PC who trips the wire that he felt the wire with his foot, and that he has time to jump. Ask him which way he jumps. If you are lucky, he will jump backward into the crate. This is a GM sucker play. You will think you are so clever. Your player will be fitting you for a cement overcoat.

**A message to Garcia:** Two ambushers are hidden in deep cover. As the party approaches, one starts running back to warn the defenders at the exit; the other begins shooting down a 40-meter section where the passage widens considerably (slingshot, roll 17 or higher, O5W impact) to cover the messenger's escape. The shooter stands for a few rounds of fire, then withdraws. The runner should evade the PCs unless they are a lot smarter than I am, or unless there is a real creative use of mutant powers.

### List 3: Arbitrary hazards

**Batbots:** A swarm of small airborne mini-flybots appears. These are minor-maintenance bots armed with pliers and screwdrivers. They are more a nuisance than a danger, though if a bunch of them land on an unguarded weapon, bot or device, they can render it useless in seconds. They are extremely hard to hit in the air (you may want to have attacks fail automatically), but easy to bash while landed.

**Steam:** As the steam ambush above, except nothing comes out of the fog. No menace—just ominous echoes.

**Unpleasant puddle:** The team is faced with a stretch of tunnel armpit-deep in some vile substance. The only way across without wading (and becoming semi-permanently slimed) is to hand-over-hand it along the ceiling pipes. This calls for one or more Violence/Agility checks. The docbot has no trouble. The jackobot plows happily into the slime. And thenceforth exudes an odor that would make a ghoulish gag.

**Really nasty puddle:** As above, except the puddle is more than just obnoxious: the pool contains a plastic substance that hardens into a thick skin on an object when the plastic is exposed to the air. There is a thin skin on the pool that may warn the PCs of the nature of this substance.

Treat any object or character immersed in this substance as though it had been given a generous application of a sprayed plastic substance like Krylon. It has to be peeled carefully off any surface, and if it gets into the works of any machinery, electronics gear or weaponry, the item either malfunctions dramatically or fails to function at all. The item must be dismantled and carefully cleaned before it can be used again.

**Collapsed tunnel section:** As on List 2, except no ambush.

**Pressure venting:** A 50-kph wind blows through the tunnel. Characters may be knocked down; light objects, like the map, may be blown away.

**Wandering botster:** A docbot with deranged programming wanders the tunnels, looking for its designated operator (who has been dead for a long time). If ignored, it is harmless but annoying; if attacked, it charges in, screaming things like 'Eat my gastroscope, Commie pathogens!'



'And away go Troubleshooters, right down the drain.'



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

If not destroyed somehow, it will show up again. If disabled and salvaged, it is worth a commendation and cash credit award.

**Evil high priest:** A crazed former High Programmer, who has been lost down here for years with no company but a tattered roleplaying rule set. He spouts dialog straight out of a bad fantasy novel. He failed his Insanity check. He may cast the Finger of Death spell once—that is, he has a sleeve-mounted ULTRAVIOLET laser pistol with one shot remaining. Weapons don't get any more illegal than this. Finding him for The Computer is worth a 100cr bonus. The rule set, of course, is classified ULTRAVIOLET.

**St. Schmo's fire:** A ball of light, looking very much like a plasma generator discharge, comes tumbling up the tunnel. It sparkles and sizzles but is harmless. Further down the hall the PCs find the device that produced the ball of light. It weighs as much as a tugboat, and its function is totally obscure.

**The missing 18 minutes:** Someone spots a briefcase wedged into the piping. It is full of secrets somebody tried to sell to the Commies years ago. The documents contain notes on certain High Programmers engaged in a competition that exploits low-clearance Troubleshooters. (For further details, see 'Vapors Don't Shoot Back' in this book. Yes, we're recycling narrative elements from earlier missions. Sharp, eh?)

**Weapons cache:** A bag of cherry bombs and bottle rockets. Warbler knows what these are; the PCs will have to study them to discover their function.

**Wild card:** Anything you think you can put over on the players. The Flying Dutchman, Judge Crater, E.T., Killer Penguins, mad game designers, whatever.

### The exit

The secret exit is located some 25 kilometers from the fringes of Alpha Complex proper. This is beyond the range of Com 1 units, and due to all the water, wires and metal, Com 2s begin having reception problems. This makes the bots very insecure; they will not actually mutiny, but they whine a lot.

The exit route goes through an abandoned nuke plant (see the map 'Mission Three: Abandoned Nuke Plant' at the end of the mission).

The exit itself is inside the containment vessel of an ancient fission reactor. The reactor core was removed centuries ago, and there is no longer a radiation hazard; however, there are lots of warning signs, which the Sierra Clubbers who man the exit hope will scare off anyone who has accidentally wandered 25 clicks down a totally hostile tunnel. (Nobody said they were bright.)

### The defenders

The lower-level defenders include ten RED-Clearance grunts, called Boo-Boos, five

intermediate levels, called Yogis, and the club leader, Mr. Ranger Sir. There are also two Outsiders similar to Oregon Warbler, any ambushers who escaped to return here and Smokey the Bearbot.

Smokey is an old-model bot programmed for fire control. It carries a shovel (hand weapon, S5K impact) and a cryochemical fire extinguisher (equivalent to an ice gun, with spray fire ability—S3K impact). Smokey's first priority is to put out fires. Its second priority is to put out people starting fires. After that it takes orders from Mr. Ranger Sir, but it is 1) profoundly slow and 2) profoundly stupid. It is very entertaining to watch in action, hacking with its shovel while growling, 'Only you! Only you!'

### Entering the complex

A short metal stairway leads from the tunnel up to a clean, dry, dimly-lit corridor. One end of the corridor is blocked by rubble. The other leads to the reactor facility lobby.

The lobby contains some potted plants (all near-dead from lack of sunlight), and a large steel desk mounting numerous switches and monitor screens. All of this equipment is long dead, but this is not immediately obvious, and the desk should be described as looking like the security stations all Alphans know so well.

If the team managed to slaughter every ambusher they encountered in the tunnel, they may surprise the defenders. If any ambushers escaped, they still surprise the PCs on a roll of 16 or higher (some other hazard got them before they could report).

If the Complex has been alerted to the Troubleshooters's approach, there will be three to six defenders here, armed with truncheons, spears and one or two laser pistols. If there is no alert, there will be one person present, reading an ancient copy of *CoEvolution Quarterly*, with an ORANGE laser pistol in easy reach. The only warning system is running around and yelling loud.

The original decor of the complex was Industrial Bland. The Clubbers have tried to dress things up with tattered posters, and plants and terraria; the cell leader even has his own aquarium, with a few neon tetras and a walking carp that gets loose now and then. Most of the nature projects are either dying from incompetent care or have gotten out of control (there is one room entirely controlled by an extended gerbil family). There is a fair amount of small disgusting wildlife at large in the walls and ventilating system. This does terrible things to the air quality. Some of the Clubbers burn incense, which doesn't really help.

The posters most likely to impress the Troubleshooters are the ones left over from the reactor's active days, things like instructions for operation of the emergency showers and field amputation in case of plutonium-salt

contamination, admonitions to check pocket dosimeters, etc.

### A cordial reception

If present and alive, Oregon Warbler may be used as a hostage to get past the guards. The only defenders who will attack Warbler are his fellow Outsiders, Mr. Ranger Sir, and Smokey (who doesn't know any better).

If the Troubleshooters arrive unannounced, they might be able to bluff their way inside. (Don't let them forget about all the radiation warnings.)

However they get in, you know it's going to turn into a gunfight before very long. Mr. Ranger Sir details half his troops to defend the Vault; he leads the rest to the Dome entrance. Smokey will probably be on his own.

At the first sign of trouble, the Outsiders go to the Vault; if the battle turns against them, they snatch up as much tradeable gear as they can, including *The Black Box*, and run for the Dome. The defenders do not stop them unless Mr. Ranger Sir orders them to. Oregon Warbler does his best to escape from the PCs, join his fellow Outsiders and get the hell out of here.

### Lower level: The clubbers' quarters

This is the sort of facility secret societies dream about: a self-contained headquarters free from Computer observation. The actual ambiance is somewhere between a bomb shelter and a POW camp, but everyone has his own idea of heaven.

These rooms were originally the personnel areas of the reactor complex. They include a kitchen where the rare and exotic foods of Outdoors are prepared, an auditorium where Club meetings are held and where visitors from Outdoors give instruction in Outdoor-world skills, a barracks for the staff and apartments for high-ranking Club members and Outsiders. There is also the Vault, a blast- and radiation-shielded room originally intended for storage of radiation-sensitive equipment (and as an emergency refuge in case of an, er, 'incident' at the reactor), which is now used to store the Club's most treasured possessions, including—you knew it was coming—The Black Box.

### Upper level: The reactor dome

*Those of you who know something about reactor design, bear with us on the following: This is not a real reactor, it's a movie reactor. If the players complain, tell them 'the Club made a lot of changes.' Then fine them for possession of classified information.*

An elevator and four flights of stairs lead to the lower Dome deck, which is circular, three meters wide and runs entirely around the Dome interior.

The walls are lined with monitoring equipment, which the Clubbers keep brightly polished; none of it has worked for 300 years.

The inside edge of the deck looks down on a pit: ten meters below is a pool of dark and oily fluid, with pipes and brackets breaking the surface. From deep within comes a cool blue glow. Any PC who has served in Power Services is in for an Insanity check at the sight of what he thinks is an unshielded swimming-pool reactor. Actually it's bacterial luminescence. There used to be a handrail around the deck, but most of it is missing, and the remaining pieces will break 50% of the time under a character's weight, 100% under a bot's.

Two metal stairways, one on each side of the Dome, lead up ten meters to an open grid platform in the center of the Dome. The platform has a 360-degree overlook on the deck below. There is no railing. There is some equipment up here, desks and consoles hauled in from other parts of the complex for decorative value—none of it works, though it could be hurled over the edge at those below.

Here are stationed the Dome Rangers, four loyal-unto-death defenders. They will not leave the platform unless physically thrown off, and if they survive they will do anything to come back and keep fighting. They have little contact with the Boo-Boos and Yogis, and may shoot them by accident, especially if they try to board the platform.

At the very center of the platform, a steel ladder leads straight up, a last ten meters to The Exit Itself—a chunk broken out of the containment dome. (One shudders to think how.) The hole is covered with an epoxy weather panel, but not locked or sealed. They're not afraid of attacks from Outdoors.

A band of light strips around the edge of the platform illuminates the Dome. Shooting out these lights leaves no source of illumination except the blue glow from the pool—unless someone gets the exit panel open, in which case glorious sunlight floods in, startling the heck out of everybody.

The Outsiders try to get out. If things look really desperate, Mr. Ranger Sir also takes the exit. If Mr. Ranger Sir goes, the rest of the staff will follow, except for Smokey (who can't climb ladders) and the Dome Rangers (who fight to the death).

This is the climactic fight in the multilevel set, just like at the end of a James Bond movie. (Ken Adam's reactor for *Dr. No* is especially relevant here.) And just like those movies, we're going to trash the place. Make sure that lots of dramatic climbing up ladders and falling off balconies takes place. Throw equipment around. Crack the walls (see next section). Blast chunks out of the walkways, creating new hazards. Dump characters into the water and let them practice their Swimming skills. Wreck things; what the heck, they're paid for.



*'Only you! Only you!'*

Should a Troubleshooter manage to get to the exit, he sees countryside and sky all around—the complex has been completely buried by some upheaval, and the exit is at ground level—and suffer an Insanity check at the sight of the Outdoors. Then he sees the Vultures coming (see 'Death from above', below). If not, you may wish to warn the team by having the attack theme music for the Squadron come over the Com units. A cassette player provides an exciting counterpoint to events. Wagner is always popular, but you might also consider 'Ghost Riders in the Sky', 'Up in the Air, Junior Birdmen' or the legendary 'Windy' by the Jefferson Airplane.

## Sealing the exit (or, remember what you came here for?)

If the Troubleshooters kill all the defenders, they may take their time in destroying the complex. But who are we trying to kid? The practical question is, where may a large bundle of high explosives be detonated so as to cause a collapse?

## In the Dome

The Dome is quite weak. As evidence of this, when a cone rifle round or a bot hits the wall, cracks should appear. It is still not a job for hand tools, but a couple of demo charges against the wall, or thrown into the central pool (water transmits shockwaves very, very well) start the structure on the road to Humpty Dumpty. A tacnuke detonated anywhere within the Dome also collapses it, though no one comes away with an eyewitness report.

## In the complex

If both the elevator and the access stairs are blown up, the exit may be considered sealed. Nobody is likely to think of it, but demo charges applied to the wall of the Dome Access Corridor send a blast through the pool, bringing about collapse. A tacnuke detonation in this area also does nicely.

## In the tunnel

If the team tries to avoid going to the end of the tunnel by using explosives to collapse it, it won't work. The tunnel blows up real good—and then the debris shifts, opening up a usable passage. The Troubleshooters have tried to abort their mission without orders. They have wasted valuable equipment. They are guilty as hell.

(If they try this, the jackobot warns them it won't work. Afterwards, it says 'I told you so' a lot.)

If the PCs are chased out of the reactor complex, they may set explosives as a rear-guard action. This time, it's messy but effective. Fate and The Computer rewards those who give it the old clonevat try.

## The Black Box again

The Box is not directly involved with this mission, except to drive the players crazy at the last minute. During the battle in the reactor complex, one or more Troubleshooters spot the thing—maybe in the vault, maybe being carried away by a fleeing Outsider.

The Troubleshooters may capture the Box. They may hang on to it for a little while. They may not open it. And they will eventually lose it, either to death, recapture or...





## Death from above

Brian-B-IWR does not trust the Troubleshooters any longer. They simply have not killed enough Commie traitor scum. This mission is too important to entrust to them. So he has taken matters into his own hands, and scrambled a flight of Vulture 720 strike aircraft.

After the Troubleshooters seal the exit, give them just enough time to catch their breath—and maybe try to find the catch on The Black Box—before Squadron 'Tobor the Great' unloads its ordnance. (If they didn't manage to seal the exit, the squadron plays the role of *deus ex machina*.)

The Troubleshooters are not injured. However, they find themselves looking out on open country, through a new hole half a click across blasted by the Vulture missiles. If they had The Black Box, it has disappeared in the explosion (though any other stuff they have picked up, either for honest or black-market purposes, is intact).

They also notice that a few of the Vultures, flying nap-of-earth, failed to execute full-throttle breakaway maneuvers in time and are now integral with the landscape. An object comes bouncing over the grass and rocks toward the

team. It is a Vulture gunner's helmet, stenciled with the name of Brian-B-IWR-6. A large and irregular piece is missing from it.

A Model 816 transport flybot lands nearby and opens its doors. It is time to go home.

## Debriefing

Only Dan-V is left in the briefing room (**Tension 15**). If the Troubleshooters achieved anything at all—even a high body count—Dan-V is warmly congratulatory. He is impressed by all the after-action reports (actually he's asleep with his eyes open), and an exceptionally fine performance, whether real or just reported that way, brings promises of imminent promotion to GREEN Clearance. He hands sealed padded envelopes to each team member, without explanation, and tells them to go home and get plenty of rest.

Because The Computer, not Dan-V, keeps all records, assign slaps and bennies as always.

Regardless of earlier threats, the PCs don't get fined for losing Oregon Warbler; they get fined for losing the map.

Two of the envelopes contain 100 bonus plasticreds each that can be used immediately.

Two contain 500 credits with credit licenses specifying payment is not to occur until after the PCs' debriefing for their next mission (after Episode 4), and is not transferable to clones. The fifth is for 7,642,001 creds. These have a credit license specifying that the creds must be donated to an Elective Activity or Pursuit Club (a social club) of the user's choosing, in consultation with The Computer. The club must consist of members at VIOLET Clearance or higher. Under no circumstances should the credits in the fifth envelope actually end up in the PC's accounts. However, a sharp PC may find a way to curry favor with a high-ranking citizen by donating to his cause. (At the same time, he may also disappoint many other high-ranking citizens....)

The sixth envelope contains a ticket to see Teela O'Malley perform live; the performance will take place sometime during Episode 4. Transferring the ticket is illegal, but may be done through Free Enterprise or other contacts. Depending on the seller's Con Games skill, the ticket is worth about 500 plasticreds, as much as twice that in contraband items. A smart Troubleshooter will lay in some illegal weapons for Episode 4. Not that they'll help him much.

# 4: Why don't we do it in the road?

## Mission background

Once upon a time there were three High Programmers, all of them fascinated by Old Reckoning technology. There was Betty-U-YFL, who heard about The Black Box and tried to have the Troubleshooters get it. There was Philip-U-BIK-4, who heard about Betty-U's attempt. Philip-U, who like most ULTRAVIOLET citizens has more knowledge of the old world than is legal at any clearance, has deduced the Box must contain Old Reckoning music, which he collects. Philip-U wants the Box.

More importantly, Philip-U wants Betty-U. He is desperately infatuated with her (a situation only possible at the highest levels of society, where the food does not contain GNH-series drugs) and is convinced that the Box will help him woo Betty-U away from her current companion...who is our third player, Dale-U- ERL-5. Dale-U knows about Philip-U's interest, and would like to do something about it, preferably something fatal to Philip-U.

When The Black Box slipped through the fingers of everyone assigned to recover it (not just the players), Philip-U decided to go to the source: he set up a mission to the Outdoors, intended to track down the source of the Box, and ensure him a permanent supply of prerecorded music.

Dale-U, meanwhile, has a project of his own: the reconstruction of an Old Reckoning

automobile, piece by piece. Dale-U has a large contraband collection of car magazines, which have taught him that no woman can resist a guy who drives the right car. Dale-U would sacrifice the lives of thousands of Troubleshooters to obtain an intact '63 Corvette convertible. As it is, some 80 have been lost recovering the parts of his current vehicle, which consists of a 427-c.i. stock Chevy block (cracked), one Cadillac tailfin, a Rolls-Royce grille Dale-U thinks is a primitive sonic shield and a large number of Toyota and VW parts, on a Saab chassis.

Dale-U has been informed that his rival Philip-U is sending a team Outdoors for some dastardly Romantic purpose. Dale-U retaliates by setting up a mission of his own, using one of his most precious possessions: an Old Reckoning service-station map.

Unfortunately for both of them, they sat down at their terminals and input their Troubleshooter Operations Request (External) almost simultaneously, and a faulty set of demultiplexing crosstalk separators caused the two requests to be combined into one. The result was an unusually incoherent mission assignment, even for the world of **PARANOIA**.

## Mission summary

The Troubleshooters are sent out, with somewhat contradictory orders, to recover Old Reckoning hardware. They get a number of opportunities

to do so, and even more opportunities not to make it back.

They meet two roving bands of Outsiders, the motorcycle-crazy Cyberpunks and the just-plain-crazy Nouvelle Vague. They may reach one or both of their intended targets, a well-preserved Old Reckoning recording studio and a not-so-well-preserved auto dealership and service station. The recording studio is inhabited by the Studio Engineers, a money-mad crew who ritually serve the recorders and mixing boards. The gas station is home to HARV[E], an ancient self-aware military vehicle, and his only friend, the battle computer ELWOOD 3610.

Then The Computer decides that the returning Troubleshooter team and their entourage are the long-dreaded Invasion of the Commies from Outer Space, and marshals its forces (in its endearingly psychotic fashion) to destroy them.

Apocalypse Any Minute Now...

## Preparing the narrative sequence for Episode 4

The 'Organizing Episode 4 events' diagram (see page 92) is a graphic representation of the possible sequences of events in Episode 4. From the 'Mission assignment' to 'Into the unknown', the sequence is linear—that is, the



*Alert Troubleshooters uncover a secret cache of weapons.*

PCs are channeled from one event to the next in the predetermined order.

However, once the PCs leave Alpha Complex and enter the unknown (the Outdoors), there are a number of possible sequences of encounters. Look at the diagram. They can run around from place to place and encounter to encounter in zillions of ways. 'EEEEEEEEK!' you say. 'What is happening to the First Law of Gamemaster Control?' you whine.

Buck up, sport. It's not so bad as all that.

The sequence is partly determined by your preplanned selection of events to be presented to the players, and partly determined by your players' choices and actions. For example, the PCs will need the assistance of one of the two gangs, the Cyberpunks or the Nouvelle Vague, to reach the locations where they can fulfill their mission objectives (get Black Boxes and a Corvette). You decide which gang the PCs run into first.

But you can't know or control whether the PCs will gain the gang's cooperation, or whether the PCs will blow the opportunity by attacking the gang or by refusing to cooperate. Perhaps the PCs will need to get another gang's cooperation instead. Perhaps the PCs will have to return and apologize to the first gang before they can reach a mission objective. (Perhaps they'll get themselves conveniently killed before it becomes an issue, but that solves nothing. Here come the clone replacements.)

In preparing for the mission, read through the whole thing first to get the big picture, then decide which events you want to present, in what order and how much time and detail you want to

devote to each event. Use the diagram to help you visualize this process.

For example, first select a few encounters from 'Into the unknown'—say, 'Road badly out', 'Really grim weather' and 'Encampment'. The first two are minor encounters, just to spook the PCs a little with the unpredictable problems of the Outdoors, and should take only a few minutes each. 'Settlement' deserves a little more time so the PCs can speak with the primitives and learn a little about life outside Alpha Complex, but it is still a minor encounter.

Now have the PCs run into the Cyberpunks. This gives the PCs a chance to establish friendly terms with the gang and perhaps make an agreement that will bring the PCs to one of the two mission objectives. The probing for information and the negotiations will require a lot of in-character diplomacy and problem-solving, and plenty of session time must be allotted.

There are a number of possibilities at this point, and the players control most of them. Can the PCs negotiate successfully, or will they offend the gang or even start a gang war? And which will they choose to visit first, the PACE Studio or the service station—each major sections of the mission, full of minor episodes and encounters.

Depending on the PC choices and actions, there are a lot of possible sequences of events. You must be prepared.

Here's what you must do to be prepared:

1. Read everything carefully first.
2. Figure out which parts of the mission you like best, and how to steer the PCs for them. The gangs are the perfect tools for this purpose; they can show up and push the PCs where you want them to go, either

by force or by offering information that leads the PCs where you want them.

3. Relax and be prepared to improvise if the PCs don't do exactly what you'd expect. They never do, anyway. That's the best part of roleplaying adventures. Except maybe for the part where you fry traitors.

## Mission assignment

The Troubleshooters have had a couple of days to recover from their last mission (visit Medical Division, scrub the muck off, etc). Suddenly, they each receive urgent orders to contact their secret societies—notes slipped under doors, hidden in food, passed at training and so forth. As soon as they have arranged contact (as per Episode 1), they receive Mission Alert: Reference YCBBB.4.3.1 (see end of mission).

The PCs have to go to Briefing Room AA as before. Violators Will Be Prosecuted.

## Checking in

A huge machine now dominates the checkpoint. It's a cross between a voting booth and a submarine conning tower, enclosing a barely visible Computer console. A smug BLUE technician in a sharply pressed jumpsuit attends it with his ORANGE assistant, a grease-monkey in soiled coveralls. The usual complement of bored-hostile guards stand nearby.

If the Troubleshooters show any hesitation at all in going inside this monster, the tech gets terribly annoyed and says, 'Yellow YELLOWS, eh? Well,



it's quite safe, and simple enough even for you. I'll show you.' He walks inside and pulls a lever.

The machine begins to tremble and grind. It closes around the tech. Then it folds again, and again, collapsing on itself until it is a neat metal suitcase, with handle. The assistant sighs, picks up the case and walks away. The PCs are admitted.

If the PCs *didn't* show any hesitation—serves 'em right.

## Mission briefing

The Briefing Room (**Tension 15**) is dim. Dan-V-OSD is alone on the bench, a single spotlight shining down on him, like a bureaucrat's idea of what God looks like.

Dan-V speaks. This is your chance to really ham it up:

**'Friend citizens, our friend The Computer wishes me to convey its unbounded joy at your performance. Would any one of us have expected you to return in triumph, nay, return alive, from such a mission? Surely none but a madman. Yet The Computer did. I think this tells us all something very important about our friend The Computer.**

**'With this in mind, our friend has selected you for a very unusual mission. You may never live to do your Alpha Complex any greater service than this.**

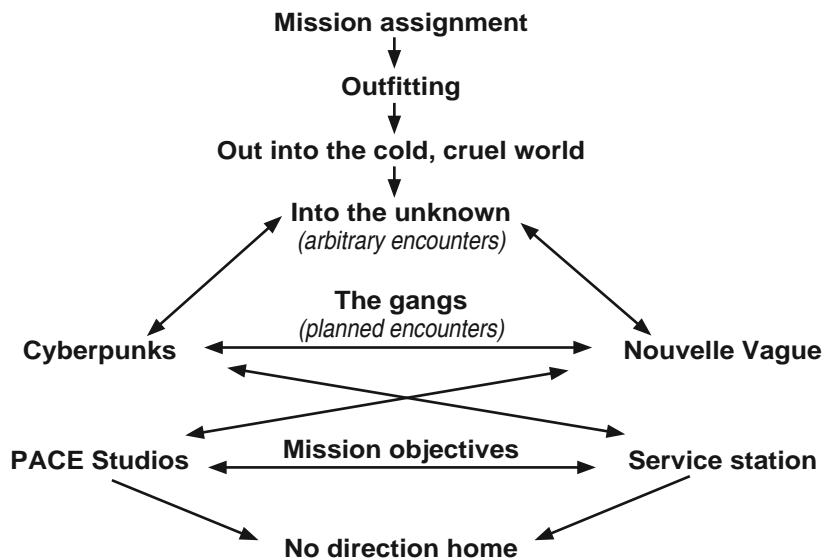
**'You are to execute this mission—Outdoors.' [Pause for reaction.] 'Yes, Outdoors, beyond The Computer's protection and safety. Why, you may ask? What does Alpha Complex, in which all our needs are provided for, want or need from Outdoors.**

**'The answer is that The Computer sees more than our everyday needs. It sees our wants our hopes, our dreams—and then it sends Troubleshooters like you after them.**

**'You are to recover certain equipment of the Old Reckoning, which, once our wise and knowledgeable High Programmers have shaped it to The Computer's use, will make our daily life even better, safer, more completely controlled. Will help to ensure that this great complex, of The Computer, by The Computer and for The Computer, shall not perish from the earth. All the complex—or nothing! Which shall it be, Troubleshooters? Which shall it be?'**

Pause here for exclamations of enthusiasm and patriotic fervor. When the cheering has died down, Dan-V has the players elect a team leader. Brian-B reads aloud the mission equipment requisition, commenting proudly on the generosity of The Computer, and hands

## Organizing Episode 4 events



the leader a copy of the requisition (display Equipment List #4). The leader will be entrusted with the mission map, to be delivered later. The map is cleared for all players, but it is Computer property, and the leader is responsible for it. Make an issue of how rare it is to actually give Troubleshooters maps of anything.

In a conspiratorial tone, Dan-V tells the players that he has heard rumors that no one ever returns from the Outdoors. (If you can spook a PC who has also heard that rumor, good.) He points out that rumors are treasonable lies, but to help bolster the team's confidence, he has pulled strings to get them some special equipment. Yup, they're going to visit Victor-I-VGF in R&D again.

**'I know you will succeed. Do not fail. If you fail, your successors will succeed. Remember, dulce et decorum est programming mori.' He falls asleep.**

He does not awaken. If the players try to rouse him, they trigger the automatic gas guns.

Eventually they are taken to R&D.

## Outfitting

Victor-I's lab (**Tension 15**) is much the same as in Episode 2, except that Willis-G's luck lapsed briefly, and his clone has succeeded him. The clone does not remember the players, and tries to sell them on power holsters all over again.

Victor-I is pleased to hear the group is going Outdoors so they can test some of his devices less appropriate to confined spaces—that is, stuff that has never been tested in Victor-I's Danger Room.

In addition to the new goodies, all the old ones are still available, *unless* the players figured out

some way to make them work advantageously, in which case the last working prototype was just dismantled for test/classified/blown up/dropped by an assistant so it looks all right but fails in use in some spectacular fashion (pick one).

## New goodies

**Bi-Axial Levitation Frame (Ned-G):** A pair of jointed wings that buckle to the user's arms and shoulders. They are rocket-assisted on the downstroke, so the user really can hang in the air by flapping energetically. Until one wing breaks, causing the user to spin in midair like a Catherine wheel.

**Procognitron (Victor-I):** A briefcase-sized portable computer programmed to extrapolate events. Victor can demonstrate simple entries (like: *push hard?* > THING FALLS OVER). The device works. But it's slow and becomes geometrically slower with the complexity of the question, making it effectively useless for anything nontrivial.

**Constant-Wear Prophylactic Biostasis Garment (Willis-G):** Elastic long underwear threaded with wires and tubes which connect delicately and intricately to a bulky backpack containing tanks of supercooled gases, sensors and monitors and complex automatic control systems. If the wearer is seriously hurt, the suit induces suspended animation, preserving life until medical aid is available. It works, after a fashion: If the wearer takes an Down or Killed result, the suit instantly freezes him solid. (Vaporized is still Vaporized.) A successful medical skill attempt (a docbot must perform or assist with this) thaws the character out in Wounded status. The suit may be reused, but it has a four in 20 chance of failure each time after the first. Optionally, you can equip it with a manual 'On' button in a highly

exposed location. Note that frozen characters may break if dropped.

**Probability Control Experiment (Ned-G):** This comes in a heavily sealed case about the size of a lunchbox, weighing five kilos. Everyone in the lab is somewhat in awe of it. The user is warned. 'Don't ever look in the box! You'll break the mojo!' No explanation of this statement is available at YELLOW Clearance. It is entirely up to you whether or not the box influences luck. It contains a horseshoe, a four-leaf clover, a frowzy rabbit's foot and a pair of loaded dice (all of which might have IR market value).

**Cis-9-Basoaterol (Victor-I):** Synthetic Charm pheromone, to be applied to the skin (bottle is labeled For External Use Only). It certainly smells funny (you decide what's 'funny' in this context). It doesn't charm people. Outdoors, however, it will charm the socks off one species of animal or insect life, Gamemaster's choice. Chipmunks or pigeons are recommended.

**Maxwell-Effect Moleculokinesic Field Device (Willis-G):** This is a large and truly terrifying rifle-type weapon: It is a Pyrokinesis gun, and it can be demonstrated to incinerate targets at a distance, without the all-too-well-known hazards of flamethrowers. Its drawbacks:

1. It draws huge amounts of power. For demonstration purposes, it is plugged into a main; it will suck a laser pack dry in one shot. It may be plugged into the crawler's power takeoff, taking all power from all other systems (including propulsion) when fired.
2. 50% of the time it fires at reverse polarity, freezing the target (see *Biostasis suit* above for effects on people). This might be used to impress the Studio Engineers (see 'The PACE Studio' below).
3. The power cable is too light and burns through with pyrotechnic results after five shots (less if desired).

### More conventional gear

The Req Room staff are back to their usual surly selves this time. Half of them wish that they were going on a mission Outdoors. The other half thinks that giving equipment to an Outdoors mission team is the Alpha Complex equivalent of an expensive funeral. However, this mission has been classified PRIORITY (because it is being run at High Programmer request), so they can't do much but grumble and stall.

Most 'reasonable' requests for equipment not on the assignment list are honored—but half of all extra items are seriously defective or mislabeled. Tacnuke and power armor requests are met with polite laughter.

The team's docbot is an Old Reliable Model 5. If asked about its programming, the bot says it has been specially equipped with an Old Reckoning Environmental Medicine package. This is true. If somebody asks it, the bot can identify edible food

(and shrewdly assess such other environmental medical situations as 'an avalanche has buried him'). It also is loaded with Old Reckoning medical clichés, making it a cross between Marcus Welby MD, Dr. Kildare and 'Bones' McCoy.

Remember that everyone has to sign for the crawler and trailer. There should be some mystery about the trailer: The staff wants to know what it's for. Of course, the players don't know yet, but for them to say anything is treason.

### The crawler

Picture a bright yellow Winnebago, about 8 meters long, sporting treads instead of tires. Add a laser cannon turret on top, and cover the windows with retractable metal shielding. Pretty natty, huh?

An alcohol-burning engine powers the crawler; the fuel in the tank will get the Troubleshooters anywhere they have to go. (Unless you want them to have to barter with the natives for moonshine.) Heavy metal armor protects the top, bottom and all sides of the crawler and provides adequate shielding (see Bot roster), but does little to improve pickup. At best it can zoom along at about 25 kilometers per hour.

The vehicle can be controlled either manually or by autopilot. The autopilot is much too stupid to be considered a true bot brain, though it does respond to verbal commands and can answer simple questions dealing with the operation or status of the crawler. (Troubleshooter: 'What's happening now?' [Pause.] Autopilot: 'We're on fire.')

The crawler easily holds the Troubleshooters and their gear; it not-so-easily holds the docbot.

### And now the bad news

If the PCs examine their gear (as any reasonably PARANOID Troubleshooters do), they find that most of it appears to match the Equipment List, with the exception of the case of HE grenades. When opened, the case is found to contain exactly 21 brand new toilet floats. No grenades. Wouldn't it be funny if the Troubleshooters found this out after they had signed for the equipment?

What the Troubleshooters probably won't notice is that two of the eight cone rifle solid slugs are actually mislabelled hallucinogenic gas slugs. While these certainly could make their lives miserable (or very short), crafty Troubleshooters might be able to make a tidy profit selling the slugs to the Nouvelle Vaguers or Mystics.

### Out into the cold, cruel world

Those PCs who make contact with their societies or service groups find that all have the same thing in mind: 'While you're Outdoors, will you bring me...?' They see this mission as a trip to the Old Reckoning supermarket.

There are two possible types of request:

1. Very general, for anything in keeping with the goals of the society or service group (weapons for the Armed Forces, consumer goods for the Romantics or Free Enterprisers).
2. Extremely specific ('A blue ribbed cylinder, stenciled GX-470-Detrick—and don't touch the valve'), implying the society knows more about the mission than the player does; the Troubleshooter of course never encounters the item he must retrieve.

### The sealed orders

When the Troubleshooters arrive at the cavernous Vehicle Bay (**Tension 6**), a large fire is merrily blazing. This creates much confusion, to say the least. A technician tells the team their vehicle has been consumed, and they must replace it. This proves to be incorrect; the crawler and trailer are in another part of the bay.

The bay is a huge structure similar to an airplane hangar, but much larger and more crowded. Losing something the size of a crawler, or a Boeing 727, is no problem. The floor is covered with tire marks, hoses, cables and meaningless colored stripes, and service vehicles race around madly. Overhead, cranes run along the girders, carrying vehicle parts and ordnance. Every so often they drop something, like an engine or a bomb.

A RED courier waits by the crawler (perhaps a clone of the courier from Episode 2) holding a sealed message pouch. He asks for a hit for the pouch. The players do not have this. He asks if they have 50 credits. If they do, he hands over the pouch in exchange for the 50 creds, no questions asked. If they don't, he walks away... and a few minutes later, an IntSec trooper brings back the case, slightly battle-damaged.

The case contains Dale-U's map and a sheet of YELLOW Computer printout.

### The map

You are encouraged to actually fabricate the map: Take a gas-station map (of any location—it doesn't matter) and work it over, stomping on it, spilling coffee, tearing pieces off, until it looks like it's been in your glove compartment for 300 years or so. Circle a couple of random locations in red ballpoint, mark a stretch of road with highlighter. If you can stamp it 'COMPUTER PROPERTY—Unauthorized Possession Punishable by Summary Execution', all the better.

If you are too lazy to find a map and mutilate it, take a piece of blank paper and print across the top of it 'EXTREMELY DETAILED AND USEFUL MAP'. You can scribble on it a bit if you have the energy. Then give it to the players and tell them, 'Pretend this is an extremely detailed and useful map.' They'll get the idea.



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**Note:** Nowhere does The Computer or Dan-V suggest the PCs' destinations are indicated on this map. The PCs are sent out to investigate. Their methods are their own responsibility. Actually, even if The Computer knew anything, it would never divulge information about The Outdoors to lower security clearances.

### The YELLOW computer printout

Display the YELLOW Computer Printout: Reference YCBBB.4.5.2 (end of the mission) for the players to study.

### Time to hit the road

Before the PCs get a chance to study the map or computer printout very carefully, a firebot wheels up, sprays them with a little water, then orders them to get the crawler and trailer out of here immediately, pointing a nozzle to the exit bay doors and guard checkpoint. Failure to follow orders results in an improvised pitched battle with firebots, arrest for failure to follow orders and a standard community execution.

When the PCs pull up to the exit bay doors and guard checkpoint, a kindly GREEN-Clearance Vulture Squadron guard (sort of like a Boy Scout assisting an old lady across the street while waving a hand ax) steps out of his armored strongpoint and pleasantly asks to see the PCs' authorization for Outdoor Excursion.

The PCs sit here until they show the guard the map and the computer printout. If they are good citizens, they call The Computer for clearance to show the guard the materials; otherwise, treason charges are in order.

The sergeant casually studies the map and printout, revealing no sign of confusion at the obvious incoherence of the printout and the lack of correspondence between the map and the printout references. 'Well, everything looks to be in order,' he says, handing the materials back to the mission leader. 'If you have any trouble finding your way around out there, just stop and ask the natives for directions.' He steps back, slaps the side of the crawler and says, 'Okay, let's roll, and be careful out there.'

He strolls back into the armored strongpoint and presses some buttons, and the exit bay doors open upon a Brave New World. The guard waves cheerily as the PCs motor off to meet their destiny.

### Into the unknown

To introduce your players to The Wonderful World of the Outdoors (**Tension 0**), read the following aloud:

**Welcome to the Outdoors World, Troubleshooters! You're not going to like it here. Everything's made out of**

**weird rough crumbly stuff, not nice clean plastic and metal. There aren't any pipes. There aren't any bathrooms (thank The Computer for the facility on your crawler)! The sky—it's not made of metal. Try not to think about that too much. And there are little alive things all over the place, doing all sorts of strange awful alive-type things.**

**You really wanted to turn around and go back to the safe white Freudian curve of Alpha Complex. When you tried it, extremely large weapons were pointed at you. Sigh.**

**Fortunately you have your crawler, with its food supply and its weapons and its com link to The Computer. And you have the map that The Computer entrusted you with.**

**The first thing you notice about the map is that it does not show Alpha Complex. Eventually you notice that the countryside you are passing through bears no resemblance to the stuff on the map. Suddenly life Outdoors seems not so different from home, after all.**

**You have spoken to The Computer. Friend Computer has been very kind and understanding. Reading maps is a rare privilege for Troubleshooters, and you may be excused a few mistakes. The Computer points out that its very own data analysis routines prepared your order sheet. Surely any difficulties must be attributed to human error.**

**Well, as the nice Vulture Squadron guard said, maybe you should stop and ask the natives for directions. First, however, how to go about finding the natives...**

This section describes a few arbitrary encounters the PCs might face in the process of wandering around the Outdoors in search of their mission objectives. You can probably imagine lots of others. Don't feel obligated to use ours just because you paid for them.

One nice touch is to take Outdoors encounters from earlier *PARANOIA* missions, particularly encounters the players will recognize. A little touch of the familiar makes PCs feel right at home. For example, there is a lovely Outdoor Arbitrary Encounter Table in *Vapors Don't Shoot Back*.

These encounters are just for fun and flavor. Don't get carried away. Don't spend too much time on them. And don't use them all at once. Save a few to spring on the PCs later in the mission as they travel to the gangs or the mission objectives.

Don't wait too long to introduce the gangs. Too long is when the PCs get bored or frustrated wandering around aimlessly, trying to figure out what they're supposed to be doing. Poor

things. They just need some guidance. And the gangs are just the ones to provide it. For the right price.

### Life in the fast lane

The following is a menu of encounter possibilities while on the road. If the team decides to drive cross-country, see the list under 'Truckin'.

**Bad weather:** May slow the team's progress to a crawl, force them to stop or cause them to run off the road (as in thick fog). Note that 'weather' is broadly interpreted to mean all those environmental events the players are unfamiliar with, such as rain ('a pipe must have broken somewhere!') and nightfall ('The Commies are in Power Services!').

After reading the description of the Studio Engineers below, you may wish to make it snow. You can. You are the Gamemaster. You can make it rain Swedish meatballs if you want. Just remember that Alpha Complex citizens don't know snow from Swedish meatballs.

**Road out:** Forces a period of offroad running. If they don't get the hint, the broken road starts damaging the crawler's suspension, bruising passengers, etc.

**Road badly out:** A bridge is gone, pass blocked or something else requiring a long detour and hunt for another piece of road. The team may fear becoming lost. This is foolish. They are already lost. The Computer reassures them that it can broadcast a homing signal. It can, but it won't until it (or both of the two High Programmers) decides that mission objectives have been achieved.

**Charge attack:** Between five and a dozen natives rush the vehicle. They are armed with pointed sticks and rocks and present little real hazard.

**Slightly more intelligent attack:** This party of natives has some missile weapons—slings, bows, throwing spears—and uses them before charging the crawler (and being slaughtered anyway).

**Wildlife attack:** It is hard to imagine what animals would charge the crawler (animals are much more sensible than people in this regard) but a bunch of rabid wolves or an eight-foot grizzly in a real bad mood are possibilities. Mutant wildlife, like gila monsters the size of Mack trucks, are another matter entirely.

**Other gang attacks:** If the party is traveling with the Cyberpunks or Nouvelle Vague (see below), the other gang swoops down. This is a Reasonably Intelligent Attack, i.e., the gangs use some crude tactics and retreat if they're getting badly stomped.

**Really grim weather:** From ice storms and flash floods up to tornadoes. (Speaking as an old Midwesterner, worse than tornadoes is probably not survivable.)

**Barricade:** Someone has piled junk on the road. The PCs must dodge around or

blast through it. There may or may not be an accompanying ambush.

**Boobytrap:** A barricade with teeth—pits, snares, punji stakes, black-powder bombs... be creative. There will probably be ambushers unless: 1) something else ate them; or 2) they got careless setting the trap.

**Wild card:** An interstate cloverleaf to get lost in (Your Tax Dollars at Work). A fast-food stand stuffed with cannibals. Mel Gibson. Use your fiendish imagination.

## Truckin'

Off the road, all the Weather and Attack encounters on the road are possible, plus the following:

**Encampment:** A humble native village, 20–50 inhabitants. They may be friendly. They may have a couple of heirloom antitank rockets. They probably carry weird diseases to which Alpha Complex citizens have no immunity.

**Gang encampment:** Headquarters of one of the two major gangs (described below). Contact is possible, unless the team travels with the other gang, in which case a turf war is automatic.

**Natural hazard:** Quicksand, rockslide, forest fire started by careless cleaning of laser weapons, small earthquake, explosion of a natural methane pocket, Costikyan Settling in the Icy Reaches of Montana. *[Editor's note: Here writer John M. Ford puns on the title of the senior thesis in Geology written by PARANOIA's original co-designer, Greg Costikyan: 'Stokes Settling in the Icy Satellites of Jupiter'. We thought of taking out this inside joke—this joke so inside it borders on subterranean—but it is not for mere game editors to meddle with the words of John M. Ford.]*

**Reconbot:** A small twin-copter observation bot, pretending to be on a secret mission for The Computer. Actually it has been 'freed' by Corpore Metal and spies on Vulture maneuvers and missions such as this one. It knows some Corpore Metal passwords and could be helpful. Then again, maybe it's really a double agent for The Computer. You can't trust anybody.

## The gangs

These two groups are fairly large, upwards of 100 members total, and well-organized for the Outdoors. (Actually, a prairie dog village is well-organized for the Outdoors.) They are in a state of constant and total war, and roam the countryside on and off the roads, looking for enemy parties to bushwhack. They are distinctive enough that they do not mistake the Troubleshooters for the enemy gang; if the team travels with enemy gang members, that's another story.

The gangs are the devices you, the Gamemaster, use to draw the PCs to the two main mission objectives: the PACE Studio (where Black Boxes abound) and Uncle Ken's Super

Service Station (where the fabled Corvette and even a Thunderbird may be found).

To get the cooperation of the gangs, the PCs must do two important things: 1) ask the right questions, and 2) offer an appropriate payment for the gang's cooperation.

## Asking the right questions

For each mission objective, there's a series of key words which a few of the leaders or wise men of each gang recognize.

*Acoustic readable data disks or black boxes* are the key words for the PACE Studio; the leaders recall the jargon as typical phrases tossed about by The Engineers who staff PACE Studio.

For Uncle Ken's Super Service Station, the key words are *Corvette* or *Thunderbird*; the gang leaders and sages recall that these names are written in shiny metal on two of the odd, autocar-like objects found at the service station.

## Offering the right payment

The gangs are neither civic-minded, patriotically loyal to The Computer, nor subscribers to the Social Contract. They expect to be paid for information or assistance. No tickie, no shirtee.

Acceptable forms of payment include but are not necessarily limited to:

- **Alpha Complex trade goods:** Anything manufactured in Alpha Complex—weapons, bots, experimental devices, routine Troubleshooter gear, household

items, anything that is scarce in the primitive economy of the Outdoors.

- **Military assistance:** Each gang has a grudge against the other, or covets something valuable at PACE Studio or the Service Station. Aiding the gang in pursuing such a grudge or covet could be fair payment for information or assistance.

- **A piece of the action:** the PCs might propose a raid or assault on a mission objective with gang assistance, with a percentage or specific reward promised.

Note also that mutant powers or persuasive skills (such as Charm or Con Games) may be used to supplement or replace payment in some cases. The PCs must also avoid two serious mistakes: 1) butchering the gang members who can lead them to their objectives, and 2) getting themselves butchered by the gangs for rude and offensive behavior. This may be very difficult for trigger-happy paranoids.

If the PCs manage to alienate one gang, a hint from The Computer may be in order. 'Hello, there, Troubleshooters! How is the mission going? Have you found any natives to assist you in locating the valuable equipment we sent you after?' If the PCs got wiped out, a hint to their clones suffices.

## The Cyberpunks

A post-everything cycle gang, the Punks wear leather and chrome and silicon chips, and like anything shiny and high-tech in appearance.



The Road Worrier.



They are armed with knives and swords, leaf-spring crossbows and the occasional ancient gun.

The motorcycle is sacred in Cyberpunk mythology. Some of them have real derelict bikes; most of the rest have imitations cobbled together from junk. None of these function—the riders push them along with their feet. This looks very silly, and the Punks will kill you if you say so.

The Cyberpunks do have a vague sort of honor code: they fight duels one-on-one, and prefer shooting people in the front.

They covet the Troubleshooters' hardware like mad, of course, and try very hard to get hold of any motor that looks adaptable to powering a motorcycle. (If for some reason the team has a motorcycle, they stop at nothing to get it. A person with a working bike would automatically be Lord of the Punks.)

The current Cyberpunk leaders are a brother and sister named Jake and Elwood. (She's Jake.) They wear black leather blazers, snapbrim fedoras and dark glasses. Jake carries a slugthrower (S&W .38 Police Positive, with four rounds in the cylinder and six more in her pocket; Troubleshooter ammo won't fit, but Jake doesn't know that). Elwood packs a big smile and the Charm mutation.

The Cyberpunks know the location of the PACE Studio and are on fairly good terms with the Studio Engineers, who play them heavy-metal music in exchange for stuff the Engineers think is 'money'. They know the location of Uncle Ken's Super Service Station very well indeed, and have been trying to loot it for years, but HARV[E] (see below, 'Wouldn't you really rather have a Buick?') always runs them off. It certainly occurs to Jake and Elwood to have the Troubleshooters destroy, or at least divert, HARV[E] while they rob Uncle Ken's.

If the Troubleshooters survive to go home, the remaining Cyberpunks try to follow them back to Alpha Complex, which they imagine as a giant Harley-Davidson showroom. (More on this later.)

## Nouvelle Vague

If the Punks are heavy-metal, the Vaguers are folk-rock. They think of themselves as 'true people of the land', totally without justification. They wear clothing in earth colors, usually with a thick coating of the real thing. Nouvelle Vague pursues a sort of nature mysticism crossed with Gary Cooper-movie individualism: imagine a culture built entirely on readings of Timothy Leary, French movies, Hermann Hesse and Ayn Rand.

The Vaguers are friendly toward Sierra Clubbers and Mystics (real or claimed), and fascinated by any psionic mutations the players choose to reveal (or pretend to have). They offer to share their humble but chemically sophisticated fare (anybody but a Mystic who does so must make

an Insanity check once the rush hits). They are not actually anti-technology, unless it reminds them of the Cyberpunks; they find items like warm clothing, ice guns and tangles fascinating.

The Vaguers are strongly anti-war. They think it is a much better idea to set traps and sneak up behind people. They may do this because they desire what the party has, or because party members infringed on their enlightened self-interest, or because Mars is in the eleventh house and Scorpio is rising.

Nouvelle Vague has no organized leadership. ('We're an anarcho-syndicalist commune!') This means that if a particular Vaguer wants to kill somebody, no one tries to interfere with his Karma in doing so.

When the PCs ask to speak to leaders or knowledgeable folks, they are directed to the Guru. The Guru is a bona fide Psionic with a complete repertoire of all the psionic mutations. He is Totally Aware, man, and Cosmic. Wow.

Initially, when out among the public, the Guru answers all the PCs' questions with obscure parables ('Ah, that reminds me of the story of the Grasshopper and the Microwave.') and bland homilies ('What, Me Worry?'). However, when the Guru gets the PCs in private, he turns into a wheeler-dealer. He drives a hard bargain, but he can deliver the information, and if the price is right, he can use his psionic powers and Con Games skill to persuade the Nouvelle Vaguers to get together behind his trip.

The Vaguers are on slightly worse terms with the Studio Engineers than the Punks are, because they, like, can't get behind the money trip the Engineers are on. Still, they pay for concerts whenever possible and can get the Troubleshooters to the PACE Studio. They know of the Service Station, but consider it a place of many negative waves and never touch anything there, so HARV[E] lets them alone.

They, too, try to follow the team home, out of curiosity and to pick off the Cyberpunks one by one.

## The PACE Studio

See the 'Pace Studio' map at the end of the mission.

Tucked away in a small valley is a smooth white dome, reminiscent of a tiny Alpha Complex. On its roof are a set of corroded microwave antennas, trained on long-decayed satellites. A weathered bronze plaque on the door reads PACE Pilot Recording Studio and shows a record surrounded by orbiting electrons.

Promoters Allied for Cheap Energy built this place as the prototype of a totally self-contained, highly automated recording facility. Nuclear-powered and computer-controlled, it was to be the test site for exotic new equipment that would make unionized crews obsolete. Then they would go about replacing musicians. Alas, the end of

the Old Reckoning arrived before the project could be completed. The staff, living rather well in their self-sustaining quarters, passed on their knowledge to another generation. And another, and another. But as everybody knows, each later generation of a recording contains some new errors. So now there are...

## The Studio Engineers

These people wear jumpsuits with their names stenciled on the pockets. (That is to say, they take names to match those stenciled on the suits.) The jumpsuits are brand new: they are of a paper fiber that is broken down and reassembled by the automatic laundry.

The Engineers pay little attention to the service equipment, since it needs none. They spend their time on the video games in the Recreation Room, and on the Studio gear—the recorders, mikes, multitrack mixers, equalizers, etc. It is almost an object of worship. But not quite. That role is reserved for money.

The Engineers are obsessed with money. They offer to do just about anything for money, except sell any equipment from the Studio (including the Master Recordings). There is only one thing they want almost as much, and that's snow. Literally. Crystallized water. Its other meaning has been lost. They don't know what they want it *for*, but that's how tradition is.

They speak a rapid-fire *Variety*-style slang: 'Sure, we'll lay you down a track, just ink your Hancock on the dotted line and we'll have the boys in Legal shoot you down a contract before you can say Hix Nix Stix Flix, have a cigar, after all you're gonna be spinning platinum soon, we must have lunch but don't quote me...' When recording matters are involved, this becomes an even less intelligible tech jargon: 'So we got to use gated cardioids, drop it 4dB and Dolbyize through the Revox, unless you're not afraid of the Nagras printing through...'

They have the language down cold, and they know every knob and button and capstan-drive in the Studio, all of which is in perfect working order. Unfortunately, they don't have the faintest idea what to do with any of that hardware. If promised enough money ('At least four percent over union scale, man.'). they promise to 'cut a master, lay down some serious tracks, do a pressing that'll be Number 1 with a bullet,' but all they can really do is make the equipment hum and rotate in an interesting fashion, and occasionally produce a deafening scream of acoustic feedback.

They *can*, however, operate the playback decks, if a Master Recording is loaded (an almost ritual act).

There are 20 Engineers of ordinary rank, 5 higher ranks called Producers and the Studio Head. The Head (also called the Mogul, Boss Honcho, etc.) has four personal bodyguards called Goons. Goons wear mirrored sunglasses

as a badge of office. They are armed with brass knuckles.

Engineers refer to death as 'going on the road'. They believe that some day, a crew of Roadies will arrive to take them all out on a Concert Tour. This could give the Troubleshooters a way in; however, the Cyberpunks tried that trick once long ago, and the Engineers are wary.

## ■ Mission objectives

The PCs are here for *Acoustic Readable Data Disks* or *Black Boxes*. All the Engineers but the Head Honcho are so thoroughly divorced from reality that they fail to catch the significance of the PCs' interest in the acoustic readable data disks—the Master Recordings. The Engineers just keep spouting encouraging talk of how big the PCs' next hit is going to be and directing the PCs to talk with the Boss Honcho.

The Boss Honcho catches on immediately that the PCs are looking to loot the Master Recordings. He listens patiently to the PCs, then shrugs his shoulders, grins cooperatively and says, 'Well, I'm sure we can do business here...' Then he turns to his Goons, gives a secret hand sign, and the Goons open fire. From this point it is a to-the-death battle for the studio and the Master Recordings.

## ■ Entering the Studio

Just inside the Studio doors is a reception lobby, with kitschy vinyl furniture, plastic ferns and a terrarium with some dead lizards. The walls are hung with gold records and incomprehensible abstract paintings. This motif of very expensive

bad taste is present throughout the Studio complex. Everything is very clean and well-maintained, thanks to the automatic maintenance systems. Most of these systems are invisible—special airflow vents that keep things dust-free, for instance—but the occasional sweeperbot appears, to startle the players.

One of the low-rank Engineers mans a desk in the lobby. This person's purpose is to send people away politely but firmly, 'I'm *sorry*-ree, but he's in conference and can't be disturbed until August. No, they're all in Gstaad. Are you representing investors, or yourselves? Requests for employment must go through the office in Marin County.' And so on. The receptionist is really just an annoyance; any reasonable excuse gets the players past the front desk.

Once past the desk, the PCs will have to wander around looking for someone official to talk to. All the Engineers are 'just hanging out', chatting in obscure jargon and polishing the hardware. The PCs are consistently given polite, encouraging and unresponsive answers to their questions—'We're with you all the way, solid on your concept. Just need to finalize the contract wording and check with marketing. See the Boss Honcho, and we'll be ready to go the limit. Awesome.' The Boss Honcho is 'around here somewhere'; nobody is quite sure where.

The Boss Honcho is in the last place the PCs look for him—that is, the PCs run into the Boss Honcho when you tire of sending the PCs around through the studio after him, and when you are ready for a little shoot-'em-up.

## ■ The Engineers' quarters

These apartments are well-equipped but rather plain; there are more decorations (album covers, concert posters, autographed 8x10 glossies) in the upper ranks' rooms. All rooms have telephone intercoms, and monitor speakers and video screens are connected to the deck in the main equipment area; twice a day an Engineer, called the DJ, plays an hour of programming for the entire staff. (This means the players should have some chance to see the recordings and what they do.)

The Studio Head's apartment contains its own playback deck, and he alone may borrow recordings for his own entertainment.

The Studio Commissary serves synthesized meals considerably superior to Alpha Complex vat product. (Unfortunately the Commissary equipment is not portable.)

The Recreation Room contains video and other games, including an electronic skeet range (the guns look real but are harmless low-power lasers) and a full-size Bally Fireball pinball machine. The 1980s video game *Berzerk*, with its laser-armed hero fleeing killer bots, is probably treasonous but should fascinate the Troubleshooters.

The Concert Hall is an auditorium to which paying customers are admitted to watch playbacks. It contains no equipment other than a holographic projection stage.

## ■ The Studio itself

The Control Room is filled with electronic hardware: rack after rack of metal-fronted components, dangling patchcords, bouncing meter needles, green-glowing screens, whole galaxies of twinkling LEDs. Imagine the showroom of a huge and upscale electronics store, multiplied by at least ten. The most prominent feature is the 64-track mixer, a vast ocean of slide-pots and timbre controls.

On the other side of a soundproof window above the mixing board is the performance area, a stage big enough for a dozen musicians and their equipment. The walls are lined with sound-deadening material, surfaced with a shiny silvery stuff. The walls can be used as projection screens in the production of video clips; there are hologram projectors and laser lightshow generators mounted near the ceiling. The lasers are harmless but don't look it. Triggering the projectors during a battle could be very exciting, as images of flying saucers swoop to the attack, tanks roll, Mick Jagger struts...

Both parts of the Studio are off limits to all but Engineers, though a heavily escorted guest might be taken on a 'backstage tour'.

Twenty meters below the Control Room, accessible by a narrow service ladder, is the Studio's isotope power plant, which still has a decade or two of operation before internal neutron decay causes it to collapse into a lump



Last services on this route before Armageddon. (In-joke alert: Another Ken Rolston portrait.)





## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

of unbelievably radioactive butterscotch crunch, melting the bedrock and causing the Studio to relocate toward China. The reactor chamber is dramatically lit by colored displays and contains a number of confusing controls: tinkering with these could cause an early melt.

### ■ **Storeroom A**

This room is filled with musical instruments: synthesizers, horns, drums, lots of guitars. The Engineers can't play any of them, though sometimes they take them out and lip-synch.

Troubleshooters do not know what musical instruments are, either. They should probably have this room described as a sort of armory: guitars are rifles, keyboards are computer terminals, mariachis are a kind of grenade.

### ■ **Storeroom B**

This is where the Master Recordings are kept, the Studio Engineers' greatest treasure. The room, which is carefully cleaned and maintained, is lined floor to ceiling with—how'd you guess—Black Boxes. They all used to say things like 'Creedence Clearwater Revival Master Recording Set', but the Engineers have polished them so many times they're down to plain black wood.

There are over 300 Boxes, each of which contains 24 hours' worth of audio or video disks (all play back on the same deck). This is more than the PCs' vehicle and trailer will hold, even if they should get a chance to take so many, which they shouldn't.

The Engineers will die to protect the Master Recordings. Every so often a Box does get stolen by a visitor (without labels, it's hard to keep track), like the one that made its way to Alpha Complex. If the Engineers should all be killed, the Cyberpunks and Nouvelle Vague will be hot after the music. If The Computer finds out about the hoard, it will be a war between Philip-U trying to recover them all, and maybe the Studio equipment too, and Dale-U trying to steal them if he can and destroy them if he can't. The Computer itself will want the Studio and everything in it obliterated, and will order a massive Vulture airstrike to do so, which will set a nice time limit on Troubleshooter actions.

### ■ **Wouldn't you really rather have a Buick?**

'Uncle Ken's Super Service Station' appears to be a vehicle sales and service facility. It is surrounded by what Troubleshooters should be able to recognize by their wheels, seats and general configuration as vehicles of some kind, probably autocars. It appears to be deserted. Attentive players will notice two things that are odd about the Station:

1. It is a very long way from a road.
2. The Cyberpunks have not looted it bare.

Uncle Ken's is actually a secret military experimental station. There is no road because the experiment was interrupted by the end of the world. (If it had been completed, they would have *built* a road. R&D logic is unchanging.) The Cyberpunks have not stripped the car lot because the experiment, Project Pooka, is operational.

### ■ **HARV[E]**

HARV[E] (Heuristic Automated Recon Vehicle [Evaluation model]) is an extremely sophisticated tank. Also a very powerful one. If HARV[E] had passed his evaluations, he and a team of units like him would be deployed in 'militarily sensitive' areas, on constant silent vigil.

Silent—HARV[E] moves on a set of baffled hoverfans so quiet that he can sneak up to within a few meters of a person unheard. He can also hit 100 kph flat out, rather more noisily.

And invisible—the antiradiation coatings on HARV[E]'s smooth flanks, coupled with thermal and acoustic chameleon transducers beneath, make him undetectable by visible light or any sort of electronic sensing: radar, infrared, magnetic. He can only be detected if he breaks radio silence or fires his weapons. (Certain psionic powers might be able to detect him.)

HARV[E] is armed with a turreted Laser Cannon 3, fore and aft sonic blasters, and an Anti-Missile Phalanx-Laser battery (intended mostly as an anti-personnel weapon, since no conventional missile can lock on to HARV[E]).

HARV[E]'s mind is that of an eager young recruit who has been told to 'wait outside' while his test scores are processed. He has been waiting for 216 years now. But he is very patient (part of his scout programming). He has grown to like the little woodland creatures, the squirrels and grizzly bears and giant mutant wolf spiders. He will wait until someone comes (with the proper authorization, of course—HARV[E]'s sentry programming is very strong) to tell him whether or not he has passed his evaluations.

Until then, silent, deadly but meaning well, HARV[E] patrols the countryside in a ten-kilometer radius from his camouflaged base, allowing no one to damage Uncle Ken's, or hurt his one friend, ELWOOD.

### ■ **ELWOOD**

No, not the Cyberpunk leader. ELWOOD 3610 (Electronic Long-term Warfare Outpost Operations Device) is the other half of Project Pooka, an immobile self-aware tactical computer intended to coordinate the actions of ten HARV[E]s. ELWOOD knows the war is over and the high command is dead and nobody's ever going to take HARV[E] home. But he hasn't told HARV[E], because then the tank would have no purpose in his life, and besides, if HARV[E] went

away, soon the scavengers would be in to scrap ELWOOD—and HARV[E] would be all alone.

Sort of gets you right there, don't it?

ELWOOD 3610 completely fills the trunk of a 1967 Thunderbird convertible, parked in the Service Station garage area. ELWOOD weighs two metric tons (concealed supports hold up the car's back end). His power and external data bus cables run through the car and out the hood (where they look like battery-charge cables) to, respectively, a buried isotope generator like the one at the PACE Studio, and an antenna array on the roof, concealed inside a giant fiberglass Studebaker with a giant fiberglass Uncle Ken waving from behind the wheel.

He has an external speaker, which he uses to talk to HARV[E], or friendly passers-by. ELWOOD is genial (if you want to make him sound like Jimmy Stewart, we have no way of stopping you). The machines also have a radio link which is not normally used (so the tank can 'maintain radio silence') but which ELWOOD will not hesitate to use if threatened.

If ELWOOD or his car are moved more than a few centimeters, the aging cables give way, and ELWOOD 'dies'. This makes HARV[E] very angry with whomever killed his friend. Simply reconnecting ELWOOD is not sufficient: he must be run through a coldstart procedure, requiring Software skill, to get his higher logic areas going again. ELWOOD can be operated off the crawler's power plant; the crawler may not fire its weapons during such operation.

### ■ **HARV[E] and ELWOOD vs. the PCs**

'Oh, boy!' I hear you say. 'An invisible, silent tank! Boy, am I going to have some fun with those poor Troubleshooters!'

Actually, the problem is going to be finding some excuse not to turn the PCs to applesauce. What we have here is the equivalent of an invisible, silent, fire-breathing dragon. No way the PCs are going to walk away from that one.



What you can't see can't hurt you. Right?

Though HARV[E] and ELWOOD are a great idea, they are just too tough in game terms. So we have to make them psychologically wimpy pacifists, or your players are going to get a lot of practice roleplaying vapors.

Use these principles to keep Project Pooka from crushing your players' morale:

1. HARV[E] is *almost* silent and *almost* invisible. His hoverfans make a barely noticeable hum, and his designers never quite handled the problem of disguising his shadow—in poor light, the shadow is masked, but in strong light, like sunlight, the shadow is faint but noticeable.

Whenever the PCs are quiet and looking around, HARV[E] is probably right behind their backs, keeping an eye on them. Tell the PCs about an odd, faint buzzing that seems to come from no particular direction. And when they are looking over the station, tell one of the PCs by note he caught a glimpse of something moving out of the corner of his eye, but there was nothing there when he turned to look. This sort of thing keeps the PCs on their toes and paranoid, so they won't get careless and do something rash.

2. HARV[E] and ELWOOD always give a series of verbal and physical warnings before they unleash their main arsenals. For example, as the PCs approach the station, ELWOOD addresses them through his external speaker, 'Caution! This is a restricted area! Danger! Tactical weapons testing in progress! Warning!'

And if the PCs do something foolish like start shooting up the station, HARV[E] politely warns the PCs by broadcasting over their com units, 'I'm sorry, I have been directed to destroy you if you do not desist these actions. Please stop immediately.' If the PCs don't desist, he turns their trailer into Swiss cheese. If that hint is insufficient...

Go ahead. Fry 'em.

## ■ Fill 'er up, Uncle Ken

Everything here is worth salvaging: the cars and the bots especially—even the ancient Motor's and Chilton service manuals *might* not crumble into dust at a touch. Of course, if the players figure out a way to deactivate (lotsa luck) or distract HARV[E], the Cyberpunks will be on Uncle Ken's like locusts. And Nouvelle Vague will decide it's a real good time to ambush the Punks. As for the Folks Back Home, Dale-U will kill for cars, or even parts; Philip-U will kill to keep him from getting them; The Computer will want ELWOOD captured or destroyed. Probably destroyed. The Computer has a big ego problem about other computers.

If a fight starts and ELWOOD is still connected, you might wish to throw in his perimeter defenses:

a belt of mines around the Service Station, and a remote machinegun turret inside the dummy car on the roof. All but a few of the mines have deteriorated and merely make thick black smoke, and the sighting camera for the gun is broken, so ELWOOD must shoot blind.

You have probably noticed the computer has the same name as one of the Cyberpunk leaders. This not only allows the designer to get in an extra pop-culture joke, but opens up lots of opportunities for further confusion. For instance, if the players talk about killing Elwood the Cyberpunk while HARV[E] can hear them, the tank assumes they mean ELWOOD 3610, and is very upset with them. Likewise if the Punks, especially Jake, should hear about grabbing ELWOOD and taking him back to Alpha Complex.

## ■ No direction home

By now the Troubleshooters should have **A.** assembled a load of loot to take home, or **B.** gotten involved in a gang war, or **C.** caused The Computer to order Vulture strikes on the Studio, the Service Station and/or themselves (in any combination), or **D.** all of the above.

It is time to consider a strategic and orderly withdrawal (sample of Troubleshooter humor: 'What do you call 40 Troubleshooters hanging off the skid of a flybot?'). The less The Computer knows about mission status, the easier this will be, because many fewer things will be hunting down the Troubleshooters.

However, the more things that are in fact breathing down their necks, the more effective the climax to this episode (and with it, the entire mission) will be. This is the part of the narrative, familiar to all from movies and television, called The Chase. And as Mack Sennett knew, the more things in The Chase and the crazier they are—cops, firetrucks, steamrollers, roller skaters, baby carriages, and don't forget the truckload of custard pies—the better.

Imagine a long cone laid on the countryside. The point of the cone is the Troubleshooter team, trying to make their very slow crawler go very fast, without losing their trailer load of videodiscs and spare shock absorbers or the Nash Rambler being towed from the trailer's rear hitch. If the crawler has konked out, it is being towed by a straining transport flybot, possibly using Troubleshooters as tow cables. Behind them come the Cyberpunks, pedaling their toy motorbikes like mad. (Feel free to insert a downslope here to help them out.) Behind the Punks come the Vaguers, laughing hysterically with murderous intent. Then the surviving Studio Engineers, in the Studio Head's BMW with the Goons on the running boards. Some miscellaneous natives for local color. Siberian Communist timberwolves. The Great Jihad. Sandworms of Dune. The Last Secret Weapon of the Third Reich. Emperor Ming's Death Squadron.

You get the idea. Don't forget HARV[E]: ol' Gomer Pylebot certainly hasn't forgotten the bad men who killed his buddy Sergeant ELWOOD.

And above it all, just behind the Mothership and the Killer Bees, flies every Vulture The Computer has been able to get airborne, with orders to bomb, strafe, scatter, destroy, do *something* to the long-dreaded-and-finally-here Invasion of the Communist Mutants from Hell. (Hey, what a great title for a mission!)

## ■ Into the wild blue yonder

So what happens when they reach Alpha Complex?

Consider the possibilities:

You could find some way to defuse the whole explosion, what we writers who want to show off our Latin call a *deus ex machina*:

1. One of the warring High Programmers shoots the other dead, and The Computer freezes all destruct orders until the contradictions are sorted out.
2. The Computer finds out about the High Programmer's treason and has them both shot. (Same results as #1.)
3. Another Alpha Complex, seeing the mass concentration of, well, stuff, thinks it is being invaded, and launches a counterstrike that exactly neutralizes this one. (Impressive, if a trifle desperate.)
4. Great Cthulhu rises from sunken R'lyeh and eats everybody, no saving roll. (Sorry, got carried away.)

## ■ The anticlimactic ending

If you take the easy way out and let Alpha Complex survive, there will, of course, be a debriefing.

A squad of BLUE Vulture Squadron guards takes the characters to the doors of Briefing Room AA and leaves them there. No security device bars the way: instead, a large, leatherette-bound book sits on a small table. Attached to the book by a chain is a ballpoint pen. A small sign above the table reads: 'Enter and sign in, please.'

The pen is almost out of ink; it runs out after the third Troubleshooter has signed in. (Whether some or all the Troubleshooters do not sign in makes no difference; the information in the book is classified ULTRAVIOLET, and no one will ever read it.)

The PCs probably enter the briefing room with trepidation, no doubt expecting to face a stern Dan-V ready to blame them for everything: destruction of Computer property, leading the Commie invasion to Alpha Complex, violating The Prime Directive, etc. However, when they do summon enough courage to enter, the room is empty. The high bench is vacant: a single spotlight is focused on the chair that Dan-V used



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

to occupy. Even The Computer's terminal in the room is deactivated.

After about ten minutes, the spotlight goes out. Time passes....

Eventually the Troubleshooters should get tired of standing around in the dark and go home.

Actually, The Computer has decided that the mission was a failure. Since this would imply a mistake on The Computer's part in okaying the mission, and The Computer never makes mistakes, The Computer has decided that the mission never occurred. Therefore no one has come to the briefing room to be debriefed, because there is no mission to be debriefed from. Dan-V has been executed for wasting valuable Computer time requesting status reports on a mission that never existed.

The Troubleshooters earn no rewards or penalties for Episode 4. If they keep their mouths shut, they can keep everything they found Outdoors. No one will ever admit anything ever happened, anywhere.

### ■ The Big Bang

Another option, one that is suitable to **PARANOIA** as to few other games, is to let nature take its course. Think about it. In fantasy, Cosmic Evil is never *really* allowed to overthrow the nice pastoral feudal autocracy. In space opera, the planetoid never *really* hits the inhabited planet.

The villain *always* has a button that blows up his headquarters, and *always* shows Agent 007 where it is.

Haven't you always wanted to see the logical thing happen, the world *not* get saved at the last instant? Remember the first time you saw *Dr. Strangelove*? Well, now you can. Your players shouldn't mind. People who get upset when their characters don't reach 15th level don't play **PARANOIA**. (Not twice, anyway.)

A suggested scenario to bring the mission to a memorable socko finish:

The cross-country motorcade draws close to the walls of Alpha Complex. The doors show no sign of opening. The chase shows no sign of slowing down. The Vultures peel off, screaming, for attack runs. Everybody is shooting. Some of them are even hitting things, not that it's making any difference.

One of the Troubleshooters (perhaps remembering the Vulture raid at the end of Episode 3) points out that the bombers are going to late-apex their dives again: wherever the bombs and beams hit, the Vultures are going to plow right into the city.

Every com and multicorder screen begins flashing:

**YOU ARE ALL TRAITORS EVERY ONE OF YOU I KNEW IT FROM THE FIRST BUT NOW I HAVE PROOF OF IT BY**

### GEOMETRIC LOGIC

**IT WAS THE STRAWBERRIES  
ABSOLUTE PRIORITY ORDER 001  
ALL VEHICLES I SAY AGAIN ALL  
TRAITOR VEHICLES TERMINATE  
POWER INSTANTLY  
I, THE GREAT OZ, HAVE SPOKEN**

The air is suddenly quiet as all the Vulture engines die. There is only an ominous whistling of wings.

Now, of course, the Vultures can't pull out of the dive, nor can they dump their ordnance loads.

By the hundreds, they punch through the walls and roof of Alpha Complex.

There is a moment of stillness, and then the bombs go off. Another pause (play it for all it's worth) and then secondary explosions occur in power plants, armories, chemical storage; everywhere. The earth heaves as all of Alpha goes up.

Everyone stares for a while. They start arguing about where to go next. There is supposed to be another Alpha Complex only a couple hundred clicks away, not so bad if they can hot-wire the crawler and figure out a hundred clicks which way.

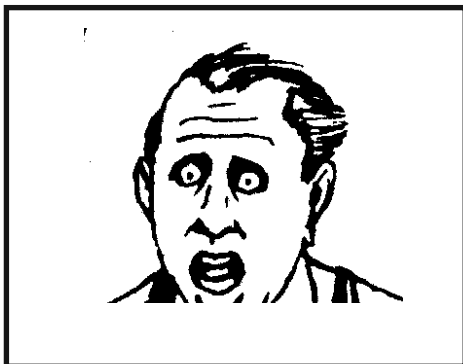
HARV[E] noses up and levels his laser. 'Are you going to take my friend ELWOOD home now, or do I have to get mean?'

You might ask them if they have any better ideas...



Citizen Sessil-B-DML's great epic.

## YCBBB PC #1



### Tex-Y-DBF-3

**Male HPD&MC Communications Officer**

**Security clearance:** YELLOW

**Credits:** 120

**Tics:** Describes everything in vague terms of color, shape and purpose.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Tex-Y:** I can't get the... the silvery long thing with the yellow bit to make things, y'know, sizzle.

**Eric-Y:** What? [*Checks where Tex-Y is pointing.*] Your laser has stopped working? Put on another barrel then.

**Tex-Y:** So, I need to screw a new tubular yellow whatsit on the front of the silvery doodad that goes fizzle?

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 09

Con Games 13

Moxie 01

Whistle at a Pitch That Makes People Forget What You Just Said 15

##### Stealth 04

##### Violence 10

Agility 01

Consume Mind-Bending Chemicals Without Discernible Effect 16

Energy Weapons 14

Fine Manipulation 01

Hand Weapons 14

Thrown Weapons 14

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 08

Electronic Engineering 12

Nuclear Engineering 01

Tune Com Unit to Same Frequency as Someone You Can See 14

##### Software 02

##### Wetware 07

Cloning 01

Make Cold Fun Into Psychotropic Concoction 13

Outdoor Life 01

Pharmatherapy 11

Psychotherapy 11

**Open slots for narrow specialties:** 2

(Stealth, Software)

## YCBBB PC #2



### Brett-Y-WYD-2

**Male PLC Hygiene Officer**

**Security clearance:** YELLOW

**Credits:** 120

**Tics:** Speaks in long sentences without taking pause or breath.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Brett-Y:** So, basically you want us to go into the deserted underground station that's currently offline according to Tech Services and find our way to where we can install the system patches necessary to bring the place back online in the control of The Computer without getting ourselves killed by any frankenstein bots or traitors with murderous intent but with due care not to cause any unnecessary and unfortunate collateral damage—would that be correct?

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 07

Bootlicking 11

Chutzpah 01

##### Stealth 03

Hide Small Objects in Cheeks Without Speaking

Funny 09

##### Violence 09

Energy Weapons 13

Field Weapons 01

Projectile Weapons 13

Scream So Loud Everyone Ducks 15

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 07

Bot Ops & Maintenance 11

Chemical Engineering 11

Vehicle Ops & Maintenance 01

Weapon & Armor Maintenance 01

##### Software 06

Bot Programming 10

Hacking 01

Make Docbots Confuse Sleepy-Sleepy With Wakey-Wakey 12

##### Wetware 08

Know Where to Poke to Make People Sneeze 14

Outdoor Life 12

Psychotherapy 01

**Open slots for narrow specialties:** 2

(Management, Hardware)

## YCBBB PC #3



### Wyatt-Y-VSC-3

**Male CPU Loyalty Officer**

**REGISTERED MUTANT**

**Security clearance:** YELLOW

**Credits:** 120

**Tics:** Easily distracted.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Donald-Y:** So, if we split up and take them from both sides, we shouldn't end up getting killed too badly.

Okay with you, Wyatt-Y?

**Wyatt-Y:** Ooh... look at that big orange truck. Yeesh, the size of the wheels on that thing!

**Donald-Y:** Wyatt-Y! Do you understand your role in this risky and possibly suicidal plan?

**Wyatt-Y:** Yeah, sure. I understa— Oh, wow! There was a flashing light up there or something.

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 10

Bootlicking 14

Confuse Jackobot FOAD-34 w/ Spurious Logic 16

Con Games 14

Interrogation 01

Chutzpah 01

##### Stealth 04

##### Violence 09

Energy Weapons 13

Field Weapons 01

Make Target Dance Like Maniac Without Actually

Hitting Him With Even One Shot 15

Projectile Weapons 13

Thrown Weapons 01

Unarmed Combat 13

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 04

Get 'Gas Giant' Vending Machines to Dispense Two Sodas for Price of One 10

##### Software 08

Bot Programming 01

Data Analysis 12

Data Search 12

Operating Systems 01

##### Wetware 05

Plausibly Explain Other People's Dreams 11

**Open slots for narrow specialties:** 2

(Stealth, Software)

## Wyatt-Y-VSC-3

### Male CPU Loyalty Officer

**Mutation:** Precognition (declared), Minor Telekinesis, Telepathic Sense

**Secret society:** Psion (degree 3)

**Secret skills:** Forgery 09, Video Games 17, Twitchtalk 12

**Background:** You've always been a bit of a dreamer. When your dreams started coming true, you realized at once that you were a psionic. It didn't bother you a bit: you knew all about projective time series statistics from your work with The Computer. You even registered your power. And you joined the Psion secret society, because you wanted to be the best psionic you could possibly be. The society taught you to communicate, and even to move objects, by pure mental power.

Then what happens? The lousy fuzzbrian Mystics 'open up' one of your clones' minds, and can't get all the tinkertoys back in the box. So The Computer calls you up to the Troubleshooters. Big thanks for all your work!

Okay, you'll serve The Computer. (Termination is not part of your career plans.) But one day, The Computer won't be looking. And *then*—pow! Right in the I/O bus!

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Your opening may have come. Recently you received a desperate telepathic communication from a fellow Psion. The stinking Mystics were running his mind through the wringer. Before he expired, he told you of a black box, which seems to be somehow toxic to The Computer. The Mystics are after it, and if they get it first, they'll use it to fry every clear human mind in Alpha Complex.

One of the team members is a sewer-brained Mystic—but you don't know which yet. Mystics are weird, though. It's only a matter of time till you spot him. And rumor says your IntSec officer is a Death Leopard. Better keep an eye on him.

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

(2) YELLOW laser barrels

Jumpsuit

Utility belt and pouches

Flashlight

YELLOW canvas backpack

Personal jackobot FOAD-JAC-34

(3) Telescopalmine pills (experimental pill version of an IntSec truth drug; ILLEGAL)

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit YELLOW reflex armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

## Brett-Y-WYD-2

### Male PLC Medical Officer

**Mutation:** Chameleon

**Secret society:** Sierra Club (degree 3)

**Secret skills:** Dendrology 14, Rock Climbing 08, Bioweapons 12

**Background:** You really wish people would let you alone. Your Chameleon mutant ability is a blessing: fading into the landscape is just what you've always wanted to do.

You joined the Sierra Club secret society because they have a dream like yours, a dream of the Outdoors, a great big place where you can go off and climb a mountain, where you can stand next to a tree and nobody will tell you the tree is classified, where you can kill things and eat them with nobody asking you to pass the chymopapain please and can I have some more of the blue soup and hey you stupid clone you got stuff on my... sigh.

You hate being a Troubleshooter. Everybody looks at you and asks when you're going to be dead. And you hate Death Leopards, because they're all showoffs. And you hate mutants because they're weird; they have three arms and things.

You'd really like to kill all the Troubleshooters and Death Leopards and mutants and go outside and stand beside a tree and turn green, but you've got to do it in some way nobody will *notice*.

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

There's this guy named Obregon Weirdhat or something like that. He's from the Outdoors, *really* Outdoors, and the Troubleshooters are after him, because he's from the Outdoors and they think he's a Commie. He's got some kind of box thing that The Computer wants. If you help him get away and get the box thing for the Sierra Club, Wildbag (or whatever) will take you Outdoors with him. And if you can get back inside with directions for getting to the Outdoors, you could become a Folk Hero like the legendary Smokey the Bear or Jane Fonda...

Of course, you aren't going to let these vat scum citizens seep out over your mountain and play with the trees. Hah! The Sierra Club can be trusted with such knowledge, but anyone else who discovers the route is going to be a sorry citizen.

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

(2) YELLOW laser barrels

Jumpsuit

Utility belt and pouches

Flashlight

YELLOW canvas backpack

Hollow-handled knife (looks standard, but used for secret society messages; not illegal, but likely to draw embarrassing questions)

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit YELLOW reflex armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

## Tex-Y-DBF-3

### Male HPD&MC Communications Officer

**Mutation:** Uncanny Luck

**Secret society:** Mystic (rank 4)

**Secret skills:** Drug Procurement 09, Whistling 11, Bribery 12

**Background:** If you had your way, HPD & Mind Control would be HPD & Mind Alteration. You enjoy experimenting with psychochemicals, subsonics, color psychology and more. You've swallowed combinations of chemicals that would turn ordinary people into kitchen appliances. No wonder you're secretly a Mystic.

But now you're a Troubleshooter, called up to replace a mysteriously deceased clone. No longer can you play with other's minds like modeling clay. Now you're supposed to hunt down people who explore the wonderful world of human software modifications.

But perhaps there's a way. Your superiors in the Mystics have asked you to be on the lookout for this...well, black thing. Some kind of box. Inside it is apparently the ultimate cosmic high. Rumor has it that the box can even get The Computer high. Imagine that: The Computer itself turned on to the Cosmic Whatever It Is. Stoned Hardware.

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Use your Troubleshooter status to recover the black box for the Mystic All—but do so before Corpore Metal's agents can do so. Those tin-plated clowns, who think Cosmicness can be engraved on a circuit board, want to feed the box into their cold, uncool equations. Do not allow this.

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

(2) YELLOW laser barrels

Jumpsuit

Utility belt and pouches

Flashlight

YELLOW canvas backpack

(3) Aerosol THC grenades (effect like a stun gun; ILLEGAL)

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

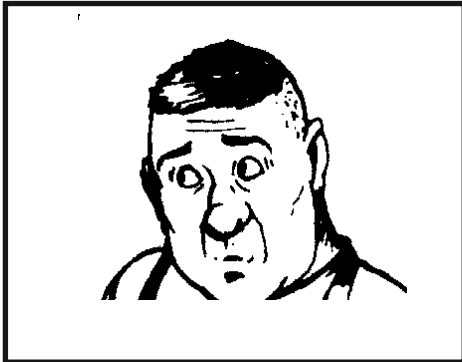
Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit YELLOW reflex armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

## YCBBB PC #4



### Miles-Y-LOM-2

#### Male Tech Svcs Happiness Officer

Security clearance: YELLOW

Credits: 120

Tics: Tends to jumble up simple processes.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Miles-Y:** Check the mirror. Ease off the brake. Close the door. Deactivate park. Activate primary pile. Maneuver into the road. Turn the ignition. Signal.  
*[Sounds of other vehicles skidding, honking horns.]*

**Rest of the team:** AAAAAAAAAAAAAH!

**Miles-Y:** Have you guys put on your seatbelts?

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 06

Chutzpah 10

Convince Superiors You Never Left Your Desk 12

Intimidation 01

##### Stealth 04

Almost Completely Muffle Autocar Engine Noises 10

##### Violence 07

Demolition 01

Energy Weapons 11

Hand Weapons 11

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 11

Bot Ops & Maintenance 15

Chemical Engineering 01

Habitat Engineering 01

Mechanical Engineering 15

Nuclear Engineering 01

Pull a Bootleg Reverse in a Crawler 17

Vehicle Ops & Maintenance 15

##### Software 09

Bot Programming 13

Data Analysis 01

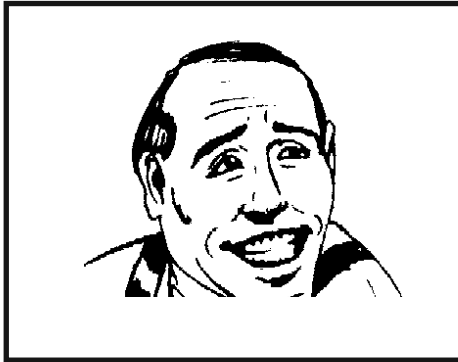
Soothe Team Transport's Jangled Bot Brain 15

##### Wetware 03

**Open slots for narrow specialties: 2**

(Violence, Wetware)

## YCBBB PC #5



### Donald-Y-EIN-3

#### Male Power Services Loyalty Officer

Security clearance: YELLOW

Credits: 120

Tics: Always muttering and worrying about the worse-case scenario.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Miles-Y:** I've lost contact with the others.

**Donald-Y:** Crud. Pinned down and shot to ribbons, fried like algae chips.

**Miles-Y:** Look, I'm sure they've just wandered out of view... I don't hear any laser fire.

**Donald-Y:** So, we're lost. They're lost. Crud. We're never going to get out of here. Surrounded by the enemy, no place to turn, clock ticking down to zero...

**Miles-Y:** *[Sighs.]*

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 04

Chutzpah 08

Analyze Worst-Case Scenario 10

Con Games 01

##### Stealth 08

Palm Treasonous Tools Without

Provoking Suspicion 14

Security Systems 12

Shadowing 01

##### Violence 09

Energy Weapons 13

Field Weapons 01

Projectile Weapons 13

Thrown Weapons 01

Vehicular Combat 13

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 09

Chemical Engineering 01

Coax a Gut-Wrenching Turbo Boost Out of an

Ordinary Autocar 15

Vehicle Ops & Maintenance 13

##### Software 07

Financial Systems 01

Turn Minor Bot Software Glitch Into a Homicidal

Rampage 13

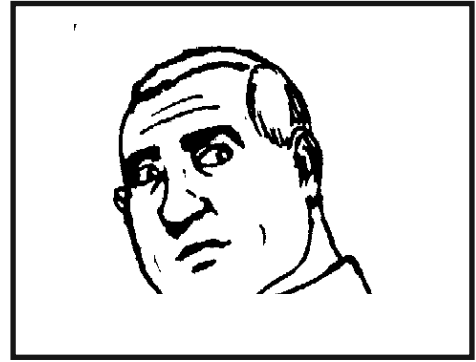
Vehicle Programming 11

##### Wetware 03

**Open slots for narrow specialties: 2**

(Violence, Wetware)

## YCBBB PC #6



### Eric-Y-KTH-3

#### Male Armed Forces Equipment Guy

Security clearance: YELLOW

Credits: 120

Tics: Suffers from a constant hangover.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Commie traitor:** Ve are to be thinkink you should be surrrrenderink!

**Eric-Y:** I'm thinking I need to lie down in a dark room and you need to stop shouting.

**Brett-Y:** We fight for the good of the complex! We shall never surrender!

**Eric-Y:** Hey man, that's good. You keep 'em busy while I go see if they have an asperquaint dispenser 'round here.

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 09

Bootlicking 01

Convince Others You Weren't Really Asleep on the Job 15

Hygiene 01

Interrogation 13

Oratory 13

##### Stealth 08

Disguise 01

Surveillance 12

##### Violence 09

Unexpectedly Give a Powerful Shove 15

Energy Weapons 13

Field Weapons 01

Projectile Weapons 13

Unarmed Combat 13

Vehicular Combat 01

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 06

Habitat Engineering 01

Optimize Laser to Squeeze Off an Extra Shot 12

Weapon & Armor Maintenance 10

##### Software 03

##### Wetware 05

Mix Intoxicating Brew From Ordinary Fizzy Beverages and Food Scraps 11

**Open slots for narrow specialties: 2**

(Stealth, Software)

## Eric-Y-KTH-3

### Male Armed Forces IntSec Equipmt Guy

**Actual IntSec service firm:** Pinkietons (infiltrating a rival Threat Assessors firm in Armed Forces)

**Mutation:** Combat Mind

**Secret society:** Death Leopard (degree 4)

**Secret skills:** Demolitions 12, Partying 12, Gambling 13

**Background:** The only thing in the world better than being a Death Leopard is being a Leopard who works as a Troubleshooter. You get to carry a laser and use it any time you feel like it. Sometimes they send you out to nab the infamous Leopard funsmith known only as 'Captain Electric'. If The Computer knew that you yourself are the daring Captain, it'd crash a disk.

You've heard occasional murmurs from fellow Death Leopards that you are not as full-tilt-bozo as you used to be—that perhaps you are getting old and cautious. But these murmurs don't bother you. You're saving yourself for The Big One—the caper that will rocket you to superstar-class immortality. In the meantime, there's plenty of subtler fun to be had in an unsuspecting group of fancypants Troubleshooters.

You're just a little worried about being teamed with Tex-Y-DBF-3. Does he know it was you who pushed his clone predecessor into the particle accelerator? Oh, well. He glowed so nicely.

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Heads up, Captain Electric: Your assistance is enlisted by a star-class compatriot. Screaming Sarah Slick, the Duchess of Rock and Roll, has proposed Fun on a Vast Scale sometime within the next 72 hours, and You Are Invited. Alas, a passel of those psniving Psions threaten to crash the party. They might even dress up as lighthearted Leopards, the psychic pschnooks. Make sure they do not do this anti-thing, beginning with your own companions in law'n'order, one of whom you're sure is a Psion.

You are sure which one of your team has the glowplug brain, but Psions can't help showing off (their one small virtue). It'll only be a matter of time. And then—pyromania!

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

(2) YELLOW laser barrels

Jumpsuit

Utility belt and pouches

YELLOW canvas backpack

Multicorder sabotage device (PDC plugin chip that erases Multicorder recordings when activated within one meter of a recording cartridge; ILLEGAL)

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit YELLOW reflec armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

## Donald-Y-EIN-3

### Male Power Services Loyalty Officer

**Mutation:** Mechanical Intuition, Electroshock

**Secret society:** Corpore Metal (degree 3)

**Secret skills:** Cyborging 08, Botspotting 03, Old Reckoning Computer Languages 09

**Background:** Crud. The world was just great in Power Services. You could sit behind the controls of a colossal machine and imagine you *were* the machine, sleek and powerful and immortal with routine maintenance. You always like machines: they would, it seemed, open up and talk to you. People are okay, too, though they wear out too quick. You joined Corpore Metal because they seemed to be working toward the best of both worlds.

And you were on your way *up* in Power Services. They let you drive transports, crawlers, even flybots. Heck, you *were* Power, as you discovered one day when you recharged a power capacitor from your naked fingertips. You could have been somebody. You could have been a *cyborg*.

But now you're a Troubleshooter. Crud.

Maybe it's not such a bad life. You get to drive stuff occasionally. You can carry a laser, which is fun. (If you ever achieve your dream of being cyborged, you're going to have a laser installed in your index finger.)

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

There's a Romantic in your team, and you've got to kill him. (Crud.) Rumor says the Romantics are linked up with PURGE psychos who've got some kind of gadget that can burn out high-level circuitry like nobody's business. The PURGERS are going to use it on a major Computer subsystem, and then the Romantics will move in and teach everybody some sick thing like rug-weaving or miniature golf.

The Romantic's got to be either that sneaky wimp Brett-Y-WYD, or maybe Tex-Y-DBF, the space case. Eric-Y is laser-happy: maybe you can get him to do the actual shooting. And grab the gadget—probably a modified bot brain—for yourself and Corpore Metal.

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

YELLOW laser barrels

Jumpsuit

Utility belt and pouches

YELLOW canvas backpack

*Special* vehicle toolkit (for making unauthorized adjustments and alterations to vehicles, like hot-wiring starters, disabling speed-governors, deactivating safety equipment and so on; ILLEGAL)

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit YELLOW reflec armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

## Miles-Y-LOM-2

### Male Tech Services Happiness Officer

**Mutation:** Precognition

**Secret society:** Romantics (rank 3)

**Secret skills:** Frisbee Throwing 13, Line Dancing 08, Old Reckoning DIY Television 13

**Background:** 'Syntholube-fingers'. That's what they've been calling you since you got out of the clone tank. And dropped the electric hand drier into the tank, terminating your #1 clone on the spot. And it isn't fair. You can fix anything, better than new and in record time. So you let a few chips get loose inside a warbot. So it identified BLF Sector as a column of Commie warbots. It performed the attack maneuvers perfectly, didn't it?

That was no reason to transfer you to the Troubleshooters.

They only did it because Troubleshooters all carry lasers, and you can fix lasers like a wizard, even if you can't hit the broad side of a residential block with one.

You know why you're a Romantic. You long for the days when Americans could fix anything on the road, and punch out a Commie before he could reach for his ratty cheap Commie gun. (Once, at a Romantic meeting, they showed a forbidden tape of *The Fighting Seabees*. You stood up and applauded when John Wayne reprogrammed the dozerbot.)

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

'Black box. More tapes. In Stone—' That was all of the message you could read before the guardbot came by. You know what black boxes are: bot brains. You know what tapes are: Old Reckoning stories about scientists like John Wayne and Boris Karloff and Mr. Peabody. But what's 'stone'? Once you heard a Sierra Clubber use the word...

Maybe a bot brain knows where a cache of tapes is located, and you have to get it away from the Sierra Club. Ordinarily you get along okay with the Clubbers...but this is different. This is *war*.

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

(2) YELLOW laser barrels

Jumpsuit

Utility belt and pouches

YELLOW canvas backpack

Contraband manual *25 Ways to Beat the Bot*

(disguised as a standard datapad; procedures for disrupting normal bot programming without revealing tampering; PROFOUNDLY ILLEGAL)

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

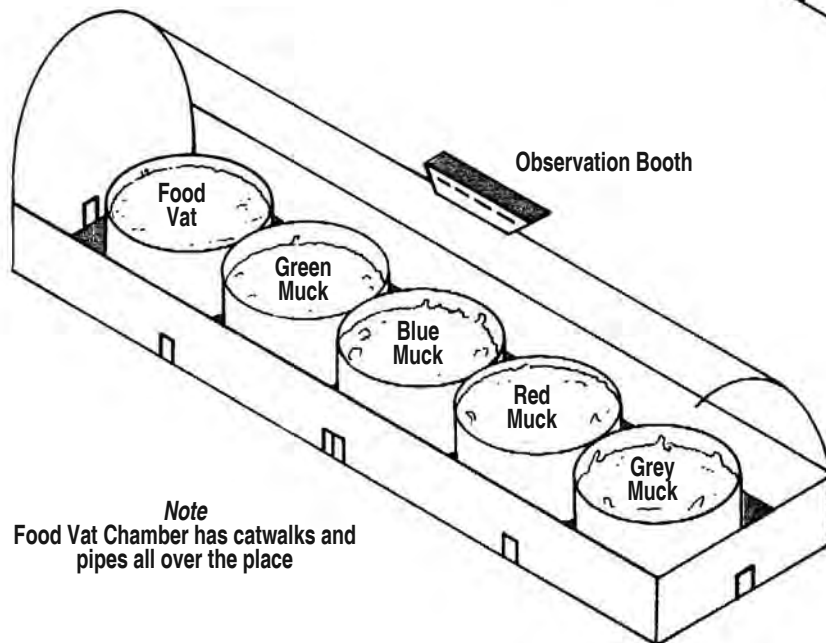
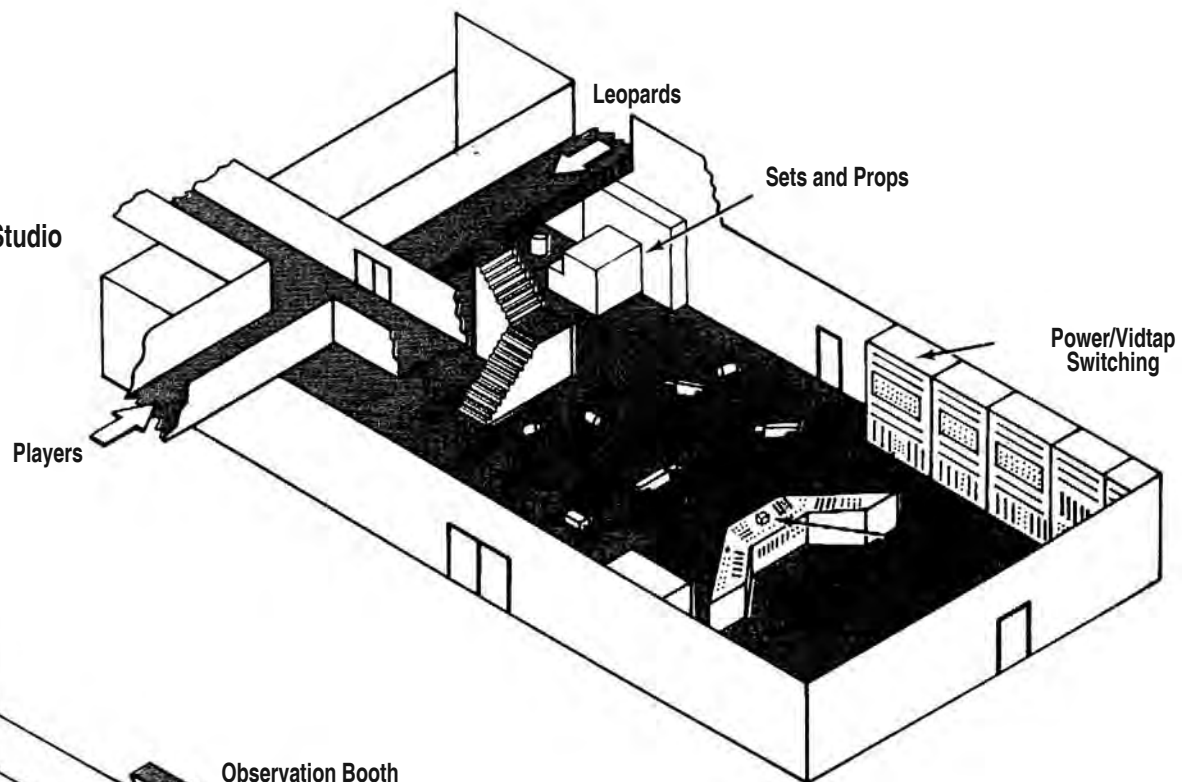
Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit YELLOW reflec armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

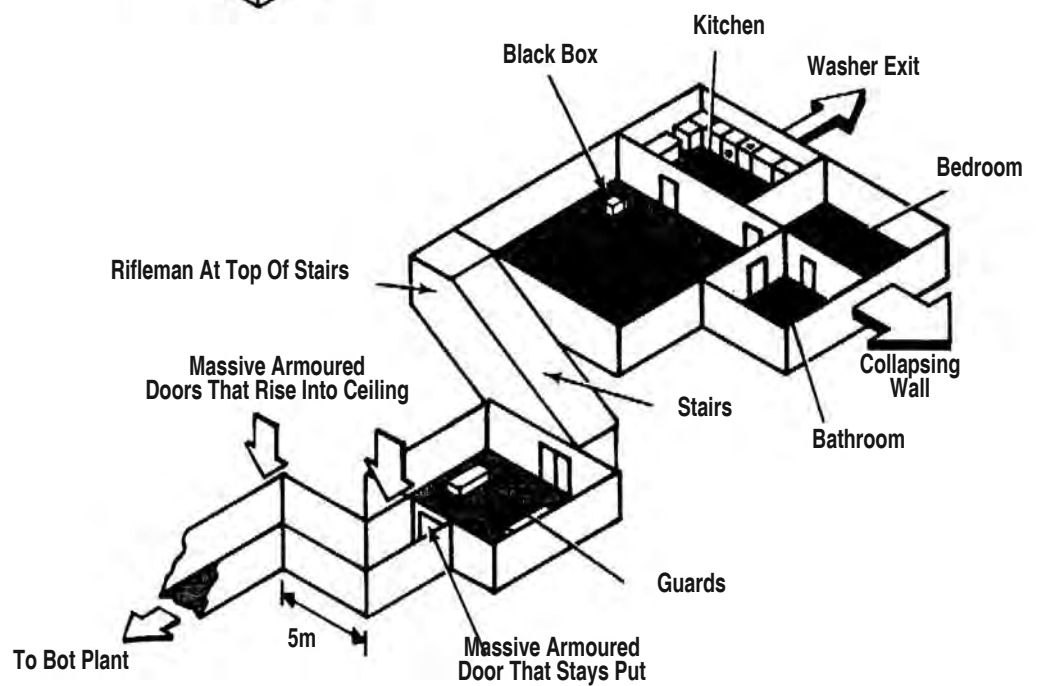
**Mission One:**  
Rasterman Ganja's TV Studio



*Note*  
Food Vat Chamber has catwalks and pipes all over the place

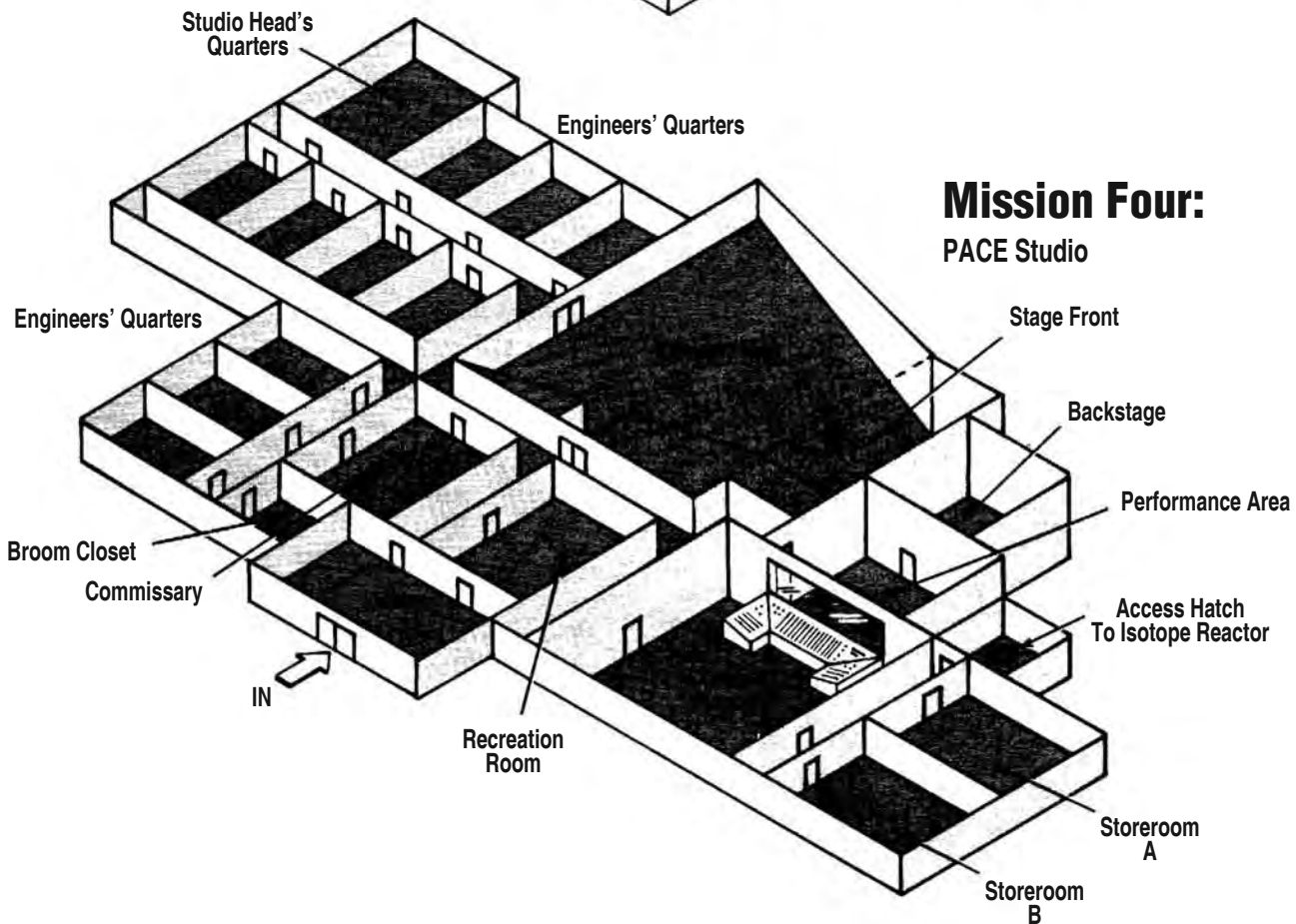
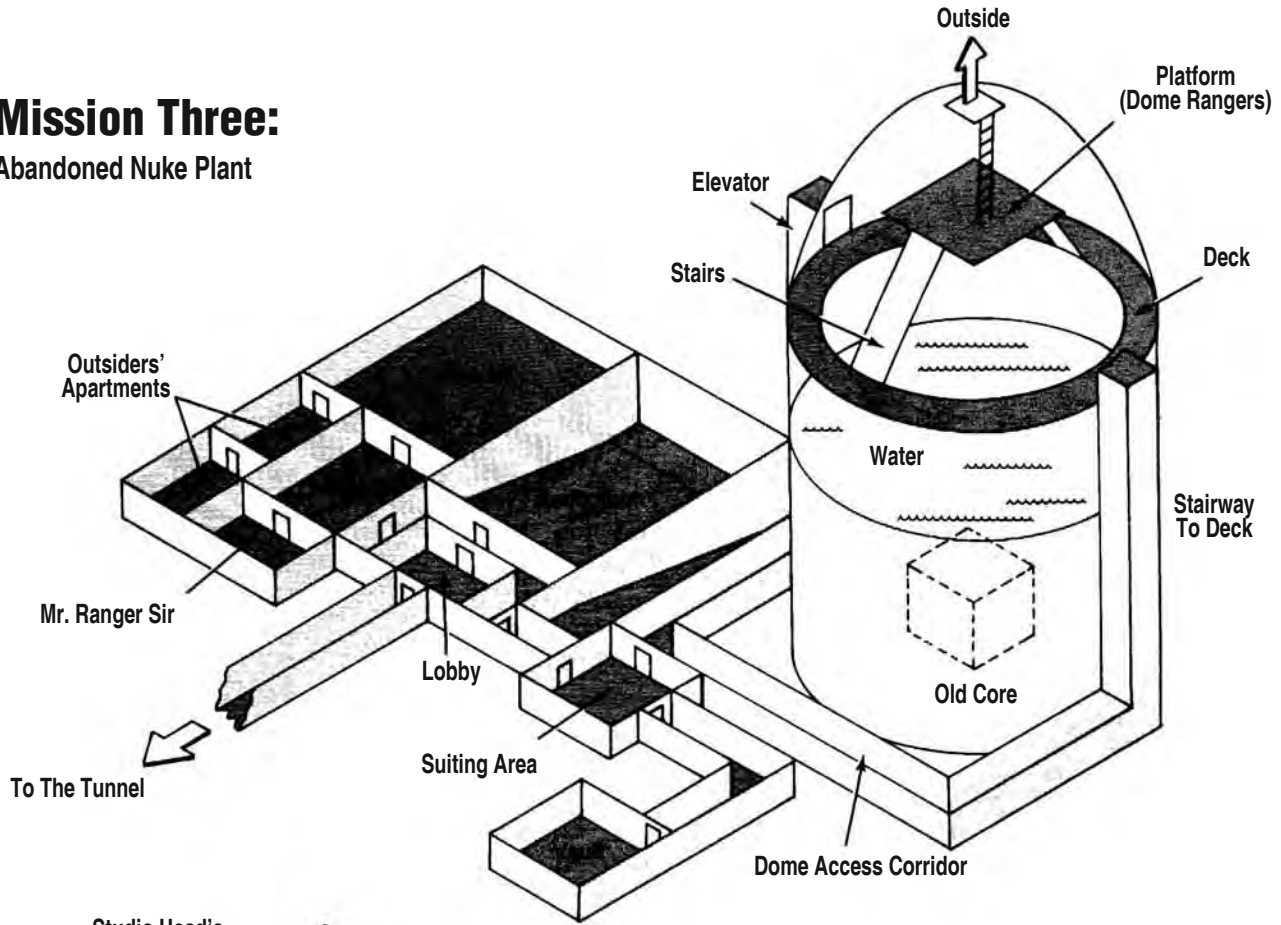
**Mission One:**  
Food Vat Chambers

**Mission Two:**  
Safe House Apartment

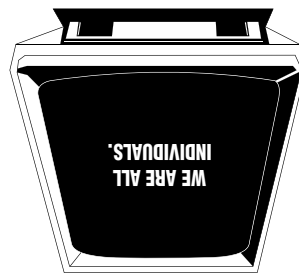
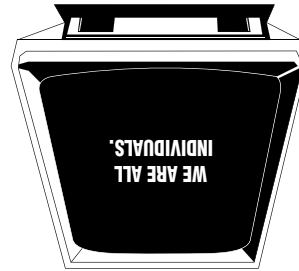




### Mission Three: Abandoned Nuke Plant



### Mission Four: PACE Studio



- (1) Multirecorder 1 with recorder program cartridge
- (1) Multirecorder 1 with Rf tracer
- (1) hottorch
- (6) Smoke grenades
- (6) HE grenades
- solid-slug ammo
- (2) Slugthrowers, each with 3 clips
- (1) Suit YELLOW reflec armor
- (2) Suits plate armor
- (12) YELLOW laser pistol barrels

**EQUIPMENT LIST: EPISODE 1**

**:MISSION ALERT**

:Reference = YCBBB. 4.5.2

**:COMPUTER REDUCTION ANALYSIS/**

**MISSION PROFILE**

:ANX.294.OUT (PRIORITY)

:CR/AMP INDICATED PRIMARY TARGET IS PACE STUDIO. PRECISE COORDINATES NOT AVAILABLE. COINCIDENT DATA IMPLIES LOCATION AT JUNCTION OF FRANKIE VALLEY [??sp] AND FOUR SEASONS [REF OR.DOC RL337

'MANHATTAN RESTAURANT GUIDE'].

:CRA/MP INDICATES PRIMARY TARGET IS

AUTOCAR PRODUCTION FACILITY

STORING PRODUCTION DATA ON

MICRODISK MACHINE/ACOUSTIC

READABLE.

:PATTERNMATCH DATA REPORTS LOCALS

WERE MAKING THUNDERBIRDS [light strike

a/cft] AND HAD MULTIPLY-ITERATED FUN

UNTIL THEIR DADDY [Karl Marx, father of

Communism] TOOK THEIR T-BIRD AWAY.

ALSO POSSIBLE PRODUCTION OF LITTLE

RED CORVETTES [small communist strike

w/cft]. APPARENTLY EVACUATED DENVER

BECAUSE THEY LOOKED JUST LIKE A

COMMIE AND MIGHT JUST HAVE BEEN

MEMBERS' BABIES.

:OPERATIONAL NOTES — CRA/MP/ON

ANX.294

— RECOVER ACOUSTIC READABLE DATA

DISKS AND ANCILLARY PRODUCTION

EQUIPMENT

— RECOVER THUNDERBIRD PROTOTYPE

— RECOVER CORVETTE, RED, LITTLE

— DETERMINE PRESENCE OF COMMUNIST

BABIES OUTSIDE DENVER AND

TERMINATE

**:MISSION ALERT**

:Reference = YCBBB. 1.2.1

\*\*\*\*\* MISSION ALERT! \*\*\*\*\*

:ATTENTION TROUBLESHOOTER!

ONCE AGAIN THE COMPUTER HAS SELECTED YOU FOR A MISSION OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE.

REWARD THE COMPUTER'S FAITH IN YOU AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED IN TURN.

:YOU WILL BE PART OF A

TROUBLESHOOTER TEAM ASSIGNED

TO TRACE AND DESTROY A GROUP

OF TRAITOROUS SABOTEURS. YOUR

IMPORTANT DUTIES WILL INCLUDE

THE RECOVERY OF

MISAPPROPRIATED COMPUTER

PROPERTY AND THE SUMMARY

EXECUTION OF THE TRAITORS

RESPONSIBLE.

:PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO

THE TROUBLESHOOTER

HEADQUARTERS IN XTZ SECTOR FOR

YOUR ROUTINE BRIEFING, WHICH

WILL TAKE PLACE IN BRIEFING ROOM

[INPUT NUMBER OF BRIEFING ROOM

HERE]. THANK YOU FOR YOUR

COOPERATION.

**:MISSION ALERT**

:Reference = YCBBB. 2.2

\*\*\*\*\* MISSION ALERT! \*\*\*\*\*

:GREETINGS TROUBLESHOOTER! THE

COMPUTER WISHES TO CONGRATULATE

YOU ON YOUR RECENT PERFORMANCE.

BECAUSE OF YOUR EXCELLENT SERVICE,

YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN FOR A NEW

MISSION OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO ALPHA

COMPLEX. SERVE THE COMPUTER WELL

AND YOU SHALL BE WELL SERVED.

:YOUR MISSION WILL INCLUDE THE

CAPTURE AND/OR TERMINATION OF

DANGEROUS TRAITORS POSSESSED OF

UNUSUAL MUTANT ABILITIES.

RECOGNIZING THE THREAT POSED BY

THESE MUTANTS, THE COMPUTER HAS

SPARED NO EFFORT TO PROVIDE YOU

WITH NEW EQUIPMENT THAT SHOULD

PROVE IRRESISTIBLE.

:YOUR USE OF THIS EQUIPMENT IS

SUBJECT TO THE USUAL SAFEGUARDS

FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF SECURITY

AND YOUR OWN PROTECTION. PLEASE

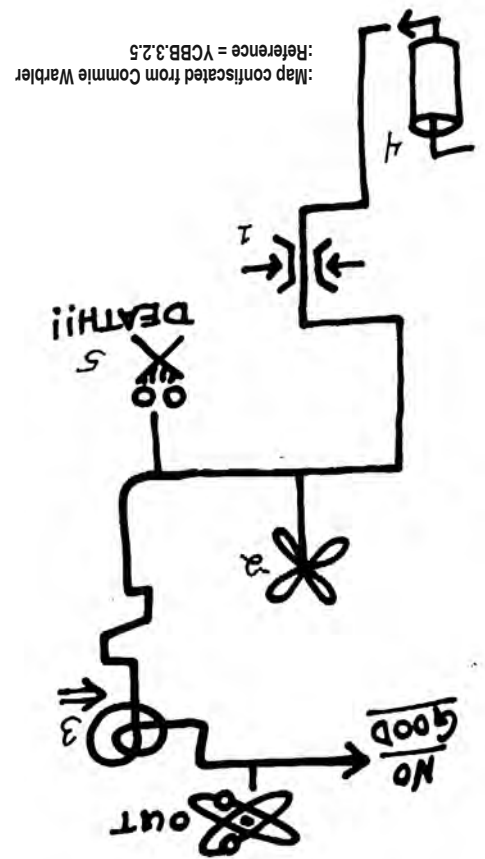
REPORT NOW TO BRIEFING ROOM

BRIEFING ROOM BRIEFING ROOM. DELAY

WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. THANK YOU

FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

(1) Multicorder 1 with recorder program	(1) Multicorder 1 with recorder program
(2) loose napalm rounds	(1) Docbot Model 7, skills are: Unarmed Combat 06
(2) loose smoke rounds	(1) Projectile Weapons 05
(1) clip HE rounds	(1) Energy Weapons 06
(1) clip slug rounds	(1) Tracking 08
(1) Slugthrower, with:	(1) Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 10
(1) Stun gun, no reload	(1) Jackobot Model 340, skills are:
(1) Blaster, 2 reloads	(1) Towel
with concealed armor	(1) Portable electric winch
(6) Suits YELLOW civilian clothing	(1) Chainsaw
(6) Smoke grenades	(1) Hottorch
(6) HE grenades	(2) Collapsible shovels
barrels	(2) Crowbars
(12) YELLOW laser pistol	(3) Intraspecs
<b>EQUIPMENT LIST: EPISODE 2</b>	(3) Electric lanterns
	minute time fuse
	(6) Satchel-type demolition charges, with 1-10-
	(6) 30m coils rope
	(6) 1-liter water bottles
	(6) 2-day ration cylinders
	(6) Pairs hiking boots
	(6) Backpacks
<b>EQUIPMENT LIST: EPISODE 4</b>	(2) Suits Kevlar armor
(6) YELLOW laser pistol barrels	(2) Environ suits
(1) Tangler, with 2 reloads	(4) loose napalm rounds
(1) Ice gun	(2) clips HE
(1) Cone rifle with following	(4) clips slugs
rounds:	(2) Slugthrowers, automatic, each with:
(8) solid slug	(1) Energy pistol with 3 reloads
(3) HE	(2) RED laser rifles, one extra barrel each
(2) smoke	(9) YELLOW laser pistol barrels
(2) napalm	<b>EQUIPMENT LIST: EPISODE 3</b>
(2) Slugthrowers, automatic, each	
with:	
(3) clips slugs	
(5) loose HE rounds	<b>:MISSION ALERT</b>
(2) loose napalm rounds	:Reference = YCBBB. 4.3.1
(1) clip tracers	<b>***** MISSION ALERT! *****</b>
(1) Flamethrower, 6 shots	<b>:ATTENTION TROUBLESHOOTER!</b>
remaining	<b>:YOUR MOST RECENT MISSION</b>
(2) Knives	<b>PERFORMANCE HAS RECOMMENDED</b>
(2) Truncheons	<b>YOU TO THE COMPUTER AS AN</b>
(1) Case of 20 HE grenades	<b>EXCELLENT CANDIDATE FOR if 593</b>
(3) Environ suits	<b>then goto TERMINATION if 1068 then</b>
(1) Suit cold-weather gear	<b>goto LONG TERM FROZEN STORAGE</b>
(2) Decon suits	<b>onerr goto A MISSION OUTSIDE ALPHA</b>
(1) Geiger counter	<b>COMPLEX return</b>
(2) Intraspecs	<b>:PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO</b>
(1) Pair binoculars	<b>BRIEFING ROOM getfile boomroom/file</b>
(30) 2-day ration cylinders	<b>not found//WHAT DO YOU MEAN FILE</b>
(3) 30m coils rope	<b>NOT FOUND THEFT OF COMPUTER</b>
(1) Inflatable raft	<b>FILES IS TREASON PUNISHABLE BY</b>
(1) Compass	<b>exe. monitor. com</b>
(1) Map, ORANGE Clearance	<b>:do you mean using an unproxied link? If</b>
(1) All-terrain crawler,	<b>the computer traces your line we'll be</b>
equipped with:	<b>bot lubeoh they just coned my door i</b>
Com 3	<b>ERRORERRORERRORERRORERROR</b>
smoke generator	<b>:HANK OU OR OUR OOPERATION</b>
laser cannon	<b>ROUBLE HOOTER</b>
(1) All-terrain trailer, 3-ton capacity	
(1) Docbot, model 5, skills:	
Medical 10	
Outdoor Life 06	
(1) Multicorder 1 with recorder	
program	



**:SPECIAL FIELD DISPATCH**  
:Reference = YCBBB. 2.3.4

**:SPECIAL FIELD DISPATCH!**  
**:TO TROUBLESHOOTER TEAM**  
[DELETED FOR REASONS OF SECURITY]

**:LATE INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM**  
[DELETED]—PROCEED TO YCA Sector  
BOT FACILITY 25—THERE COMPLETE  
MISSION TO CAPTURE [DELETED  
DELETED] AND RECOVER [DELETED  
DELETED DELETED DELETED  
DELETED].

**: [DELETED DELETED] IS WANTED FOR**  
INTERROGATION. ANY [DELETED  
DELETED] THAT INTERFERES WITH  
INTERROGATION IS [DELETED].  
:GOOD [DELETED]. THE COMPUTER IS  
[DELETED] ON YOU. SERVE THE  
COMPUTER WELL AND YOU WILL BE  
[DELETED].

**:END MESSAGE**

# YELLOW CLEARANCE

## Bot roster

Type	No.	Speed	Weapons	Special equipment & abilities	Size	Armor
XS Chainsaw Massacre	1	Tread (walk/run)	4 chainsaws (impact, W5K), rating 16	Has four extendible arms fitted with chainsaws; small brain; narrow, literal programming	Refrigerator	2
Security guardbots	1 per PC	Tread (walk/run)	2 stunguns, rating 15 2 tangles, rating 15	Standard model; four multipurpose arms and manipulators; medium brain; broad, flexible programming	Water heater	2 hardened
YCA Bot Repair Facility—Because these exist to complicate any silly melee in YCA facility, they should come in various sizes, shapes and appendages (soap sprayers, multiple work arms with dangerous tools like drills and oxyacetylene torches, automatic sealers looking for something to wrap...).						
Unarmed briefing guardbot (The Deadly Servomotor Extensors of Kung Fu)	1	Legs (walk/run/sprint)	Unarmed Combat 17	Small brain; narrow, literal programming	Bruce Lee	2
Tunnel mission jackobot	1	Tread (walk/run)	See Equipment List 3 for details	Two heavy-duty arms and manipulators; large brain; broad, flexible programming	Washing machine	1
Smokey the Bearbot	1	Legs (walk...slowly)	1 shovel (S5K impact), rating 10 1 fire extinguisher (as ice gun with spray fire—S3K impact), rating 10	Looks like guess-who; small brain; very narrow, literal programming (Only <i>you</i> can prevent fires!)	Grizzly	2
Outdoors mission docbot 5	1	Legs (walk/run/sprint)	None	Standard chassis; two light manipulators; medium brain; narrow, literal programming	Human	1
All-terrain crawler	1	Tread (walk/run)	1 laser cannon (W2K energy), rating 15	Tny brain; autopilot and weapons programming only	Your basic tracked personnel carrier	3 hardened
ELWOOD 3610—Chest-freezer-sized; kindly old mainframe, likes to chat with friendly folk. If unplugged, gives good dying speech: 'My sight grows dim! Do not go gentle into that good night—alas, I fade, I sink—Kiss, me, HARV[E].' (Note: This British Naval History joke has no place in <b>PARANOIA</b> . So sue us.)						
HARV[E]	1	Hoverfans (up to 100 mph)	1 laser cannon 3, rating 15 2 sonic blasters, rating 15 antimissile laser, rating 15	Medium tank on hoverfans with active camouflage; effectively invisible; medium brain; narrow programming; relies on ELWOOD for higher mental functions	Speedboat	5

## NPC roster (1 of 2)

Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Roleplaying notes
Vulture guards (2)	Unarmed Combat 13, Projectile Weapons 15	Slugthrower—HE ammo (W2K impact)	Kevlar (I3)	BLUE Clearance; silent, violent Buckingham Palace guards
HQ staffer	Unarmed Combat 10, Energy Weapons 09	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	GREEN reflec (E1)	GREEN Clearance; aggressively cordial; obstructively cooperative
Vulture guards (5)	Unarmed Combat 09, Energy Weapons 12	Laser rifle (W3K energy)	GREEN reflec (E1)	GREEN Clearance; tough but fairly bright; easily bewildered
Vulture sergeant	Unarmed Combat 12, Projectile Weapons 15	Slug pistol—power holster (W3K impact)	Kevlar (I3)	BLUE Clearance; cocky; easily offended; proud of power holster
AI-B-MNU	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	BLUE reflec (E1)	BLUE Clearance; HPD&MC; glum; dispirited; fit-to-be-framed
Zach-I-LVI	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	INDIGO reflec (E1)	INDIGO Clearance; Tech; distracted; bored with administrative detail
Brian-B-IWR	Unarmed Combat 09, Energy Weapons 18	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	BLUE reflec (E1)	BLUE Clearance; IntSec; witch-hunter; kill-Commies-serve-Computer gonzo
Dan-V-OSD	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	VIOLET reflec (E1)	VIOLET Clearance; R&D; Ben Franklin; benign, concerned, elderly; nods off a lot
Angela-G-DRQ (Screaming Sarah Slick)	Unarmed Combat 10, Projectile Weapons 10	Slug pistol—HE ammo (W2K impact)	Kevlar (I3)	GREEN Clearance; Death Leopard identity is Screaming Sarah Slick; vat tech/punk rocker
Death Leopard strike team (4)	Unarmed Combat 07, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	Wide-eyed punk nutzoz; Sara's minions
Rasterman Ganja	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	Death Leopard media tech and commercial buff
Ganja's techs	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	Death Leopard, but sensitive artists; inclined to flee

[NPC roster continues on next page]



# CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

## NPC roster (2 of 2)

Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Roleplaying notes
Secret society strike teams (3 per team)	Unarmed Combat 06, Energy Weapons 06	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	According to society's personality
Victor-I-VGF	Unarmed Combat 05	None	None	INDIGO Clearance; R&D; privileged, crazy, mad scientist; false confidence
Willis-G-PLJ	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 09	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	GREEN Clearance; R&D; calm, quiet, sincere, like a psychopath
Ned-G-RFB	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	GREEN Clearance; R&D; bug-eyed, wacky; Marty Feldman in <i>Young Frankenstein</i>
<b>Free Enterprise Guards</b>				
Guards in lobby (2)	Unarmed Combat 10, Energy Weapons 09 Unarmed Combat 10, Energy Weapons 11	Laser rifle (W3K energy) Slug pistol—HE (W2K impact)	ORANGE reflec (E1)	ORANGE Clearance; dim louts; lazy and indifferent to PCs
Tunnel guards (2)	Unarmed Combat 12, Projectile Weapons 12	Slugthrower—HE ammo (W2K impact); other 05	Kevlar (I3)	Used to cooperation; overconfident and careless
Upstairs guard	Unarmed Combat 12, Energy Weapons 15	Laser rifle (W3K energy)	Kevlar (I3)	Polite, friendly, professional; deadly
Oregon Warbler	Unarmed Combat 10, Energy Weapons 10	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	Frontiersman; sneaky, but apparently cooperative
Psion, Anti-Mutant, Free Enterprise, Sierra Club squads (5 per group)—See <i>Secret society strike teams</i> above				
Cone rifle instructor	Unarmed Combat 07, Projectile Weapons 18, Field Weapons 18	Cone rifle—solid AP (W3K impact); tangler (entangle)	Kevlar (I3)	BLUE Clearance; earnest, patient, kindly; bad nerves
Tunnel ambushers (2–6)	Unarmed Combat 05, Hand Weapons 10; Thrown Weapons 05	Club (S5K impact); tossed junk (O5W impact)	None	Primitive but willing soldiers in Sierra Club cause
Tunnel fanatics (2–4)	Unarmed Combat 05, Hand Weapons 10, Thrown Weapons 10	Club (S5K impact); tossed junk (O5W impact)	None	Tough, cautious sentries; send warning if attacked
Boo-Boos (10)	Unarmed Combat 04, Hand Weapons 04	Club (S5K impact)	None	Undrilled militia; completely unreliable; weak-kneed
Yogis (5)	Unarmed Combat 06, Hand Weapons 06	Club (S5K impact)	None	Casually drilled militia; spirited
Dome Rangers (4)	Unarmed Combat 12, Hand Weapons 12	Truncheon (S5K impact)	Leather (I1)	Tough, gung-ho fight-to-the-death fanatics
Mr. Ranger Sir	Unarmed Combat 14, Projectile Weapons 09	Slug pistol—HE ammo (W2K impact)	None	Gifted leader; hides and shouts orders
Outsiders	Unarmed Combat 09, Projectile Weapons 09	Slug pistol—solid slug ammo (W3K impact)	Leather (I1)	Visiting from the Outdoors, they want out; will avoid fight
<b>Typical Outdoors Mobs</b>				
Incompetent fools	Unarmed Combat 04, Hand Weapons 04	Club (S5K impact)	None	Laser bait
Competent fools	Unarmed Combat 08, Hand Weapons 08	Club (S5K impact)	Leather (I1)	Vaguely threatening
Skilled fools	Unarmed Combat 13, Hand Weapons 13	Club (S5K impact); bow (W5K impact)	Padding (I1)	Clever at ambush and picking weak spots
Cyberpunks (50–100)	Unarmed Combat 08, Hand Weapons 08, Projectile Weapons 08	Knife (S5K impact); sword (W5K impact); crossbow (W4K impact); slug pistol—solid slug ammo (W3K impact)	Leather (chain) (I2)	Vicious but honorable; a sly, tough cycle gang; leaders: sister Jake (pistol) & brother Elwood (Charm mutation)
Nouvelle Vaguers (50–100)	Unarmed Combat 04, Hand Weapons 10	Knife (S5K impact); club (S5K impact)	Padding (I1)	Mellow one minute; homicidal the next
<b>Studio Engineers</b>				
Engineers (20)	Unarmed Combat 04, Hand Weapons 04	Club (S5K impact)	None	Terminally hip
Producers (5)	Unarmed Combat 06, Hand Weapons 06	Club (S5K impact)	None	Fast talk
Goons (4)	Unarmed Combat 12, Hand Weapons 13	Truncheon (S5K impact)	Padding (I1)	Musclted thugs
Boss Honcho	Unarmed Combat 10, Projectile Weapons 10	Slug pistol—solid slug ammo (W3K impact)	None	Smooth but smart

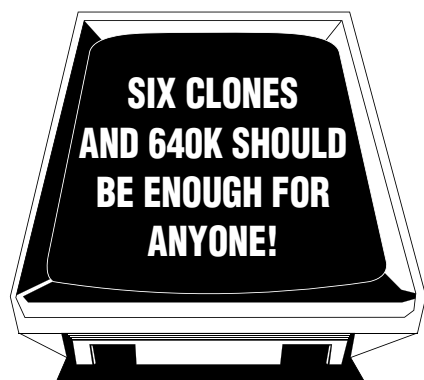
# PARANOIA Code 7s

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'Code 7' is a euphemism popular around Troubleshooter Dispatch Central. It originated long ago with side-bets taken among the dispatchers on how many clones a particular mission would use up before its completion: 'Ah, this one's easy—a 2 at most.' 'Naw, it's a 3 for sure.' Because gambling is illegal, dispatchers devised the official-sounding 'Code' prefix to disguise references to this activity.

In those days Tech Services decanted citizens in families of six identical clones. Once you ran out of your allotted six, you were gone. So a 'Code 7' was a mission that called for more clones than anybody had (legally, anyway). Even today, Dispatchers still use the same term as shorthand for 'certain death'.

In **PARANOIA**, a Code 7 mission is an idea a Famous Game Designer was too lazy or busy to develop into a full-scale mission.



## An ARD Day's Night

by Allen Varney

Troubleshooters dispatched to investigate traitorous manipulations of Alpha Complex's day-night cycle find themselves running through whole days in mere minutes.

### Setup

The Troubleshooters are sleeping soundly in their communal barracks in ARD Sector as the adventure begins. They have shared the same quarters, 'just temporarily, of course', for months, while their regular rooms are rebuilt after the Foaming Cleanser Incident. (I'm sorry. Information about this trifling disaster is unavailable...)

**BRRRINNNGGGGG!** The 'Patriotic Wake-Up Reveille' sounds from every loudspeaker (deedle-deedle-deedle-deedle-*ding-dong-ding!*) and it's another day in The Computer's service. Cordial guardbots roust citizens from their beds.

Yes, cordial. Hardly at all like SS troops. Sure, they act a bit brisk. They're prone to overenthusiasm, perhaps. But really, they just want to help The Computer's loyal servants to full alertness. That's what the built-in air-raid sirens are for.

Into jumpsuits and out to the mess hall for breakfast: some of that good triple-augmentation-processed flavored pseudolactate fungal residue popularly known as Pleasant Morning Experience. Yum, yum! (PleMorEx may look like sludge from a well-worn pistol casing, but it tastes slightly better.) Wash it down with Lichen Flakes and a hot swallow of what is called Authentic Coffee-Colored Liquid Analogue.

But ten minutes into the meal, the lights dim! The Computer's friendly voice is heard over melodious chimes: *Ding-dong, ding-a-dong-ding!* (**GM note:** Establish the melody of these chimes. You'll be repeating it many times during this mission.)

**'And so, citizens, another busy day draws once again to a close. The Computer congratulates you for your labor in its service. Please return to your sleeping cubicles promptly for a well-deserved night of rest. Remember, unauthorized violation of curfew is treason. Thank you for your cooperation, and rest well.'**

Bots hustle bewildered citizens back to their sleeping cubicles. Anyone who protests gets a 50cr fine and a dose of sleep gas in the face. (Nighty-night for six hours; if roused

prematurely, the victim feels exhausted all day.) Out of the jumpsuits, into the bunks—silence falls—night patrol bots with sensitive heartbeat monitors patrol the rooms, spraying sleep gas on recalcitrant citizens who are only pretending sleep.

That's right. All of them.

But 15 minutes later—lights on. Patriotic Wake-Up Reveille (deedle-deedle-deedle...), guardbots, jumpsuits, breakfast, PleMorEx, yum! And 12 minutes after that—*ding-dong, ding-a-dong-ding!* Back to bed, with sleep gas for encouragement, and dreams that are nightmarish even by Alpha Complex standards. Twenty minutes after that—up and at 'em, a new day! Deedle-deedle-deedle...

### Briefing

Keep this up forever. Send the PCs into the middle of next week before lunchtime. Soon they figure out that the day is unusually brief. Then summon the Troubleshooters to Headquarters for a mission assignment. The briefing has all the conventional elements—simply put, 'This is happening, it's treasonous, find out who's doing this at once and execute them.'

Unfortunately, this simple mission directive is fragmented into installments. During the briefing the lights go out, guardbots scurry into Headquarters to escort the Troubleshooters back to bed like good citizens, and they have to overcome sleep gas hangovers to get back to HQ for the next segment of the briefing.

But won't cumulative sleep gassings reduce PCs to a passive zombie torpor? Realistically, yes—but be a sport, let them keep playing. It's not like they've had a chance to *do* anything yet. Just tell the players to act really tired, and at various critical points tell each individual player to roll 1d20. Regardless of the result, have the character crash to the floor in a deep doze.

### Investigation

The Troubleshooters notice a peculiar activity on their way to and from HQ. A detail of INFRAREDS is daubing the corridor walls with some kind of clear fluid—cleaning fluid, perhaps?

Questioning the INFRAREDS isn't particularly helpful. They're about as well-informed and cooperative as the talking trees in *The Wizard of Oz*. They were assigned to put spots of this fluid in patterns along the corridor walls. The

assignment came from some high-clearance guy in Technical Services—i.e., the next target of the investigation.

Should the chimes sound and the lights dim during the questioning, the PCs notice something else as they're herded back to quarters; the spots of fluid are now glowing faintly in the dimness. The patterns of dots vaguely suggest familiar shapes like food dispensers, vidscreens and scrubots.

### The explanation

The Sierra Club wanted to have an eclipse.

It would be great! To bring the most spectacular of natural wonders to an entire sector—it would more than make up for the unfortunate failure to produce a real live volcano. (See previous reference to the Foaming Cleanser Incident.) Clubbers in Tech Services put squads of INFRAREDs on 'cleaning duty'—putting spots of glow-in-the-dark chemicals in patterns. These would recreate the glorious 'stars' and 'constellations' the club members were always hearing about. High-clearance Clubbers in Power Services arranged for the day-night cycle to be reprogrammed.

It was supposed to be a one-shot deal—but hasty sabotage, combined with bad communications and gargantuan ineptitude, made the programming permanent. Permanent, that is, until the Troubleshooters move in to fix things.

The trail of clues can be short or winding, clear or obscure, deadly or—well, deadly. Tech Services traitors are expecting investigation, so they have a deathtrap or two prepared. Think about the garbage masher in *Star Wars*.

Clubbers in Power Services also expect trouble from Troubleshooters. These guys are high-clearance, so they'll just *order* the Troubleshooters into deathtraps. And they don't have to rely on hackneyed old electrocution devices, either. Think about two-ton cable drums rolling all over your mission, or big vats of battery acid. Brrr.

Actually, you've already established that anyone can fall asleep at any time, due to gas effects. Even a mess hall or a confession booth can become a deathtrap.

### Frustration and anguish

Meanwhile, the lights are turning on and off every ten or 20 minutes. To dramatize this, get an ordinary kitchen timer and position it so no one, including yourself, can see it—but everyone can hear it ticking away. Set the interval of day and night cycle as you wish. Then, when the timer goes 'ding', stop whatever the players are doing and hustle everyone off to bed. Bring them back to consciousness in their bunks and



reset the timer for another daycycle. Real-time frustration!

To complicate your plot, throw in an attempt by another secret society to exploit the darkness. The Illuminati have (of course) infiltrated the Sierra Club. When the plot became known, they ordered their agents to Do Something about the mess.

PURGE? Death Leopards? Frankenstein Destroyers? Some hitherto unknown organization, dedicated to dismantling all bots and reassembling them into one ultimate bot?

Or just toss false leads around to distract and bewilder the players. To draw attention away from themselves, the Sierra Clubbers are scrawling crude secret society symbols with obscure messages on the corridor walls, bots, slumbering Troubleshooters and so on. They stick the incriminating empty cans in the hands of the still-slumbering servants of The Computer. What a lovely surprise!

### The wind up

After seven or eight clones are out of the way, bring your story line to a fitting climax. Stitching this onto the main narrative is easy. Just have your Troubleshooters chase the Sierra Club/other-secret-society culprits into the scene of your big showdown.

The food vats are always a good arena. An abandoned warehouse; a bowling ball factory; a Happy Homecoming Automated Euthanasia Center; Power Services' Primary Generating Facility—your choice determines the degree of catastrophe you will visit on the complex.

We don't know—call us crazy—but we personally would have this mission end with the complete wiping of The Computer's entire memory bank. Really. The whole schmeer, right down to the last hard drive and memory card. Total system crash. Just rambunctious guys, we guess. Here's how to orchestrate this little wingding.

The chase after the baddies leads to the huge Central Processing Core in the deepest



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reaches of Alpha Complex. Forbidding security measures—pure white walls—combots and Vultures stacked like cordwood. (How do the Troubleshooters get past these formidable obstacles? Maybe the day-night cycle length is down to a couple of seconds at this point, and the guard shifts are so bungled up trying to change every time the lights dim, arguing and complaining, that they don't notice the PCs.)

Then everyone runs into this incredibly colossally hugely gigantic cylindrical chamber where memory cores tower like sequoias, like Saturn rockets. The ceiling is lost in clouds of coolant that hiss from every relief valve. Dozens of High Programmers walk along catwalks looking at readouts. The walls are jammed with gauges, dials and rigamarole. Maintenance bots—shiny, functional, high-quality bots—scurry about in close order drill. It's James Bond time, get it?

The voice of The Computer is heard everywhere, spouting technical directions incomprehensible to mere Troubleshooters. 'Reduce coolant ratio Twelve Core, mark oh two niner', 'new readout one four mark eight seven seven', 'Faulty access head Sector Five, subsector three six six. Rescue data and replace.' Et cetera.

Establish the voice, because when you blow up these memory cores you have a terrific opportunity to swipe from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Remember Keir Dullea floating in that red room while HAL 9000 says, 'I can see you're really upset about this, Dave'? And punching those cartridges out of the wall while Hal regressed to computerized infancy?

Well, when stray shots hit those memory cores, The Computer's voice slurs a bit. 'Warrnninnng,

warrnninnng!' Another stray shot, and now the jets of coolant hiss more loudly, while Programmers run around in panic and The Computer stutters, missing a word now and then. 'Danger! dannnn... hmmm-mmm-inate intruders immmmm, mmmmm—ommm...'

A Vulture lets loose with a cone rifle—misses—hits the base of a core—it totters, and now The Computer is reciting flybot fuel costs and reservoir maintenance specifications, a different spiel from each speaker. The white-robed Programmers run around like headless chickens.

More shots. More hits. A tower topples against another, and now The Computer says things like 'Pawn to king four' and 'From the magic cavern you can go north or west.' It's a nice touch to mention to your players the effects of each hit on a core—'Whoops, there went the automatic scoring in the bowling alleys in RPM Sector' or 'That hit means the algae cakes at dinner will probably be purple.' As the devastation escalates, say things like, 'Oh, well, no more life support in that sector', and 'All those autocars with no guidance signals—oh, my...'

From this point it's a mere exercise to regress The Computer to 'Mary Had A Little Lamb' and down to its component transistors. All the lights go off. It suddenly feels cold (or hot, as you wish) and stuffy. Surviving Programmers shriek hysterically. Surviving Troubleshooters (if any) should realize that their friend The Computer has died, shuffled off this mortal coil, gone to Relay Heaven, failed its saving roll and left its progeny in deep trouble.

Sit back and let them do whatever they want, now that their whole reason for existence is

gone. Maybe they'll make friends. Some of them cheer—'Hurrah, we're free at last!'—while others say, 'Hey, we're going to suffocate down here, aren't we?'

Let this interval last as long as your players are having fun. The longer it goes on, the freer they'll feel. Make them think you might have decided to turn this into a post-holocaust RPG where they're charged with rebuilding civilization.

Then—wherever they are in the Complex—a little red light goes on in an obscure panel, or they hear a voice—a very familiar voice. 'Activate backup systems.'

That's right, The Computer is coming back online! You can do a slow fadeout here, but this is an interesting situation. You could turn it into a whole new mission. In fact, check out 'Reboot Camp', the next Code 7 mission. Slick, huh?



## Reboot Camp

by Allen Varney

We won't ask how you managed to wipe The Computer's memory banks. Gamemasters must have their little secrets. All that counts is, you did it: You erased every maintenance program, every surveillance routine, each bit and byte and scintilla of artificial intelligence in The Computer's sprawling circuitry. It's vacant. Nada. History. *Exeunt omnes* with flourish.

When they confront this idea, your Troubleshooters—the source of their trouble now finally, persuasively shot—may be stunned, exhilarated, frightened or uncertain. The Computer—gone. Alpha Complex—free to pursue its own destiny. Treason, security clearances, secret societies, paranoia—obsolete. The dawning of a new age.

Probably your cannier players don't believe for a minute The Computer is really gone. They're sure you wouldn't buy this superlative supplement and then go and destroy your campaign.

They're right, of course. But kill their characters if they start to get smug about it.

### Online

In fact, The Computer has a complete duplicate operating system deep in the earth beneath Alpha Complex. Destruction of its primary memory merely activates the extensive triple-redundant backup system. Operation continues with minimal interruption. The changeover is supposed to be foolproof.

So was the invasion of the Bay of Pigs. In dealing with The Computer's restoration as the central power of Alpha Complex, you have several options. Here are a few of the more obvious approaches:

1. **The reboot is uneventful.** Of course, you'll want to have a little fun at your players' expense before turning the lights back on: 'Gosh, you're used to power outages, but you've never seen it *this* dark. *CRASH*. Gee, listen to all the people shouting and running into things! CoreMem only knows

what awful, treasonous activities are going on under cover of darkness. Hadn't you better get hustling and suppress all that illicit activity? Oh, by the way, did I mention how stuffy it's getting in here?'

Once you've whipped your players into a frenzy of futile activity, turn the lights back on and let things get back to (heh, heh) normal. Everything is as before.

(Simple, huh? Too simple, of course. Use this option as a punchline wrap-up for a wipe-The-Computer-memory mission. If you want something a little more rococo, read on.)

2. **Citizens are frustrated at being denied the freedom they enjoyed so briefly.** They rebel and confront The Computer's forces while it's still vulnerable. Pockets of resistance gather around the secret societies. Service groups vie with one another for control of key installations. Shifting relations among the various power blocs keep the boundaries uncertain,



the alliances unpredictable. The players choose sides and fight.

This sounds pretty interesting, actually, but of course you're not playing **PARANOIA** anymore. Maybe *d20 Modern* rules will prove useful. Too bad you wasted all your money on this **PARANOIA** supplement.

3. **The Computer comes back to power, but it's got, like, a *Totally* different personality.** It's as fast and shallow as a valley girl, or soulfully compassionate like Dr. Joyce Brothers, or overprotective like your grandma. Maybe it talks solely of semiotic interpretations of Old Reckoning literature, or it likes electric trains. ('Troubleshooters! Fetch me an HO Scale Southern Pacific flatcar, pronto! Thanks for your cooperation, okay? Toot-toot!') This can be tolerably humorous, but, again, **PARANOIA** it's not.
4. Boy are you gonna like this. The Computer comes back up, paranoid as usual, and it doesn't remember *a-ny-thing*. Zilch. 'You! Identify yourself! Friend or traitor? I'm going to give you a test, and don't think for a second that I don't have the answers. Now: Who am I? Where am I? What am I supposed to be doing here? What are *you* doing here? Have we met before?'

The Computer is *tabula rasa* on everything. If a player weaves a plausible tale ('I'm an ambassador from Beta Complex, your trusted ally in the fight against Commies. I have diplomatic immunity'), The Computer might buy it. The Con Games skill helps here big-time.

Note some important points. Calm amid disaster and widespread human misery, The Computer completely abandons its customary politeness when it feels itself even slightly out of control. Also, it's extraordinarily suspicious, but at the same time willing to latch onto any absurd story as the truth—provided the story plays to The Computer's own assumptions. ('Why, friend Computer, I'm your most trusted VIOLET-Clearance IntSec agent. I'm only in this RED jumpsuit because I've

been documenting treason among these Troubleshooters. And believe me, you've got a lot to worry about!') The Computer goes to outlandish lengths to justify such a believable lie, circumventing objections and rationalizing contradictions as long as possible—unless the speaker is finally discredited.

Furthermore, once The Computer has found a damfool story to hang a situation on, everybody who's smart plays along with the story unless they have solid evidence to refute it. Even then, it's usually a bad idea to swim against the current. This includes all NPCs, who'll swear up to their ears and down to their toenails that this lowly RED technician is a VIOLET-level IntSec operative. Or that all Troubleshooters have been identified as traitors. Or INFRAREDS are really High Programmers. PCs who don't go with the consensus are early casualties... unless they introduce an even more compelling damfool story of their own.

If you're the kind of **PARANOIA** GM we think you are, you've probably already figured out the players aren't the only ones in Alpha Complex out to kick The Computer while it's down. Consider that there are High Programmers who would give their eyeteeth and their eyes to reprogram The Computer in their own images.

The players, of course, are not privy to the high-level machinations of the ULTRAVIOLETs. But the infighting is fierce. Each Programmer is trying to convince The Computer *his* programs are the programs of choice, *his* orders the orders to follow, *his* instructions the way to lead Alpha Complex to salvation.

Perhaps one High Programmer is out to kill the others. (Heck, all High Programmers are out to kill the others.) Perhaps one is eager to throw open the doors of Alpha Complex to let the sun shine in. Perhaps one hopes to welcome the Commies with open arms. You can certainly devise other goals for other highly-placed, selfless (uh huh) citizens.

Ideally, you'll end up with The Computer—which is, after all, everywhere—trying to pay attention to your lowly Troubleshooters, every other Troubleshooter in Alpha Complex and every High Programmer—all at once. Confusing? Disconcerting? Stressful?

Poor Computer. Likely to go a little bozo, eh?

The upshot of these conflicting, competing messages during The Computer's 'vulnerable' period is a whole series of flustered questions, contradictory statements, unusual orders and even (*gasp*) impossible missions, interspersed with inexplicable memory gaps and lapses of amnesia. (Hard to distinguish this state of affairs from normal Alpha Complex life. Has it occurred to you that perhaps *all* **PARANOIA** missions are set in an interregnum following a colossal system crash? Wonder what would happen if the *bona fide*, doctrinally pure, culturally coherent backup programs went online? Disneyland? The Gulag Archipelago? We leave this as an exercise for the apt pupil.)

Maybe The Computer sends each individual Troubleshooter on a different insane scavenger hunt for the ideal Cuisinart or C-sharp tuning fork. Make sure this mission sends the suckers on the obligatory tour of the sidereal universe. Maybe you even let the poor wretches find what they're looking for. If and when they return, The Computer is back to its old paranoid self and fines them for possession of unauthorized tuning forks. The campaign resumes.

5. Ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny and all that, maybe The Computer goes through all these side-interests in rapid sequence before it comes back to what passes for stability. Everything at once, in rapid-fire sequence, with only token gestures to coherence and plausibility.

Now *that's* **PARANOIA!**

## Whitewash

by Greg Costikyan

Once upon a time there was a basically incompetent INFRARED worker in HPD&MC. He made a booboo. He filled the paint receptacles of a maintenance bot with white paint when his Job Control Form clearly specified black paint. Unfortunately, his supervisor did not catch the error until after the maintenance bot had left the hangar to perform its job. The INFRARED worker was terminated for incompetence, but the error was never recorded in Computer records.

The bot went off to do its job. Its job was to repaint a section of INFRARED corridor in DOJ Sector. Because its paint reservoirs contained white paint, it painted the walls white, not realizing the error.

As you may recall, each corridor and room in Alpha Complex is painted with a security clearance color. It is treason to enter an area of higher security clearance than your own.

The formerly INFRARED corridor is now ULTRAVIOLET.

This is unfortunate, because the corridor connects the barracks section of DOJ Sector with the sector's work area. No one who lives in DOJ Sector can get to work.

Several people have reported this problem to The Computer. However, The Computer's records clearly show the corridor has always been black and, indeed, has recently been



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repainted black by a maintenance bot. Clearly, anyone who says otherwise is a traitor.

Indeed, so many people have reported the corridor to be white, when utterly reliable Computer records indicate otherwise, that a Communist conspiracy of truly monstrous size must exist. Anyone who reports the corridor as white must be terminated. Anyone who presents irrefutable evidence the corridor is white has manufactured the evidence and must be terminated.

Furthermore, for unexplained reasons, DOJ Sector shows a 100% work absentee rate. The usual solution—random terminations among the INFRARED laborers—has failed to rectify the situation.

The Computer has assigned one of its most trusted servants, Cosmo-V-DOJ, to root out these traitors and solve the problem. Cosmo-V-DOJ has figured out explaining the problem to The Computer is a quick way to the nearest termination center. What's needed is to repaint the damn corridor black and have done with it.

Unfortunately, in Alpha Complex you can't just drop down to the corner hardware store for a can of black paint. Black paint is highly dangerous stuff. Why, someone could paint, say, an ULTRAVIOLET corridor black, thereby giving all sorts of low clearance schmucks access to The Computer's most precious secrets.

Cosmo-V has a plan he thinks is pretty smart. Obviously, he can't just activate a group of Troubleshooters for a mission to paint the corridor black, because The Computer would learn of this and terminate him. Instead, he'll activate a bunch of Troubleshooters for 'a mission to the Outdoors', privately tell them to paint the corridor black and dump them in DOJ Sector.

### Mission briefing

Read this aloud:

#### •••• MISSION ALERT ••••

**GREETINGS, CITIZEN. THIS IS THE COMPUTER. YOU ARE ORDERED TO BRIEFING ROOM AB IN SECTOR DOJ. THERE YOU WILL BE BRIEFED FOR YOUR NEXT MISSION. THIS MISSION WILL NOT BE DANGEROUS. AT ALL. YOU WILL ENJOY IT. HAPPINESS IS MANDATORY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.**

When the PCs reach the briefing room (**Tension 0**), they enter a veritable vault, with a door consisting of two feet of solid steel. Cosmo-V-DOJ is sitting at a desk in the room. After they enter, he touches a control and the door shuts.

When they're seated, he tersely informs them a bot has mistakenly painted white a corridor in DOJ, INFRAREDS are stranded, and the Troubleshooters' job is to rectify the situation.

They can ask questions, but he's notably unhelpful. Resourceful Troubleshooters such as themselves, he says, ought to be able to solve such a trivial problem.

The Computer is not monitoring this room at the moment because of some clever (and treasonous) programming by Cosmo-V.

During the briefing, the PCs hear shouts and pounding from outside the door. If asked about it, Cosmo-V says, 'I'll tell you later.' Actually, this is Earl-B, who knows he is supposed to give a briefing and has arrived to find the door locked.

When he's finished, Cosmo-V touches a control on his desk. Instantly, a steel slab drops from the ceiling in front of his desk, shortening the room by about two feet. The characters are now looking at a blank wall. Then the door opens, and Earl-B-DOJ enters to give his briefing.

Cosmo-V's treasonous anti-surveillance program ends; the Tension level in the briefing room returns to its normal level, **Tension 15**.

Earl-B has no idea his boss, Cosmo-V, just briefed the PCs. He just knows he's supposed to brief them about their mission to The Outdoors. If asked why his briefing is totally different from the one the characters just received, he wants to know what the questioner is talking about. If the PC sticks to his story about an earlier briefing, Earl-B has him terminated as a traitor.

If told about Cosmo-V, Earl-B tells the characters Cosmo-V is on a special mission to RGB Sector. If pressed, he requests Cosmo-V's current position from a Computer terminal, and is told Cosmo-V is indeed in RGB Sector. (More treasonous programming by Cosmo-V.) Anyone who says Cosmo-V was here a few minutes ago is clearly misinformed, mentally ill or worse.

Earl-B tells the characters:

**'...you will be taken to a portal to the Outdoors. Using a device you will be assigned at R&D, you will locate a crashed Vulture Model 616. In the cargo bay of the 616, you will find three two-meter long, ten-centimeter diameter INDIGO cylinders. Under no circumstance are you to open or damage these cylinders. You are to return the cylinders to Alpha Complex.**

**'Now, the Outdoors is in many respects quite bizarre, very different from our own beloved Alpha Complex. Outdoors, the floor is white and the ceiling is blue, but you shouldn't worry about security clearances. That's just the way things are.'**

If the players ask questions, Earl-B is voluble and helpful. Fabricate whatever details you need to make your players buy this story. Cosmo-V has given Earl-B a completely detailed and plausible cover story.

Of course, Earl-B can only tell what he knows—that is, what Cosmo-V has told him. If

you run out of ideas, have Earl-B start demanding security clearances. (He'd rather do that than admit ignorance.)

If anyone contacts The Computer about the mission, it confirms that the characters are to go Outdoors. If anyone mentions a white corridor, he is terminated.

### R&D

At R&D (**Tension 14**), the players meet only one person: Raven-B-DOJ. The labs are empty—'We've been having some problems with Transport'—except for her.

No fancy gimmicks, this time. When the PCs ask Raven-B about the device for locating the crashed Vulture Model 616, she issues them the following:

Standard-issue Brunton compass

6-man tent

Canteens

Mess kits

Propane stove

Heavy winter clothing

Snowshoes

Snowgoggles

Manual entitled *Treating Frostbite*

Propane lighters

Electric socks (these malfunction, giving their wearer an electric shock, whenever you need something to enliven the festivities)

Chapstick

In addition, give the players virtually any weapon they desire. They'll be useless anyway.

When questioned about the special device they were supposed to pick up, Raven-B says, 'It must be in that stuff somewhere.'

If anyone is stupid enough to ask for paint, Raven-B responds, 'Paint? What in The Computer's name do you want paint for?' If someone insists, have him terminated.

### The corridor

The moment the players are finished at R&D, a group of GREEN-Clearance IntSec goons in battle armor shows up, surrounds them and force-marches them—'Hup! Hup! Hup! Get moving there!'—to Corridor CX, DOJ Sector. The leader of the troopers announces, 'Here you are! So long and good luck!' and then the whole bunch of them turn and start force-marching back: 'Hup! Hup! Hup! If any of the players tries to ask questions or stop them, there are three possible answers:

'Sorry, buddy! Got a schedule to keep! Hup! Hup!'

'Beats the crap outa me, buddy! All I know is, you're going to Corridor CX, DOJ Sector! Hup! Hup!'

'A wise guy, huh?' (In this case, the PC gets a truncheon in the liver.) 'Keep moving! Hup! Hup!'

The corridor is three meters across, 2.5m high and 25m feet long. It is totally featureless. It is also white. It is also empty. (Are you kidding? It's Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET!) The PCs are standing in a T intersection with an INFRARED corridor. There is occasional traffic on the INFRARED corridor, usually scrubots. The characters are beginning to sweat in their heavy winter clothing. So what do they do?

- ◉ **Report to The Computer that an INFRARED corridor has been improperly painted white:** The Computer asks the person making the report to identify himself. It then asks those nearby (the other PCs) to confirm the identification. Then, the characters hear a voice reverberating from every speaker in the Complex: '[Name] is a traitor! Terminate on sight!'
- ◉ **Report Cosmo-V-DOJ as a traitor who told the party to repaint Corridor CX black:** Cosmo-V is a trusted servant of The Computer. Troubleshooters are not sent on missions to paint corridors; maintenance bots paint corridors. Also, The Computer knows there is a Communist conspiracy to make it believe that Corridor CX is white. The person making this report is a traitor who deserves immediate execution. If the other PCs won't terminate him, another bunch of GREEN troopers shows up who will.
- ◉ **Request black paint:** 'What is your security clearance, please? —I'm sorry, the substance you requested is not available at this time.' If the requester insists, he receives a lecture on why black paint is classified—'A traitor might use it to paint an ULTRAVIOLET corridor

black, thereby permitting access to The Computer's most precious secrets.'

- ◉ **Insist to The Computer something has gone wrong, and the team has not been taken Outdoors as the mission briefing indicated:** The Computer demands to know why the reporter is not at Outside Access Door 74-Q-stroke-17. If the reporter is not fast on his feet, he's terminated for not reporting to the Access Door as ordered. Otherwise, the GREEN goons are terminated for taking the PCs to the wrong place. In this case, a new lot of GREEN goons shows up ('Hup! Hup!'), takes the characters on a mile-long jog around DOJ Sector and brings them back to Corridor CX, leaving them panting, sweaty and extremely hot in their winter clothing.
 

Anyone who tries to report the problem again is branded a traitor over the Complex PA system. The Computer's records show the characters have been taken to Outside Access Door 74-Q-stroke-17 not once, but twice. Anyone who claims differently is obviously a traitor. (More clever programming by Cosmo-V makes the orders to the GREEN goons change in transmission from The Computer to Internal Security headquarters.)
- ◉ **Kill one of the PCs (or a random passerby), claim he was a traitor who painted the corridor white and request a maintenance bot to repaint it.** Good paranoid thinking, but it won't wash. A Communist conspiracy of truly monstrous proportions, remember? The reporter is a traitor not only because he reports the corridor is white, but also because he murdered a loyal citizen as part of his plan to deceive The Computer.

**So, is there a solution?** Yes. It's quite simple, actually. Dirty up the corridor. Say, start a fire with the heavy winter clothing and the propane lighters—or lob a few grenades down the corridor. Then, report to The Computer that Corridor CX has become dirty and requires repainting. In order to test the loyalty of the person making the request, and because it knows about the Communist conspiracy and Corridor CX, The Computer asks the person making the report 'What color is Corridor CX, citizen?' The correct response is 'Black, friend Computer!' The Computer dispatches a maintenance bot—with black paint—at once.

## Debriefing

A bunch of GREEN goons show up to take the characters back to Briefing Room AB. Cosmo-V awaits them. They enter, the door swings shut. Cosmo-V congratulates them and announces that each PC is promoted a security clearance level. He gives each PC a set of new coveralls of the characters' new clearance—lightweight, summer coveralls, comfortable in Alpha Complex's controlled climate. Let the players bask in your praise for a moment.

Then Cosmo-V-DOJ punches a control on his desk; the steel wall slams down. The door opens and Earl-B enters. He solemnly indicts the PCs with a variety of crimes, among them failure to retrieve the two-meter long and ten-centimeter diameter INDIGO cylinders, and the wearing of coveralls not appropriate to their security clearances. Immediate termination is in order.

(*Alternative ending for nice GMs:* When Cosmo-V punches the control, the door opens and in walks Earl-B. Cosmo-V indicts Earl-B for failure to acquire the INDIGO cylinders, then has the PCs terminate him for treasonously poor leadership. Don't forget to reward them for executing a BLUE-Clearance traitor.)



# PARANOIA™

## Me and My Shadow Mark 4

### Special duties for special troubleshooters

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**Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET**

**WARNING:**

**Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen  
of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower is treason punishable by a  
long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.**

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TRAITORS

FRAGILE

# MARK 4

## 1: A new day dawns

Another day begins in Alpha Complex with the familiar buzz of fluorescent lights. You wake and reflect on the multitudinous gifts of The Computer: your spacious shared three-meter cell, last night's extra ration of Cold Fun.

Out in the hall, you hear the quiet patter of the lowly INFRARED drones, mindlessly yet faithfully serving The Computer.

Start by letting the players practice their Bootlicking ('Every day in every way, I serve The Computer better and better! What about *you*, citizen?' 'Why yes, today I feel *full* of energy and *happy* as can be, thanks be to The Computer!'), then continue reading.

'Good morning, citizens!' says The Computer in a soft, soothing voice. 'Time to protect and serve Alpha Complex!

'And how are we today? Isn't this a wonderful day? Good. I'm happy to hear you're so enthusiastic.'

Are your players happily jabbering away, answering The Computer's questions? For those who are, give them an extra helping of Cold Fun. And for those who aren't...

'Still sleepy? Here, have a Wakey-Wakey pill. It's in your dispenser dish right now.'

A green light flashes as a fist-sized, cubic purple tablet crashes into the dispenser dish from one of the many slots and tubes in the wall.

Roll 1d20 and consult the Pill Ingestion table on this page for the effects of the drug. (Note: The pill dissolves in water. Manly Troubleshooters, who swallow their pills without asking for a cup of water, should make a manly Violence roll to avoid an hour-long bout with dyspepsia.)

### Mens sana in corpore sano

Read:

'Okay, citizens, up and at 'em! It's time for your daily exercises!' Up on the vidscreen, you see the familiar figure of Jane-O-QED—'Janey Jump!'—dressed in orange and black tights.

Jane-O is a perky, happy blend of an exercise guru and a case of Jolt Cola. (Staging hint: Feel free to put on some bouncy aerobics music.)

'C'mon, citizens, on your feet for your daily fitness maintenance! The Computer says it's good for ya, and would you doubt the Computer? Let's start with five jumping jacks.'

Force players onto their feet. No pretending! If they balk, mention the nearest security camera is focusing on them (Tension 6). If they still refuse, assign some Official Reprimands and give them Personality Stabilizer pills. If they decline a third time, maybe they're not Troubleshooter material after all...

'Now for some really good positive energy. Let's do it. Five jumping jacks. Ready, annnd... *jump*, two, three, four! *Two, two, three, four!* Keep those loyal bodies moving!'

Other exercises to inflict on your players include push-ups (if the floor is dirty), chin-ups (if there is no bar available) or weight training (if there is any piece of heavy furniture around).

'Well, are we all warmed up now? [Pause.] Ready to begin another joyous Alpha Complex day? [Pause.] Not quite, you say? That's right! We forgot to do our five kilometers running-in-place! Okay, ready! set! aaanndd...'

Suddenly, the image of Janey Jump is replaced by the following message:

Show your players the mission alert from the prop page (end of mission). Hold it up in front of them for about ten seconds—count them off, so they know something's up—then snatch it away.

The players should have no problem finding the briefing room, provided they remember the room number. However, should they forget, have some BLUE-Clearance PLC Coordinator shanghai them—'Oh yes, my, you got here fast. You see, our totebot broke down and we need you gentlemen to carry these 1,400 crates to FAR Sector.'

### I never saw him before

Assuming the Troubleshooters ever arrive at the Briefing Room 23087D, read:

**QED Sector—the central core of Alpha Complex R&D and a hub of activity and mayhem. As you enter, many sights and smells greet you: Two scrubots methodically clean each other; INFRAREDs whisk by carrying plastic cartons labeled 'New Improved Bouncy Bubble Beverage'; high-clearance R&D personnel appear and disappear through doors and hatchways.**

**And ahead, Briefing Room 23087D. Beside the briefing room door is a frail, yellow-striped INFRARED guard. As you approach, she hooks her thumb over her shoulder and says, 'Go right in.'** [Wink, wink.] 'You won't get in trouble. They're expecting you.' [Wink, wink.]

Needless to say, this behavior might arouse suspicion among the PCs. We would like to go on record as *deploring* any GM who would use this opportunity to create a rift amongst the Troubleshooters.

If the players decide to question the INFRARED, she's evasive and jumpy. Her name is May-NTA-1. If the questioning starts to get biting, (i.e., it looks like the Troubleshooters are about to fry her), May-NTA reminds them Joseph-B-DGU awaits.

Just before the Troubleshooters enter the room, May-NTA addresses one of them directly (choose one of the characters at random). Read:

'Which one of you is [random Troubleshooter]? Err... Joseph-B-DGU asked me to deliver a... umm... special, supersecret, top, ahhh... high-priority message to you... in private.'

Will his fellow Troubleshooters let him receive the message? Will the privileged Troubleshooter even want the message? Probably not.

If May-NTA isn't allowed to deliver the message, she gets very anxious, almost hysterical. If she still isn't permitted, she bites down on something in her mouth, coughs and falls... dead.

### Pill ingestion table

1-10	<b>Wakey-Wakey pill:</b> You're awake, all right. Really awake. You feel like you'll never need to sleep again. (GM note: He won't, at least not for 72 hours. Then try to keep him awake.)
11-12	<b>Happy pill:</b> Wow, you're so happy to live in Alpha Complex, and being a Troubleshooter is keen! Isn't it great that Troubleshooters have a life expectancy of three days? Gosh, you're happy. (GM note: Duration: a while.)
13	<b>Sleepy pill:</b> Back to bed! This can be very bad, especially if you're supposed to be reporting to a mission briefing. (GM note: Duration: half a day.)
14-18	<b>Personality stabilizer:</b> You feel calm, confident. Very confident. (GM note: The personality stabilizer picks you up, yet calms you down. It keeps you from worrying about the little things, like spilling your Bouncy Bubble Beverage, or losing your left arm. Duration: a scene or two.)
19-20	<b>Hallucinogen tablet:</b> Look at all the colors! The hair in your mouth is tickling your brain. You can breathe in stereo. You can fly. Wheel! (GM note: Duration: 1d20 minutes, with flashbacks at your discretion.)

**Prop hint:** Sometimes trying to remember who took which pill gets pretty confusing. We find it helpful to have players wear tags describing the effects of their medication. For example, if someone took a personality stabilizer tablet his tag might read: 'It's okay... Everything's okay...'



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

Close examination reveals a broken false tooth in her mouth, filled with a greenish muck. (The muck is a deadly contact poison. Anyone want to examine it?) Clutched in her right hand: a piece of paper with a code printed on it. A code even The Computer can't decipher—hey, this is some serious stuff. (Give the players the message from System Supervisor 592, on the prop page at the end of the mission.)

If May-NTA is permitted to deliver the message, she takes the Troubleshooter aside, hands him the coded message and salutes by placing her left fist on the right side of her head and her right fist on the left side. Mission completed.

Any questioning of this odd behavior is futile:

**PC:** What was that salute you gave to my team member?

**May-NTA:** Salute, err...what salute? [*Troubleshooter demonstrates.*] Oh, that. That wasn't a salute. It was actually, uhh... rather like scratching. Yes, I was scratching my head. Uhhh, because it itched.

The PC who received the note won't understand it either. This has all been a big misunderstanding. Naturally, May-NTA is nowhere in sight when the Troubleshooters emerge from their briefing.

### What's it all about

When the players enter the briefing room, read:

**The gaunt but dapper figure of Joseph-B-DGU, Mission Briefing Officer for QED Sector, stands before a burnt-out pit. In the shallow, scorched depression is a**

**huge crate marked 'DANGER: MISSION EQUIPMENT'. Flanking Joseph-B are two GREEN-Clearance Vulture Squadron goons, armed with neurowhips and hand flamers. One of them motions you to sit on an empty bench which Joseph-B is addressing. The other guard seems to be unaware of you. In fact, he seems to be unaware of everything, except for a wad of gum on the ceiling, which he idly toasts with his hand flamer—repeatedly.**

**Joseph-B is in the middle of a sentence when you enter: '...just make sure you are beyond the blast radius if this should occur.'**

It's obvious the Troubleshooters have missed an important part of the lecture. Some ambitious Troubleshooters may decide interrupting Joseph-B is the best way to find out what they missed. Well, they're wrong. Instead, interrupting Joseph-B is the best way to find out how good the GREEN goons are with their neurowhips. The answer is 'rating 15'.

Joseph-B is extremely punctual and insists upon keeping schedules. This includes giving briefing room lectures on time, regardless of whether the Troubleshooters are there to receive the briefing.

When playing Joseph-B, think boring. In fact, Joseph-B is one of the most boring people in Alpha Complex. Other citizens find him boring. The Computer finds him boring. Even Joseph-B finds himself boring.

Joseph-B speaks in a monotone voice with no variation in tempo or pitch, pausing at odd times as he speaks. Read:

**'Now that you understand how to safely use your mission equipment after this briefing you will take it and report immediately to Hangar 139 on level 27b where you will be assigned to guard the new experimental Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 field.'**

**'Testing on the new warbot begins in precisely 20 hours for 20 hours you will be responsible for the safety of the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 after the 20 hours a representative from R&D should arrive to take charge.'**

**'Of the Mark 4 we have no indication that a sabotage attempt will occur but we're taking no chances while you are on this mission your code.'**

**'Name will be Task Force 451 also depending upon your performance you may receive an invitation to the field test courtesy of Research & Design at this point please select a mission leader.'**

Joseph-B waits a few moments for a mission leader to be selected. If after 30 seconds someone hasn't been chosen, Joseph-B points at the nearest Troubleshooter. (Any CPU members?)

Read:

**'You'll be acting as mission leader for the entirety of this mission your team's codename is Task Force 451 as mission leader your special equipment consists.'**

**'Of one chronobot which will count down the time.'**

**'Remaining in your mission starting right now from the 20-hour mark your.'**

**'Chronobot will announce the time remaining every hour on the hour now all of you will be receiving the standard authorization and responsibility forms.'**

At this point, one Vulture gorilla hands out an armload of papers and contracts (all marked 'Security Authorization Application Guide'), incomprehensible to anyone with less than Access 06 or Bureaucratic Intuition.

**Prop hint:** Tape a sheet of paper over your telephone directory cover or unabridged dictionary and print on it 'Security Authorization Application Guide', then insert copies of the Security Authorization Form (from the props page at the end of the mission) in the Application Guide, on various pages (one form per character). Now plopp the telephone book in front of your players.

If the players try to study any of these forms, the Vulture Squadron goons crack their neurowhips at them for not showing proper respect and for doubting the wisdom of The Computer who issued them.

Joseph-B continues his speech, insensitive to the spasmodic quiverings of Troubleshooters who have been thrashed senseless.



*'...Uhh—well, equipment officer, I believe it's your job to examine the mission equipment.'*

**‘A security perimeter has been marked with a yellow line around the Mark 4 absolutely no one may cross the yellow line without proper authorization only citizens presenting a Security.**

**‘Authorization Form are authorized, however, before receiving your Security.**

**‘Authorization Form you must first sign the standard Personnel Personal Responsibility Form.**

**‘PPRF-328890/B upon signing the PPRF you will immediately take responsibility for the Mark 4 retroactive to your scheduled briefing time which I might add you were three minutes late for and which sloppy behavior I have duly noted.’**

At this point, Joseph-B hands the Troubleshooters PPRF-328890/B (see end of mission) and waits for them to sign. Once the players have signed, Joseph-B scrutinizes the signatures very closely. **Note:** Joseph-B takes a very dim view of anyone who signs a phoney name.

**‘You may all remove the Security Authorization Form at this time from pages [name the page numbers where you have inserted Security Authorization Forms] in the Security Authorization Application Guide each of you will sign and carry with you a Security Authorization Form at all times.’**

Can the players find their Security Authorization Forms quickly, before Joseph-B loses his patience? Give them 30 seconds, then encourage the characters—with neurowhips.

Read:

**‘To restate this mission is very important to Research & Design and we want to make sure that you have the necessary data and technical specifications available this information will prove.**

**‘Invaluable to brief you on the technical aspects of the Mark 4 I now have the privilege and honor to introduce the illustrious Rob-Y-QED-2 R&D designer of the Mark 4 Warbot.’**

**The sage, white-haired citizen Rob-Y rises to greet you.**

You might have Rob-Y act like Mr. Wizard. If you’ve never seen Mr. Wizard, try Obi-Wan Kenobi, or even a cross between Mr. Rogers and

Albert Einstein. He is a concerned Alpha Complex citizen, a firm supporter of The Computer. He is also quite senile. There is no connection between his love for The Computer and his senility. It is only a coincidence.

**He begins the briefing with a cheerful query: ‘Isn’t this a wonderful Alpha Complex day?’**

After waiting for an enthusiastic response, he goes through the following routine. (Do it yourself; stare, pace, etc.)

1. He stares long and thoughtfully into each Troubleshooter’s eyes, as if looking into his soul. Actually he is just trying to remember who he is and what he is doing here. Have him ask random PCs these questions:

**‘Excuse me, but what is my security clearance?’**

**‘What door did I come through?’**

**‘Who do you think I am?’**

2. He paces back and forth before the PCs for a long time, frowning solemnly. Let the PCs think Rob-Y ponders the weighty problems of Alpha Complex. Actually, he has a bad case of gas from last night’s vat meal. If the PCs get itchy, keep them in line with a couple of lashes from the goons’ neurowhips. That’ll teach ‘em respect.
3. Read:

**‘That’s a handsome uniform,’ he says with deep profundity. ‘I hope they don’t have blue dessert tonight.’**

The Vulture Squadron goons nod knowledgeably. Are the PCs nodding knowledgeably too? They aren’t? It’s neurowhip-time again. Three-time offenders graduate to the hand flamers.

4. At this point, a very bored Joseph-B addresses the players:

**‘At this time feel free to ask Rob-Y any questions you might have about the Mark 4 remember you are responsible for the welfare of the Mark 4 and the more you understand the warbot’s design the better able you’ll be to protect it.’**

Considering so far they’ve learned nothing, the PCs probably have several questions. They’re also wondering how

this veg-brain ever managed to design the most sophisticated weapon ever created. The answer is—he didn’t. The designer of the immense warbot was, in fact, the late Rob-Y-QED-1, the predecessor clone of the person who is now trying to touch his tongue to his nose.

Unfortunately, Rob-Y-QED-1 died and a Tech Services mistake spawned this idiot backup (who, by the way, will receive a huge promotion and pay bonus if Mark 4 checks out). Rob-Y-2 knows nothing about the Mark 4, and has only heard of the warbot this morning.

In a rare moment of lucidity Rob-Y recalls:

**‘...the Mark 4 is actually quite large.’**

This, in fact, is the extent of his knowledge.

Joseph-B now interjects one final time. Read:

**‘This concludes your pre-mission briefing please proceed directly to the hangar with this crate of mission equipment.’**

**With the aid of several jackobots, a GREEN guard lifts your mission equipment out of the crater, carries it to the door and deposits it outside the mission briefing room. He and the jackobots return to the room.**

**As you leave, you notice Joseph-B check his watch and begin lecturing another empty bench. Out in the hall, six anxious Troubleshooters run past you and enter the room you’ve just left. The door closes behind them.**

## Transit time

The next problem our intrepid Troubleshooters face is how to get from point A, the briefing room, to point B, Hangar 139, with a one-ton crate of mission equipment. Regrettably, no one thought to provide our Troubleshooters with a totebot.

Guess it’s up to them to do some creative recruiting. Or they can open it here and paw through its contents now. If so, see ‘Opening the box’. Of course, they’ll have to take it all with them regardless. The Computer would look askance on Troubleshooters leaving valuable mission equipment lying around.





## 2: The most powerful war machine ever created

The Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 (affectionately known to lowly carbon-based lifeforms as 'Markie') is convinced it is The Computer's gift to the world, and is quite willing to let everybody know this (with the aid of 20 large loudspeakers). It is always willing to brag about its firepower and defenses—'Ha, that rapid-fire Megablaster can't harm me, you ignorant Commie slime!' (Meanwhile the Troubleshooters are probably being turned into bad imitations of swiss cheese.)

As far as combat ability goes, Mark 4 has every reason to be arrogant. It is virtually indestructible and has the firepower of a 23rd-century armored division. For game purposes, Mark 4 can wipe out anything at will in a single round, and nothing the players have can hurt Mark 4.

And all those statistics and technical stuff... look in the box labeled 'Mark 4'. It has myriads of useful data. Like how quickly Mark 4 can kill a Troubleshooter.

### The face of God

The entrance to Hangar 139 is a set of giant clamshell doors. Next to them is a Computer monitor. It speaks:

**'Greetings, Troubleshooters. To enter, please present your Security Authorization Forms.'**

When all the players show their authorization forms, the massive doors shudder open. Make loud whooping sounds to simulate the warning alarms, like this:

**'WHOO! WHOO! WHOO! STAND CLEAR OF THE OPENING DOORS! STAND CLEAR OF THE OPENING DOORS! WHOO! WHOO! WHOO!'**

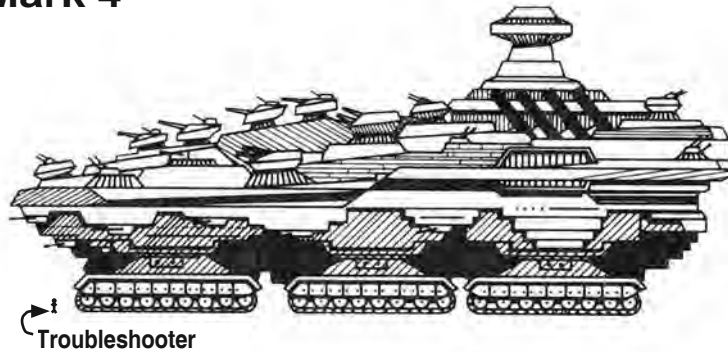
Within... a cavernous hangar, usually used to house a full Vulture Squadron. Now, there is only one vehicle, Mark 4. One 75-meter-long, 25-meter-wide, 40,000-ton vehicle, mounted on six monstrous treads and bristling with dual-mount vapoguns, grenade launchers, rapid-fire tacnuke cannons and one huge MegaGun.

Show the Troubleshooters the hangar floorplan (next page) and the size comparison between them and Mark 4. Read:

**Mark 4 is silent. The dozens of quadmount megablasters—motionless. Yet from somewhere deep inside Mark 4 you hear the quiet, steady hum of the warbot's power plant.**

## Mark 4

### Mark 4



As promised, here are Mark 4's stats. And, boy, are they impressive. Clearly, this warbot doesn't need the PCs' protection...

#### BASICS

Length: 75 meters  
Width: 25 meters  
Height: 35 meters  
Weight: 40,000 metric tons  
Chassis: 3 pairs of twin treads

#### WEAPONS

(24) turrets each mounted with 3 laser cannon 3s  
(12) turrets each mounted with 3 tube cannon 2s  
(15) turrets each mounted with 2 sonic blasters  
(42) swivel-mount grenade launchers  
(4) single-turret rapid-fire tacnuke cannons  
(2) turrets each mounted with 7 missile racks  
(12) turrets each mounted with 2 vapoguns  
(1) MegaGun

**Suddenly—the silence is broken. 'HALT!!! WHO GOES THERE?' booms Mark 4! 'IDENTIFY YOURSELF IN FIVE SECONDS—FOUR—THREE—TWO—ONE.'**

Now, in your pleasantest voice, ask the PCs what they do first. If the PCs don't immediately pull out their Authorization Forms, they're dead. Mark 4 is strict about orders. (After the first time it counts down, Mark 4 doesn't do countdowns any more. It was just programmed to do that to the 'first group' that enters the hangar.)

Once the Troubleshooters, or their clones, show Mark 4 their Security Authorization Forms, have Mark 4 launch into the following monologue:

#### MAGAZINE

(600) AP tube cannon shells  
(120) napalm tube cannon shells  
(120) poison gas tube cannon shells  
(60) flare tube cannon shells  
(280) tacnuke missiles  
(70) ECM missiles

#### DEFENSES

GM fiat: Mark 4 has unbelievably thick armor that defends it against any kind of attack you want. Play Mark 4 as invulnerable.

Additional defenses: Smoke generators, heat maskers, chaff casters, radar jammers—but really, when you have GM fiat, who cares?

#### ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT

(20) large audio speakers mounted liberally across the surface of the warbot  
(20) multicorder 1s for visual sensors

**'I am the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4, the single greatest war machine ever created. My neutronium steel armor can withstand any weapon known to man. I am capable of firing 20 tactical nuclear shells per second. My MegaGun has transglobal firing capacity.**

**'My armaments include 14 batteries of quadmount vapoguns, 42 grenade launchers, 4 rapid-fire tacnuke cannons, plus scores of supporting plasma generators and triple-mount laser 2s and 3s.**

**'I am capable of speeds of over 200 kph overland, through the air or underwater. And I am powered by the latest fission engine, thereby providing me with unlimited power. There is no foe I cannot face. There is no mountain I cannot climb. There is no sea I cannot swim.'**

# Hangar 139 floorplan

Hangar 139 is a nice place...a veritable playground. It is 150 meters by 150 meters, with a domed ceiling 60 meters high. Features of the hangar:

**A. The steam launchers:** Launch tubes designed to hurtle Vulture craft at high velocity (200 kph) into the atmosphere, but don't tell the players. If the PCs want to look them over, just read:

Each upward-slanting tunnel has metal rails, like train tracks. At the base of each track is a sled which runs upon the rails. After 20 meters, each tube fades into darkness. To one side of each tube is a control box labeled 'Guidance Control'.

Ideally, a Vulture craft is placed on the sled and then steam pressure hurtles it down the track. At the end of the track the sled stops and the Vulture craft flies off. Then the sled rolls back to its rest position.

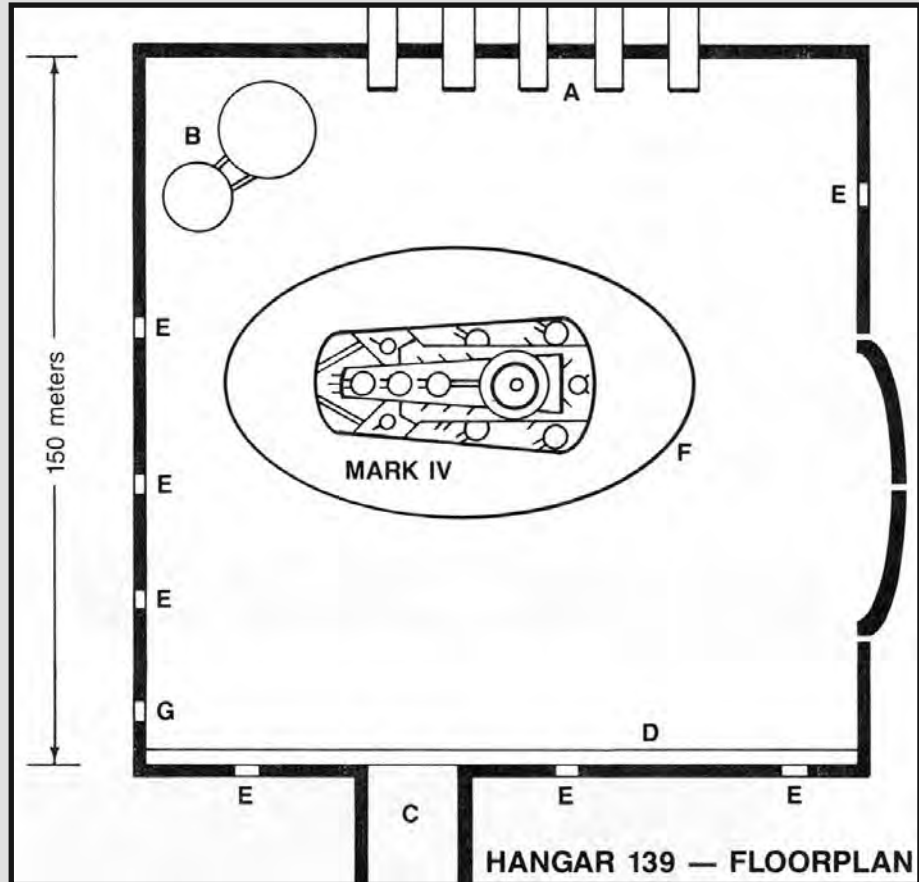
Does anyone want to open a guidance control box? If so, make the PC work at it, really smash it up. However, if your players are of the more loyal (dull) variety...how about that! One of those Vulture goons left one box just swinging open.

Inside the box are three buttons, labeled 1-3.

**Button 1:** Opens the security door at the far end of the launch tube. When it's open, PCs see blue sky at the end of the tube and feel gentle breezes waft down the tunnel, smelling of fresh-cut grass.

**Button 2:** Starts the pressure build-up for launch. Without a lot of pressure nothing will happen if Button 3 is pushed. After 30 seconds there's enough pressure to launch. After 60 seconds there's enough pressure to cause an explosion (W2V, 15 meter radius).

**Button 3:** The actual launch button. Two seconds after this is pushed, the sled is launched. Is anyone on the sled or in the tunnel? If so, they suddenly find themselves several hundred feet over the ocean—assuming they already pushed



HANGAR 139 — FLOORPLAN

Button 1. By the way, the launch tubes are built into the side of a cliff...

**B. The fuel depot:** Vulture squadrons need fuel, and lots of it. These are two very large fuel storage tanks labeled  $C_6H_{14}$ . No one would be foolish enough to shoot a laser in the general direction of a fuel depot. Sure. No one.

**C. The access corridor:** A very long, very large, very dark tunnel from which bad smells and strange sounds emanate. If the PCs want to investigate, have it go on, and on, and on...

Any PC who abandons his post for more than 30 minutes is declared a traitor, terminated and replaced by his clone.

**D. The walkway:** Rickety, one meter wide and 40 meters above the floor of the hangar. A ladder on each side of the hangar permits access to the walkway. At the top of each ladder is an ancient, rusty sign: 'Guardrails soon to be installed.'

**E. Hatchways:** Normal hatchways that can't be opened from this side.

**F. The yellow line:** The yellow line Joseph-B mentioned. Encircles the Mark 4. Citizens must display Security Authorization Forms to cross it.

**G. The service entrance:** A normal hatchway, except this one has 'Service Entrance' printed on it.

Are any PCs cocky enough to question these assertions? Vaporize them.

If the PCs ever get beyond the initial introduction, Mark 4 immediately wants to know who they are and what they're doing in the hangar. Smart PCs establish a working relationship with Mark 4, a mutual understanding in one of two ways: They can lie or tell the truth.

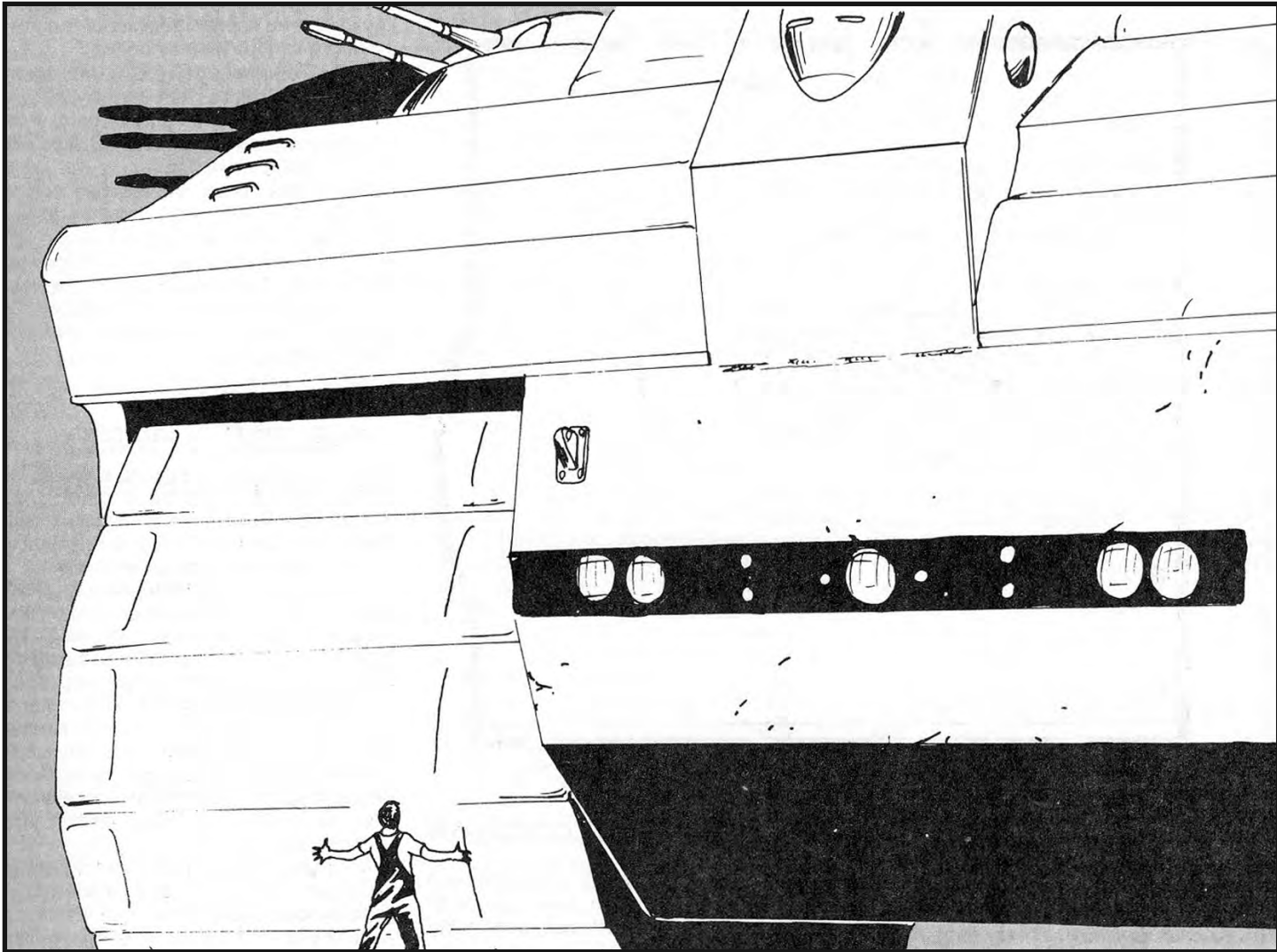
**1. The Troubleshooters tell the truth:** Probably foolish. Mark 4 reacts very poorly: Here it is, the greatest machine ever created (next to The Computer), and all it rates is a bunch of low-clearance Troubleshooters as guards.

Naturally, The Computer can verify the orders, if the players think to ask. The end result: Mark 4 is so confused that it spends the rest of the evening having a serious identity crisis.

**2. The Troubleshooters lie:** This opens up a lot of possibilities. All we can say is, keep in mind Mark 4 is very arrogant. Smart PCs play on this—lots of Bootlicking and Con Games. They'll also try to work it so Mark 4 helps them throughout the evening. Good plan. Hope it works.



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET



### 3: Setting up shop

The Troubleshooters have arrived at the hangar. Naturally, they'll want to break open the mission equipment. A rarity for Alpha Complex, this equipment actually works—*really*.

That's right. For once R&D has delivered the right box, to the right people, at the right time. 'But,' (you say) 'it's going to blow up in their faces, right? Or it's really a box of spare parts from a '57 Chevy, or the box is empty and our Troubleshooters have to explain what happened to all the equipment they signed for. Right?'

Nope: This time not only do they get good equipment, at the start of their mission briefing they were told how to use it. Oh, wait—they were *late* to their mission briefing. Oh, well.

#### Opening the box

You can't have the players treating this stuff like it's a glob of putty. So do your best to make them—what's that magic word—that's right, *paranoid*.

For example:

**GM:** So you're opening *The Box*. Okay, who's opening it?

**PC-1:** Uhh...as mission leader, I think Kay-R, our equipment officer, should...

**Kay-R:** Oh no you don't.

**GM:** Are the rest of you standing nearby when they open it?

Who ever thought a couple of simple questions could lead to all that argument, punctuated by all that laser fire?

There's really nothing dangerous about opening the crate. It's just your average shipping box. The Computer *repeatedly* stresses this to the PCs as they're about to open it. Remind them to trust The Computer. The Computer is their friend.

Once the players have it open, read them the following description:

**Look at all the pretty things R&D gave you: big boxes, little boxes, a small bot, barrels, a RED crate marked 'Perimeter**

**Defense Equipment'. There's even a big twisty metal thing, with valves and stuff. Wow, and grenades.**

**This must really be an important mission. Too bad there aren't any instructions. But that's okay; most of this stuff should be easy to figure out.**

On the prop page at the end of the mission there's a mission equipment list. Give this to the team leader. It has no useful information, just descriptions of the odds and ends in the crate:

**1. Perimeter defense equipment:** A RED plastic box two feet on a side. When the players open the box, read the following:

**The box is filled to the top with 40 round disks. Each disk is dirty grey in color, two inches thick and slightly smaller than a frisbee. There is also one small metallic box. On top of the small box is a booklet entitled 'Warranty: ACME Home Perimeter Defense Landmines'. The box**

has two switches, labeled 'Activate' and 'Deactivate'.

*The disks:* In all respects these look like ordinary landmines to the PCs.

*The booklet:* ACME has thoughtfully provided the Troubleshooters with a warranty booklet:

**'...the parent service firm, henceforth known as ACME, shall not therefore be whatsoever responsible, should said product be construed or misconstrued as the implement whereby...'**

And so on. The players should deduce that you place the mines on the floor and then activate them with the 'Activate' switch.

**Note:** There is only one activation switch. This is because once this switch is flipped, all the mines become active.

The landmines are 'thinking mines'—they blow up when they think they're supposed to. As soon as the players activate the mines, six metallic spider legs emerge from each mine, and the mines begin to scuttle all over the floor. Mines still in the box climb out to join the mayhem.

Try to imagine 40 superspeed crabs, each headed to what it feels is its 'ideal' hiding place.

Examples of good hiding places are:

- 👁 Under, on or in Mark 4
- 👁 On one of the PC's legs
- 👁 Outside or down the corridor
- 👁 On the floor, where they continually try to get themselves stepped on

Remember the 'Road Runner' cartoon in which Wile E. Coyote releases a whole basket of flying dynamite? All through the rest of the show, the flying dynamite keeps showing up at *just* the wrong time ... and blows him up... again and again. Well... PCs within ten meters of an exploding mine take W3K impact damage.

P.S. The 'Deactivate' switch doesn't work.

**2. Hand grenades:** A plastic box, about the size of a small footlocker, filled with 20 grenades.

Do the Troubleshooters want to test these out? Who's first? Courageous PCs quickly discover these are *antigrav* grenades. Anyone within five meters of an exploding grenade hovers ten meters above the hangar floor until the blast effects wear off—in 1d20 combat rounds. Plus, hoverers are easy targets, like shooting fish in a barrel.

The length of the time delay on the grenades depends. R&D kindly provided both kinds: the ten-second kind and the one-second kind. What a useful weapon! Hooray for R&D!

How can you tell them apart? Roll 1d20 when they pull the pin: 1–15—it's the ten-second variety, 16–20—it's not.

**3. Petroleum jelly:** A 100-liter barrel labeled 'Petroleum Jelly'. This has been mislabeled; it's jellied petroleum (i.e., napalm). Unfortunately, there seems to be no way to get this barrel open. Of course, the Troubleshooters could always pry or shoot it open—but watch those sparks!

**4. Lightbot:** A very small bot scheduled to be shipped to HPD&MC to be used as a photographer's assistant. Instead, it mistakenly wandered into QED Sector where an INFRARED promptly picked it up and dumped it into the nearest available crate.

The bot answers to the name Mikey-4, has limited intelligence and is only a half-meter tall. Protruding from Mikey's head are various light bulbs, flashbulbs and strobe lights. The head rests on an extendable neck (maximum extension five meters).

The bot is programmed to work as a photographer's assistant, specifically for Junior Citizens' photos. Mikey-4's vocabulary is limited to stock phrases like 'Serve The Computer and sit up straight', and 'Be a good citizen and smile. Only Commies won't smile.'

The first Troubleshooter to act kindly towards Mikey-4 is immediately branded 'The Photographer'. Thereafter, Mikey-4 follows The Photographer around, babbling about how happy it is and how 'even though I'm only a lightbot now, someday I'm gonna be reprogrammed and refitted.'

Should Mikey hear any word which pertains to its program (such as 'light'), it crazedly shines a variety of lights at the person who spoke and starts spewing forth a torrent of its stock phrases.

**5. Radiation badges:** Tucked in one corner of the mission equipment crate is a box labeled 'Radiation Indicators' (see prop page). Inside this box are 20 credit card-sized radiation indicators and a clear set of instructions. Read:

**Greetings.** These radiation indicators are included for your safety. Simply clip an indicator to your jumpsuit and periodically check the digital display for a precise reading of your exposure to radiation. In case of exposure, please follow the indicator instructions. Thank you for your cooperation.

Troubleshooters who examine their indicators fail to find any instructions. However, the indicators do have a line of red lights that are all off at the start.

As the mission progresses, some of the indicators may (heh, heh) malfunction. Malfunctioning indicators gradually display rising radiation contamination—the red indicator lights go on one at a time over a period of several hours. In reality, radiation levels in Hangar 139 are perfectly normal. Feel free to have The Computer assure the Troubleshooters of this, should they ask. Remind them how The Computer was right earlier about opening the equipment box.

These are talking indicators. At intervals, the malfunctioning indicators speak to their owners:

**'Excuse me, citizen, are you INDIGO-Clearance or higher?'** [*Pauses for the Troubleshooter to say 'no.'*]

**'Good! Then you are receiving acceptable amounts of radiation.'**

The indicators continue to ask questions every hour. As more indicator lights go on, the security clearance for 'acceptable radiation' goes down (BLUE, GREEN, YELLOW, ORANGE, RED) until all the lights are on and the indicator's question reaches INFRARED status.

If a PC ever answers 'yes' to the query, all the lights flash simultaneously, and the indicators repeat in a deep but panic-inducing voice:

**'Alert! Alert! Danger! You have received unauthorized levels of radiation. Please report immediately to the nearest docbot for decontamination.'**

For the record, decontamination Alpha Complex-style consists of being thrown into a top-loading washer for a rinse and spin-dry.

## Never a dull moment in Hangar 139

Sometimes you may think the players are taking too long, or things are getting dull. There are a lot of gags in this mission you can bring into play whenever you feel the need to liven things up. For instance:

**Pill effects:** Remember the pills? Flashbacks can be lots of fun.

**The crabmines:** Did they activate the crabmines? Some of the little bastards have

got to be hanging around. They can scuttle into play whenever you need them.

**Mark 4's boasting:** Mark 4 likes to brag. Like most know-it-alls, it can turn everything into a story designed to point out how wonderful it is. Use Mark 4's repeated claims of invincibility to drive your players up a tree.

**Mikey-4:** Remember the little lightbot? It's really good at getting in the way; pull it out at will.

**Radiation indicators:** Are these malfunctioning? Not yet? Maybe it's time they started to.

**Scrubot:** Is the scrubot still around, tipped on its side, maybe? (See Episode 4.) Maybe now is the time for it to start yelling.

**Your ever-faithful friend:** And, of course, The Computer can always start asking embarrassing questions.



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

### Special effects

The mission equipment crate includes additional gizmos and gadgets. Use these to liven up play:

6. **Sousaphone:** Great for the parade (more on that later).
7. **One quart of White Out:** Highly illegal.
8. **GI Joe with kung fu grip.**
9. **A little red bicycle and wagon.**
10. **An aerosol horn.**

11. **An audio player/recorder and graphic equalizer.**
12. **5,000 marbles.**
13. **Four large rolls of silver duct tape.**
14. **Two pairs of roller skates** (adjustable size).
15. **25 pairs of sunglasses** (brown).
16. **Spare parts from a '57 Chevy**, all stuffed in a box labeled 'Betty'. (So we lied).
17. **50 meters of nylon rope.**

Give your players time to play with everything and check out the hangar. When the fun starts to

wane, The Computer interrupts with a message. It expresses its 'highest confidence in each of you' and reminds the Troubleshooters they only have 16 hours left on guard duty.

Already the Troubleshooters have survived exercises, wake-up pills, finding their briefing room, neurowhips, meeting Mark 4 and a crate of excessively dangerous mission equipment, including a bot named Mikey.

Now for the rough stuff.

## 4: Cleanliness is next to treason

Scrubots keep Alpha Complex clean and shiny. They are important, loyal and efficient. They are also annoying, but harmless. That is, they were until R&D, er... 'fixed' them. Now scrubots are annoying, but dangerous.

In this episode, the Troubleshooters must deal with a persistent scrubot programmed to clean the hangar bay and everything in it. This includes the floors. This includes the characters. This includes Mark 4.

Do you know what a steel scrub-brush does to a delicate bot-brain? Put some lime jello in your left hand. Now clap many times. Hard!

### Enter the scrubot

**Ahhh...isn't guard duty peaceful? The quiet hum of Mark 4's fission-powered turbine engines. Fellow Troubleshooters alert—relaxed. Your chronobot beeps: 'Only 15 hours till deadline.'**

**Meanwhile, a scrubot cleans the hangar... in ever-tightening circles. Gradually coming closer... and closer... and CLOSER.**

**It's almost to the yellow perimeter line.**

**The scrubot is cone-shaped with four main arms. It has a pair of treads, plus secondary arms that emerge from various openings to do touch-up work. Printed on the side of the scrubot, in large, block letters is 'Extreme Danger'. Above this...a radiation symbol.**

Now, what are the Troubleshooters doing?

If the players say they do nothing, the scrubot crosses the yellow line, cleaning all the way around Mark 4. If they still do nothing, the scrubot begins cleaning Mark 4. (See below for the results.)

If the Troubleshooters confront or challenge the scrubot, read the following to see how to play Scrubot 409-D.

### Bots just wanna have fun

Scrubots have a difficult job keeping Alpha Complex clean, what with all the citizens and traffic and lasers. This stuff (especially the lasers) keeps R&D busy modifying the scrubots. R&D's latest creation: Scrubot Model 409-D.

Words to keep in mind when playing 409: obnoxious, smart-ass, know-it-all, whining, arrogant, vindictive and spoiled. 409-D's idea of fun is cleaning—floors, walls, people who piss him off... it doesn't matter.

409-D's supersensitive microsensors can spot a dirt speck at 20 meters. However, for PCs with inferior visual sensors, 409 was equipped to make things more 'visual'. For example:

**409-D:** Citizens, please move aside to allow sanitation of Mark 4.

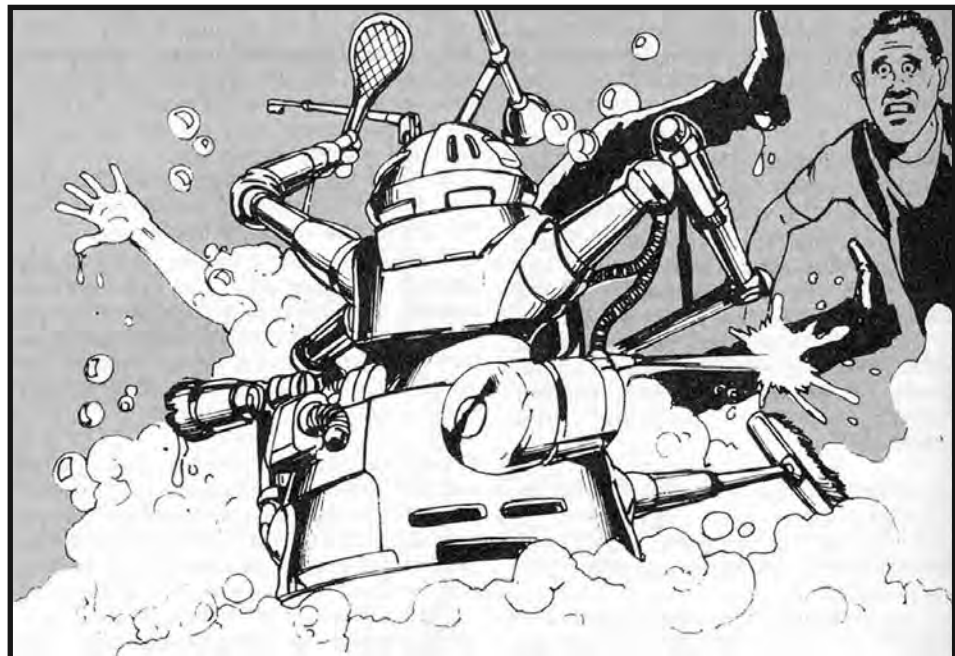
**PC:** Mark 4 is clean.

**409-D:** How would you know, laser-whiff?

**PC:** Listen, this bot is clean, C-L-E-A-N! [Wipes a finger across part of Mark 4's armor.]

**409-D:** Oh yeah? [A little tube comes out of 409-D's body and squirts a black, oily substance over the PC's head and onto Mark 4.] Well, Citizen Weaselface, he's not any more!

409-D is not only equipped for standard cleaning duties, but has also been programmed to maintain high levels of personal hygiene among lower-clearance personnel in Alpha Complex. To support this programming, R&D is now working on a new line of grooming attachments. Unfortunately, these attachments are not yet available, so 409-D is forced to use 'alternate grooming equipment': grease solvent for shampoo, a floor scraper for soap



Scrubot 409-D helps a Troubleshooter perform his daily hygiene maintenance.

and ammonia for mouthwash. These will be some of the cleanest Troubleshooters in Alpha Complex.

Beware! He who annoys 409-D is guaranteed to fail 'hygiene inspection'. This can be bad, especially if the character submits (or is submitted to) 409-D for 'Personal Sanitation'. 409-D informs a Troubleshooter if he fails hygiene inspection: 'Hey, you! Vat-stench!'

**(Prop hint:** Get an old spray bottle, fill it with water and the first time someone fails hygiene inspection, let 'em know.)

Sanitation is good. That character will be clean. He'll be so clean you may decide to roll for O5W impact damage.

By the way, 'scrubot' is a demeaning term. 409-D is a 'Sanitation Engineerbot'. Calling 409-D a scrubot is grounds for immediate Personal Sanitation. Other things are also grounds for Personal Sanitation—for example, if 409-D hasn't cleaned anyone in the last five minutes.

**How to determine who has failed hygiene inspection:** Roll 1d20 in front of the players and have the players count off in a circle. Your players are not stupid. They will count silently to themselves. They will know who is hosed. Hosed players often act impulsively before Sanitation.

## Wrapping up the episode

The four ways to wrap up this episode are explained below. If your players don't use one of these four solutions, then they are wrong. (Gamemasters are never wrong.)

1. **Shooting 409-D:** Shooting 409-D is bad. It is bad for 409-D because it explodes.

It is bad for characters within 20 meters because they are in the explosion (W3K impact). It is bad for those characters accused of destroying Computer property. But it is especially bad because Hangar 139 remains dirty for a *whole day*. See how bad it is?

2. **Let 409-D clean Mark 4:** If the players allow this, 409-D does a good job. It cleans the treads. It cleans the guns. It uses its 15-meter extension arm to clean the delicate bot-brain—with a steel-needed brush. When 409-D is finished, Mark 4 will have added a new word to its vocabulary: 'Akkk'. This is such a nice word that Mark 4 will not use any others—until it gets a new brain.

3. **Delaying 409-D:** A good solution. It might even work—if the players can delay 409-D for 16 hours.

Some delay tactics: The PCs can argue with 409-D (see Personal Sanitation). They can shoot it (see Explosion). Or, especially fun, they can tip it over. When tipped, 409-D is quiet until someone walks in. Then it screams its speakers off.

4. **Some other way:**
  - a. Rip off an arm and tell 409-D it needs servicing.
  - b. Poke out its eyes and tell 409-D it is cleaning Mark 4, as it scrubs the inside of a transbot headed for parts unknown.
  - c. Find an INFRARED 'volunteer' to be hygienically scrubbed, many times.
  - d. Anything else.

## Scrubot 409-D

**Size:** 1.5 meters tall, body is pear-shaped, one meter wide at base (see illustration on previous page).

**Weight:** 200 kg

**Armor:** Reflec E1 (see 'Power' below for effects of shooting 409-D).

**Description:** Mounted on a twin tread chassis. Four main arms along with several minor ones, which emerge from various openings in its body as necessary. Each arm has a retractable hand, such as a mop hand, vacuum, orbital planer, etc.

Printed on the side of 409's body is a large radiation symbol, with 'EXTREME DANGER' below it in bold, block letters.

**Sensors:** Two visual sensors, plus another 'eye' on the end of a multijointed arm. This arm can retract into 409-D's body or be extended up to six meters away. (**GM note:** Whenever 409-D is talking to someone, have the eye slowly scan the person's body from a discreet distance—like three millimeters).

**Speed:** 10 kph (a slow jog).

**Power:** Model 7 Micropile. (**Note:** Model 7s are known for their reliability, for their endurance and for their tendency to explode with tremendous force when punctured or—yes, you guessed it—shot (W3K impact damage within 20 meters.)

**Additional information:** 409-D has internal tanks that hold glass cleaner, water and hydrochloric acid. Sometimes 409-D accidentally gets its tanks mixed up. Sometimes it isn't an accident.

# 5: Whatcha gonna do to my bot?

The Troubleshooters encounter a group of authorized Technical Services personnel who wish to make a few 'minor adjustments' to the Mark 4. This encounter is a measure of the PCs' trust in The Computer. It is also a good measure of their intelligence, because little do our brave Troubleshooters realize, but those jovial, happy-go-lucky Tech Services 'repairmen' are actually fearsome Communist agents in disguise!

## You can never put too much trust in your fellow citizen

Now it's time to see if the players understand the meaning of this common Alpha Complex saying. Authorized repairmen come by, asking to have a look at the Mark 4. The PCs certainly wouldn't want to waylay them and risk having them complain of harassment to The Computer.

But the PCs must make sure all standard security measures are followed—to catch any traitors or Commies who have infiltrated Alpha Complex. Troubleshooters are always vigilant. Right? And they want to make sure they aren't making false accusations. False accusations are a bad thing.

Irreparable psychological damage is also a bad thing, but heck, that's gonna be par for the course.

## The man, the myth, the legend

For years Alpha Complex has been terrorized by a fierce madman known only as 'Comrade Borscht'. He has led his band of fanatical Communists, the Red Guards Tank Army, through battle after battle against the instrument of Capitalist Oppression, The Computer.

He has recently learned The Computer has manufactured a weapon of immense destructive power, which might put an end to his successful resistance.

The ever-daring, brilliant and scheming—but always treasonous!—Comrade Borscht plans to lead four Communist operatives on a mission to do some 'creative servicing' on Mark 4's robotic brain.

They have everything they need for the job: some burnt-out electronics equipment found lying in a dumpster behind QED Sector R&D, six high-explosive cone rifle shells stripped from a dead Armed Forces guard, and four signed and approved copies of pages 97 and 304 of the *Security Authorization Application Guide*.

Unknown to Internal Security, Comrade Borscht is actually Vlad-G-ADR-4, Head of QED Sector Office of Troubleshooter Assignment and Security Authorization. He knew about the Mark 4 long before the Troubleshooters were



called in on the scene and is determined to see it destroyed.

## At your service!

You hear a bit of static and then your chronobot announces 'Only 13 hours till deadline.'

On the far side of the hangar, by the Service Entrance, a light goes on and four men step through. One is GREEN Clearance, the others YELLOW. They all carry tool boxes and large bundles of wire.

Unless the PCs start firing at the repairmen as soon as they enter the hangar, the repairmen present the proper Security Authorization Forms, and the GREEN Clearance leader addresses the Troubleshooter team leader:

**'Werry glad to be meetink you am I, Fred-G-ANM, from QED Sector Tech Services. Please to allow us fix rrrrobot. Introducink to you my fellow Comm—panions, who assist me in minor tune-ups to Marrk 4.**

**'Here are Securritty Authorrization Forrrms for self and men. Trrrustink you find ewerrything in orrder.'**

Vlad-G-ADR-4 is a portly, wrinkled man with slightly greying hair and big, bushy eyebrows. He pronounces all Vs as Ws, and slightly trills his Rs. He learned to speak 'Russian' when he had close dealings with some Romantics a few years back. If the PCs ask about his strange affectation, he says he 'once had mouth *operrration* after tryink to swallow Happiness Pill.'

If the player characters haven't blown Vlad-G away just based on his accent, they might demand to search through the Tech Services

toolkits. By no means suggest this idea to them, but if they ask to do so, let them.

The satchels contain only spare fiber optics cables, jumpstarting cables, one chainsaw, a ball peen hammer, six high-explosive cone rifle shells and a copy of *The Communist Manifesto*.

If the players notice either the book or the shells, the Tech Services 'repairmen' all unholster sonic pistols and pull out scripts from their pockets. They read their scripts aloud and in unison. Fred-G-ANM (Comrade Borscht) leads the hollering like a conductor, with appropriate hand gestures:

**'Hey! What arrre you puttink in my satchel! Dat doesn't belong dere! Hey, arrre you ttryink to frrrame us?! Help, Computer, help! Watch out, dey have explosives! Oh no, I think dey're Communists! Help! We are outnumbered! Heeeeeelp!'**

With the final cry for help, they open fire on the PCs.

They make this believable to The Computer by all shouting the same words in unison. The Computer knows all loyal citizens think alike and act in unison when confronted with the threat of Communism. Meanwhile, the Troubleshooters are all probably shouting different things, or saving their breath and just firing away.

Thus, The Computer believes, the real Communists are actually loyal citizens being attacked by cruel Communist traitors. Thinking this, it dispatches 12 Vulture Squadron troopers with semi-automatic slugthrowers, who arrive in minutes.

However, if the players didn't search the satchels and still haven't lasered the 'repairmen', the repairmen approach Mark 4 and address the hulking warbot:

**'Marrrk 4, we have authorization for makink of rrrrepairs. Please to shut down**

**to rrrreserve power until finishink of our worrrrk.' The repairmen hold up Security Authorization Forms and Overhaul Servicing Authorization Forms.**

**With a subsiding rumble, Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 disengages its nuclear-powered turbine engines. The hangar becomes ominously quiet. The Tech Services repairmen nod and smile at each other.**

## Into the breach

The Commies just have to do a little button-pushing here and a little wire-snipping there, and Mark 4 will fall to pieces. But with Troubleshooters around, it's hard to avoid discovery. Comrade Borscht hopes the Troubleshooters are so scattered trying to keep track of him and his three lackeys that one of them gets a chance to do the necessary 'repairs'.

The four repairmen split up and head for different access hatches. One (armed with two cone rifle shells) ducks through Mark 4's treads. Another (equipped with another two shells and the chainsaw) heads for the ladder on the rear of the warbot. The next repairman (with one shell and a ball peen hammer) goes up a ladder on the side of Mark 4. Fred-G (with the last shell in his satchel and the copy of *The Communist Manifesto*) starts climbing a ladder on the front. They seem to be happily going about their work. Ask the Troubleshooters what they want to do now.

Should the Troubleshooters try to tag after the 'repairmen', you may wish to dissuade them by hinting at the possible risks of crawling around on Mark 4:

**PC-1:** I'll follow the guy going up the back.  
**GM:** The sign next to the ladder says 'Authorized Technicians Only'. Do you still want to follow him?

**PC-1:** Uh, maybe not.  
**PC-2:** I'll go after the one that ducked through the treads.

**GM:** He's crawling up through a hatch on the bottom of the Mark 4. A sign next to the hatch says 'Danger! Radiation! Nuclear Reactor'.

**PC-2:** Forget it.

**PC-3:** I'll follow the guy going through the hatch on the side. I don't care about any signs. [An obvious tough-customer type.]

**GM:** Okay, but you better be quick about it, because the hatch is closing right now!

**PC-3:** All right, I'll jump for it... [Gulps.]

Or you may prefer to let the PCs go after the Commie repairmen, undeterred by warnings or signs. You can let them think their mission to protect the Mark 4 also gives them the authority



Loyal citizens think and act alike when confronted with the specter of Communism.

to roam around the warbot's innards. They're wrong, but let 'em find out for themselves.

If the PCs weren't fast enough making up their minds, or they change their minds and want to follow the 'repairmen', or if they hear muffled explosions coming from inside Mark 4 and want to investigate, they have to get in through the access hatches.

Ordinarily this would be no easy task. Standard Alpha Complex security access hatches are tough enough to withstand heavy explosions. Their security access codes are at least nine digits long. Too bad the codes haven't been set yet. They are still set at their default value: 999-999-999.

Any Troubleshooter with hypersenses can see or hear the 'repairmen' enter the codes on the keypad beside the hatch. If no one on the Troubleshooter team has such a mutation, this might be a short mission. At your option, one of the Commies might have 'left a hatch open'.

## Hard on the inside, too

If you want to run scenes inside Mark 4, you can wing the interior descriptions as your whim dictates ('It's just like the big mining ship *Nostramo* in *Alien* or 'Imagine the battleship *Missouri* on steroids'). Alternately, you can take a cue from the actual Mark 4 interior maps and descriptions in *Alpha Complexities*, the full-length mission reprinted later in this volume.

Mark 4 is not without internal defenses. An entire platoon of bots of various sizes and functions roam Mark 4's conduits and corridors. Six guardbots, 12 jackobots and 20 scrubots maintain and protect the giant warbot. They police the tremendous machinery, scoping out loose wires, bits of weathered metal or Communists trying to plant high-explosive cone rifle shells in the works.

The bots ignore the 'repairmen' if they show their Overhaul Servicing Authorization Forms. The Troubleshooters, however, have no Overhaul Servicing Authorization Forms and won't be ignored. Instead, guardbots 'escort' them to the warbot's Internal Detention Center. The bots throw captured Troubleshooters into cramped cells, where the PCs find four skeletons dressed in GREEN R&D uniforms...

The Troubleshooters face an interesting dilemma. They can try to avoid or fight the guardbots and continue following the 'repairmen', or they can leave, or they might come up with an interesting idea of their own.

One final note on Mark 4's bots: If any shooting starts inside the warbot, the bot attendants declare open season on everyone in the hull. The guardbots try to kill both Troubleshooters and Commies alike, and take no one's word as valid. The jackobots dismantle anyone they can get their vice-like mandibles on, and the scrubots

spray ammonia in everyone's eyes and block the narrow corridors and accessways.

By the time the Communists reach their targets, the Troubleshooters are probably scattered throughout the crawlways and corridors of Mark 4's labyrinthine hull. Some might have been able to keep up with the Commie infiltrators, while others might have stayed outside, protecting the Mark 4 from any external threat. Others will be battling or running from Mark 4's army of bots, and maybe a few are trying to kill the 'repairmen' or each other.

These are the best kind of action scenes in **PARANOIA**. Keep jumping from one part of the action to another, to get everyone in on the fun. Interrupt a raging gun battle between the Commies and the Troubleshooters in the engine room to cut to a PC trapped by a pair of enraged jackobots wielding soldering guns and blowtorches, and then skip to a PC wrestling a 'repairman' in the magazine while the timer on a high-explosive shell keeps ticking and ticking...

## Wrench in the works

The Communists have three targets. If they can discombobulate any one of the three locations, they have succeeded.

If the Troubleshooters do not interfere, the Communists destroy whichever systems you want. If the Troubleshooters stop the Communists, but the Commies manage to detonate their cone rifle shells, the systems are only damaged, not destroyed.

## Target 1: The brain

Hidden amongst the immensity of Mark 4, located at the highest (and most heavily armored) point, is the core of Mark 4—its brain.

If the Commies destroy the brain, Mark 4 is useless. If the brain is only damaged, Mark 4 turns into a raving lunatic when reactivated, screeching 'Exterminate! Exterminate!' It cuts down the Troubleshooters (and anyone else in the vicinity) with a steady stream of tacnuke shells.

If the brain is damaged or destroyed, there is no immediate catastrophic result. But when The Computer eventually finds out, the PCs are turned into food-vat gruel.

## Target 2: The magazine

The warbot's magazine contains over 500 tacnuke warheads, not to mention thousands of 450mm high-explosive shells, hundreds of napalm warheads... you get the idea. The magazine is located on the level right below the bridge.

If the magazine is damaged, destroyed, shot, lasered, burnt or repeatedly hammered, it explodes with a deafening 'KA-THOOOOM!'

killing everyone in and around the Mark 4, the hangar and adjacent sectors of Alpha Complex.

## Target 3: The nuclear-powered engines

The third target is the warbot's nuclear-powered fission turbine engines. The engines are located on the lowest level, accessible through a hatch in the bottom of Mark 4.

Fission turbines are kept cool by circulating water around them. If the water doesn't circulate properly, the engines could overheat and break down. If the water stops circulating completely, the engine not only breaks down, but actually starts to melt.

The water used to keep the engine cool eventually becomes irradiated, and must be handled with caution. If not handled with caution, it makes people sick. (Are the PCs wearing their radiation indicators?) If the Troubleshooters ever get sick because of irradiated water, take a timeout from the mission and have The Computer explain this to them.

If the turbines are damaged or destroyed, there's a radioactive water leakage, as well as a few other nasty problems:

- ☞ Everyone in the engine room dies almost instantly from the radiation.
- ☞ The rest of the Mark 4 interior becomes irradiated in two hours due to flooding. Radiation poisoning affects anyone still in the warbot. Radiation also fuses all the electronics systems of Mark 4's attendant bots.
- ☞ Three hours after the turbines are destroyed, the reactor finally melts down. Everyone in the hangar dies quickly from the radiation. The Troubleshooters can prevent this by manually turning a wheel in the engine room. The wheel inserts graphite damper rods into the fission pile, shutting the fission reaction down. Of course, anyone who enters the radiation-filled engine room to turn the wheel dies about ten minutes later.

## Should your mission fail...

If Comrade Borscht ever gets caught in a firefight that is going against him, or presented with any other threat that smacks of defeat, he uses his mutant power of Teleportation to whisk himself away. His men, however, continue their missions to the death.

If the Communists succeed in their mission, they exit the way they came and fade into the far expanses of Alpha Complex.





## After the dust settles

If any Troubleshooter brings the vile fiend Borscht to justice (or lasers him, if that would be more convenient), and tell The Computer all about this high-ranking Communist, it would be a miracle. But miracles do happen (even in Alpha Complex), and if one should occur, shower the responsible PC(s) with 1,000 credits and a year's supply of Hot Fun Dessert. But Borscht's next clone will be back in action later in the mission.

As long as Mark 4's magazine didn't detonate, the engines didn't melt down and the brain hasn't been damaged in any way, there should still be

enough of Mark 4 left to be repaired for the field test at the end of the mission.

After Tech Services mops up the blood and activates clones backups, the PCs gain a brief moment of respite before another group enters the hangar.

Identical in number and dress to the first group, they ask if they can make some minor repairs to the Mark 4. These are actually real Tech Services repairmen, but they seem to have forgotten their Security Authorization Forms back at the office.

If the PCs let the repairmen off the hook to go back to get their Security Authorization Forms, the repairmen return shortly with the required forms.

If the PCs laser the repairmen, The Computer finds out and executes Troubleshooters who murdered loyal citizens; a new group of repairmen is also dispatched.

If the players just detain the Tech Services personnel and report to The Computer, it awards them 100 credits apiece. The repairmen are issued a stern warning and a 100cr fine for forgetting to bring their orders.

Once the matter has been settled, the repairmen reset the codes on the security access hatches, just so no one gets any funny ideas later in the mission.

## 6: Alpha Complex Road Runners Club

To be clear: The Computer never tells you to do one thing, and then turns around and tells you to do another—so that no matter what you do, you get executed as a Commie traitor. Never.

Five ULTRAVIOLET joggers run through Hangar 139 every day. The Troubleshooters aren't supposed to let anyone in the hangar, because their mission is to guard some super-secret equipment. If they let anyone in, they're gonna get yelled at. And if they don't let 'em in, they're gonna get yelled at anyway.

Read:

**Being a Troubleshooter is cool—and guard duty is fun. It's so fun you don't even notice how incredibly boring it is. You haven't seen anything move for over two hours, except for your chronobot, and all it said was, 'Ten hours until deadline.'**

**But you're not bored. With most jobs, if you stare at a wall for two hours, you'd get bored—but not guard duty.**

**Of course, it isn't always this way. Sometimes you get to see some neat stuff—like those five ULTRAVIOLETs who just entered the hangar—running right towards Mark 4.**

**Five out-of-shape, sweaty, smelly ULTRAVIOLETs dressed in cut-off white sweatshirts that say 'STATE', metallic-silver sweat pants, high-clearance-prisoner-made running shoes and ULTRAVIOLET Security Clearance badges are headed straight toward Mark 4.**

## Here we come...

That's right, five ULTRAVIOLET joggers running right towards the Restricted Zone. If the Troubleshooters are feeling uppity and want to stop the ULTRAVIOLETs, let them. The UVs turn and stare at the guilty Troubleshooter with utter

disdain. Let's hope the PC had a good reason to interfere with five ULTRAVIOLETs.

Like most joggers, these UVs run the same route every day...regardless. Guess what's in their way?

**The five joggers run right through the yellow line, right up to Mark 4 and continue to run in place. Then the sweatiest of them, Jess-U-TWE, stops jogging, turns, staggers up to the nearest Troubleshooter and pants, 'Who... whezzz—parked this—whezzz—circuit-board-mutant—whezzz—in our gym? Get it out of here—sweat, whezzz—that's an order!'**

That's right, remove the Mark 4.

## Mark 4 vs the ULTRAVIOLETs

To Mark 4, The Computer is mommy and ULTRAVIOLETs are its sibling rivals. However, Mark 4 realizes it's the new kid in the creche, and if it makes trouble, its big brothers and sisters will have it disconnected. Thus, Mark 4 remains notably silent in the presence of ULTRAVIOLETs, only speaking when they directly address it, and answering in a squeaky, whining voice.

Mark 4 is extremely hesitant about disobeying its original programming, which was: *'Remain within this perimeter until 0800 tomorrow, when an R&D representative will arrive to escort you to the Armed Forces test grounds.'* However, ULTRAVIOLETs can be, er, persuasive.

## Catch-22 meets 1984

As we all know, ULTRAVIOLETs are a very understanding lot, and these guys are no exception. (For a personality profile of each jogger, see the box nearby.) As far as their general attitude goes, think of these guys as a

bunch of kids in a toy store their dad just bought, because they wanted it!

What's going to happen when the Troubleshooters are ordered to remove the Mark 4 is anybody's guess. So to help you out we've made a handy flowchart (see the end of the mission). It shows the consequences of various actions. Just start in the middle and follow it to the end.

One thing to keep in mind while using this flowchart is it ain't the law. For example:

**Troubleshooter Doug-R:** Uhh, we'll move this bot immediately.

**Team leader Bob-Y:** Are you crazy? Our orders were...

**Jess-U-TWE:** *[Interrupting.]* Doug-R, I promote you to GREEN Clearance for exemplary past service. You are now also mission leader. Carry out your orders.

**Bob-Y:** You can't—!

**Jess-U:** *[Interrupting again.]* Doug-G, terminate Bob-Y-GRT-2 immediately for treasonous behavior.

## That's a wrap

All good things must come to an end, but don't think this is a hopeless situation. Well, maybe the flowchart *is* hopeless, but the whole idea is to avoid the flowchart. With a little thought, the Troubleshooters can wriggle out of this one. For example, one PC might say, 'Oh High Programmer, I assume R&D told you of the new Commie-killing germ they're going to test on us, in about three minutes?'

If, on the other hand, your players figure it out too quickly, feel free to gum up the works a little. Have one of the ULTRAVIOLETs, in the midst of yelling at the Troubleshooters, keel over from a heart attack.

Relax. Enjoy. Torment.

## A.C.R.R.C.

Here's a rundown (no pun intended) on the personalities of those sweet, lovable ULTRAVIOLET joggers.

**Jess-U-TWE-6:** Computer genius extraordinaire and unofficial A.C.R.R.C. leader. Quick to take command. Quick to give orders. Quick to execute. All around, the personification of the ideal ULTRAVIOLET.

**Cal-U-RXT-2:** Possessor of the treasonous Machine Empathy mutation, Cal-U has always used this ability to his best advantage. No one would have believed someday he'd rise through the ranks to become the Mind Control Coordinator, but it's true. A kind and gentle sort, Cal-U has no idea his mutation exists. Instead, he assumes all Alpha Complex citizens relate to The Computer as well as he can.

Cal-U is quick to become enraged at anyone who can't understand him. The Computer always understands, so why can't people? After having things explained to them in a nice, fatherly voice, the Troubleshooters are apt to see a radical personality shift in Cal-U if they fail.

**Lot-U-DJI-1:** Lot-U really loves Alpha Complex. Where else could you go from being an INFRARED janitor to ULTRAVIOLET Director of DOA Sector in just one week! Yeah, that was the best gag he's pulled since joining the Computer Phreaks. Hee hee! The look on Dan-U-DER's face when The Computer told him

he'd been demoted to INFRARED. Guess *he* won't be pushing any more INFRARED janitors around.

Lot-U is an all-around swell guy, a great kidder, and he's always willing to do favors for friends (anonymously, of course). Any Troubleshooter who goes out of his way to do something nice for Lot-U (or makes him laugh) is apt to find himself suddenly promoted to BLUE Clearance about 15 minutes after the joggers leave the hangar. What a guy!

**Kim-U-FXJ-5:** Credits, credits, credits. What a lovely word. Oh, and the things credits can buy! Kim-U-FXJ is the Director of Fine Collection and Credit Dispersal, a major subdivision of CPU.

Also, not surprisingly, Kim-U belongs to Free Enterprise. Even though she's receiving thousands of credits a week in commissions and sales tax (a new innovation of Kim-U's) from lower-clearance Free Enterprise sales-citizens, Kim-U is never above making a few on the side just to stay in shape. Kim-U leads the Troubleshooters away one at a time and offers to sell them genuine autographed pictures of Teela O'Malley for only 100 credits. She's got 1,000 of them.

Kim-U is willing to haggle on price. But if a Troubleshooter stonewalls her, Kim-U tries a new tack, ordering the Troubleshooter to stand at attention and prepare for inspection. Needless to say, the Troubleshooter fails inspection

and she fines him 200 credits. Kim-U demands instant payment. Appealing to The Computer only makes matters worse.

**Anne-U-JXT-8:** Anne-U is Supervisor of Clone Development, Breeding & Replacement (CDB&R), a division of Tech Services. Anne-U enjoys her work. She spends much of her spare time researching how to improve clone quality (i.e., she keeps a harem).

Any good-looking male Troubleshooter (read: a vexatious male PC) attracts Anne-U's attention. After this mission she has him promoted and assigned to assist in CDB&R. Doesn't sound too bad? Well, maybe not for the first week, but after that Anne-U has him 'broken down' so she can research his each individual cell.

Of course the Troubleshooter doesn't know this; all he knows is, Anne-U seems to be unusually attracted to him.

**Butch-U-VFV-6:** A Special Officer in Armed Forces. It's a tough job, but Butch-U is a tough guy. Make that a tough, tall guy (220cm). Butch-U's favorite pastime is picking up (with one hand) people who annoy him and throwing them against the nearest wall.

To any Troubleshooter who shows any kind of hesitation or caution, Butch-U delivers one of his famously loud 'Moxie lectures'. If there's one thing Butch-U can't stand, it's *weak-kneed, narrow-shouldered, wimpy Troubleshooters!*

## 7: The kids are all right

Junior Citizens, field trip, teacherbot: Sounds frightening, doesn't it?

A bunch of 'the best and brightest of Alpha Complex' decide to 'take in the hangar' as part of their creche's supplementary field trip. And their lovable old teacherbot just doesn't have the heart (or programming) to say no.

So it's up to the Troubleshooters to 'educate' the tykes. Read:

**The hangar is quiet. Your chronobot beeps and announces, 'Only eight hours until deadline.'**

**Over the address system you hear:**

**'There's nothing more important to The Computer than Junior Citizens. Today's children are tomorrow's loyal citizens. And it's up to all Alpha Complex citizens to educate and guide our children so they'll grow up to be responsible citizens serving your friend, The Computer.'**

**'This message brought to you by PAO, the Public Awareness Office of HPD&MC. Remember: The Computer is YOUR friend!'**

No sooner has this 'very important' message ended, when one of the minor side doors slides open and in rolls a teacherbot followed by 12 well-mannered Junior Citizens. The children seem stunned by the awesome hangar and the stupendous Mark 4.

It's now or never for our Troubleshooters. These are your typical streetwise kids, and they aren't gonna stay stunned for long. If the Troubleshooters use a firm hand, they've got about 15 seconds to hussle the little brats out. After that...

**As you watch, the little tykes' eyes start to grow as they scan the hangar, almost like they're in a candy depository. Then you hear 12 simultaneous squeals as the**

**youngsters each tear off in a separate direction—two for the steam launchers, three towards Mark 4, two towards the fuel depot, one for a ladder to the catwalk, three to the mission equipment. One fat-faced kid stands obediently by the teacherbot. What do you do?**

The Troubleshooters have missed their golden opportunity. From now on it's all down-tunnel.

## How to play the kids

As bratty as your players can stand. They like to climb stuff, but they don't like to climb down, sort of like cats. For example, a Troubleshooter sees a little girl climbing on a pole extending off Mark 4, 15 meters above the floor:

**PC:** Hey, you, get down from there!



# CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

**Susie:** No, and you can't make me. And I'm gonna tell my friend, The Computer, you're a Commie.

**PC:** *[Looks around nervously and tries a new approach.]* If you come on down, right now, I'll let you wear my cap.

**Susie:** Hurray, I get to wear a real Troubleshooter cap! *[Pauses for a few moments, and then starts crying.]*

**PC:** Hey, little citizen, what's the matter?

**Susie:** I can't get down. *[Sob.]* I'm scared.  
Will our Troubleshooter risk his own life and climb out to the end of the pole? Will Susie thank him for his selfless act? Or will she just demand that he give her his cap?

## Other shticks for the kids

1. **Stealing:** They're all packrats. If it ain't glued down, it's fair game. An example of something to steal would be the control box to the crabmines (if they aren't activated yet), a laser, grenades, credits, ME Cards, a Troubleshooter's extra laser barrels, authorization forms, etc.

2. **Breaking stuff:** Fuel valves, Computer consoles, security cameras, etc.

3. **Lying and general obnoxious behavior:**

**Bobby:** *[Pointing at a PC.]* I saw that Troubleshooter pass a secret message to a Commie who was hiding by that access corridor.

**PCs:** *[Laser. Laser. Laser.]*

**Bobby:** Ha ha ha! Kidding.

4. **Pranks:** Ranging from the simple (tripping a Troubleshooter) to the elaborate. For example:

**Ricky:** Mr. Troubleshooter, sir. My friend Bobby went up that tunnel and he hasn't come back. *[He points to one of the steam launchers...]*

**PC:** *[Grumbles and stalks down the corridor. About halfway to the end he hears a pleasant kind of hissing sound sort of like steam building up before a launch...]*

5. **Opening stuff:** Kids get into anything.

**PC:** OK, I'm gonna try to catch the little brat climbing up Mark 4.

**GM:** Right. You see him disappear behind a dual-mount Laser 3 battery.

**PC:** I follow.

**GM:** You go behind the guns, but there isn't any sign of the kid. However, there is a hatchway... open.

Characterize the kids using well-known stereotypes:

- ☞ The red-haired, freckle-faced bully.
- ☞ The four-eyed brain.
- ☞ The spoiled little girl who does nothing but cause trouble and then cry to The Computer about the mean Commie Troubleshooter who hurt her.
- ☞ The shy, quiet one who never does anything wrong (but is always nearby when things break, or burn, or explode).
- ☞ The twins.
- ☞ The star pupil.

## The teacherbot

'Children should be seen, not heard.'

It's sayings like these that get teacherbots disconnected (because half the time you won't even see the little monsters coming). Working with a bunch like this would fray anyone's connecting circuits. But that doesn't sway teacherbot Apl-TRE/e from her duty.

Maybe a little unstable, this teacherbot still means well. And she's a great protector of the kids. For example:

**PC:** Gimme that! *[Snatches a grenade from Susie.]*

**Susie:** Waaaah, that Commie Troubleshooter just stole my toy.

**Apl-TRE/e:** You ought to be ashamed! *[Snatches the grenade from the Troubleshooter and hands it back to Susie. As the teacherbot lectures the PC and threatens to report his behavior to The Computer, Susie pulls the pin and drops the grenade in the Troubleshooter's backpack.]*

On the bright side, Apl-TRE/e can't take much punishment. She's on her last treads. One good blast will probably finish her off. Of course, the Troubleshooter who blasts her is guilty of destroying valuable Computer property.

But remember, these Junior Citizens are a pain, and it'll be a pain collecting them. Killing them is not an option. At the first shots (even if the kids are doing the shooting), teacherbot calls The Computer, and there's a platoon of IntSec guards in the hangar before you can say 'child abuse'.

## If I had a rocket launcher

If the PCs can't figure out how to round up the kids, don't worry. An hour after they enter, the teacherbot claps her hands, at which point the kids all line up obediently and follow her out of the hangar.

But if the Troubleshooters have blown away their favorite schoolmarm, it's another story. How are those lovable tykes gonna get home?

The PCs can request a replacement teacherbot (or send a couple of team members out to 'recruit' one), or they might try expunging the little monsters (remember the steam catapults).

However, if the kids are still around after two hours, nature starts to take its course. The Troubleshooters face a crash course in parenting and child-care. Make their ears ring with constant cries of 'I'm hungry'; 'I have to go to the bathroom'; 'I feel sick' and 'I'm sleepy, tell me a story.' This goes on as long as the players put up with it. Maybe longer.

Or if you get bored, an annoyed vice-principalbot—nasty, obnoxious and heavily armed—shows up to take them home.



'Sorry, kids, this is a restricted area.'

# MARK 4

## 8: Something falls off

### Episode summary

Something falls off.

### Setup

With only six hours to go, the Troubleshooters have probably gotten the idea: Be alert, stop Commie infiltrators and fight off direct attacks. Standard stuff. There probably isn't any emergency the PCs couldn't handle!

**'To further elaborate on my superiority,' booms Mark 4, 'my neutronium-enhanced blast armor can withstand a direct—KLUNK—iapoziot. Poing.'**

Lying on the ground beside one of Mark 4's treads is a two-meter wide, gray, multipronged device. It appears to have just fallen off Mark 4.

The chronobot announces 'Only six hours remaining.'

Is Mark 4 damaged? Maybe we'd better ask. Hmm. Mark 4 won't answer. Maybe it's in shock because it just realized its own mortality. Well, we're sure Mark 4 will be itself again. Once it's fixed.

Some of the PCs probably want to examine the thing that fell off. There's not much to tell, except the object is completely unrecognizable to anyone without a Meteorology rating of 07.

On the bright side, if they look really hard, they'll find a serial number—34t879-117—on one of its appendages.

Unfortunately, the serial number is totally useless information, except it earns a 250cr fine if mentioned to The Computer.

### Fixing the bot

Don't panic! We're sure the Troubleshooters will straighten things out before you can say 'clone replacement'. Some common approaches:

1. **Telling The Computer:** Admirable. They deserve a gold star for honesty. They also deserve to be vaporized—for allowing the Mark 4 to be damaged. The Computer is cruel but fair.
2. **Fixing Mark 4:** Anyone climbing onto Mark 4 can use the Weapon and Armor Maintenance specialty to determine the device's origin. But just because he misses his roll, don't leave him empty-handed:

**GM:** You've found where the thing fell off.

**PC:** Great! I'll try to put it back.

**GM:** OK. But it's not going to be easy carrying that thing out to the end

of that skinny pipe...30 meters above the floor of the hangar.

**PC:** Gulp!

If the character finds where the device belongs (or where he thinks it belongs), then he may try to reattach it using Weapon and Armor Maintenance skill.

Naturally, failure to reattach the piece means *another* piece falls off.

3. **Calling R&D:** Naive but loyal Troubleshooters might call R&D to get the Mark 4 repaired. Regardless of who the Troubleshooters talk to, these events occur:
  - A. The person to whom they are speaking screams, 'Oh my Computer, they've damaged Mark 4! Alert, alert!'
  - B. Every siren in Hangar 139 goes off, making communication impossible. (Imagine being right next to the speakers at a rock concert.)
  - C. Three minutes later, 20 Vulture Squadron goons burst in, guns blazing. End of story.
4. **What missing piece?:** A more elegant solution: throw it away. This is especially risky, because R&D is guaranteed to notice something is wrong—when Mark 4 doesn't move or talk. Do you think R&D will take responsibility? Neither do we.

Please don't get the idea that the players are automatically hosed. Nosiree. It's just that the obvious solutions aren't always the best. Certainly a creative bunch will think of something, like abducting—err, *recruiting*—someone from R&D who can fix Mark 4.

Ideally, the Troubleshooters can repair Mark 4. This is good. Mark 4 should be repaired. After all, it's very important for a super-combot to have a functioning barometer.

Once the repairs are made, Mark 4 buzzes right back in, picking up where it left off.

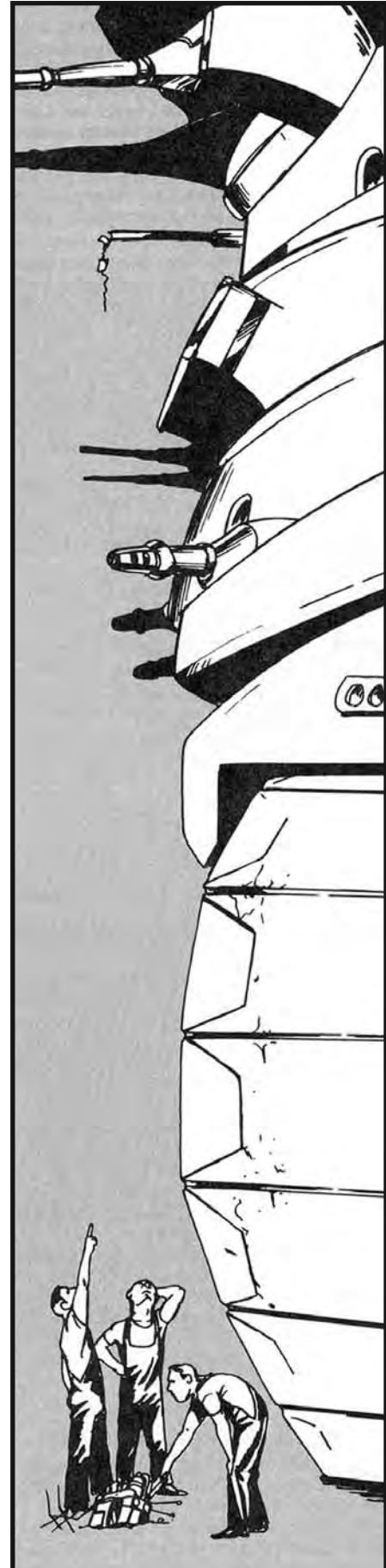
Read this aloud:

**'—hit from a tacnuke shell!' booms Mark 4.**

As far as Mark 4 is concerned, nothing has happened. Everything is fine. If pressed, it admits:

**'My mnemonic circuits were accessed by a random energy flare, creating a nanosecond illusion of incapability and inefficiency.'**

If questioned further, Mark 4 becomes tense and edgy. This causes it to make a mistake: it does *not* use its laser cannon to eliminate the citizen upsetting it. It uses the rapid-fire tacnuke cannon instead. No problem; the explosions won't harm Mark 4.





## 9: Commies to the left of me, traitors to the right

Once again, the infamous Comrade Borscht (*boo! hiss!*) has organized his notorious band of marauders, the First Red Guards Tank Army.

Multiplying in numbers like yeast in a petri dish, the Commies have once again massed in force for a full frontal assault against the agents of Alpha Complex. This time, their goal is nothing less than the destruction of the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4.

### Prelude to battle

Ah, peace and quiet. In Alpha Complex, these are sure signs of an impending attack.

Encourage the PCs to put their feet up, sit back and relax. Tell them how quiet everything seems. Have The Computer inquire about how safe everyone feels under the protective shadow of Mark 4's 400mm (16-inch) guns. Proclaim how beautiful Alpha Complex looks: even the shell holes and scorch marks.

Do this for about three minutes, until they are nervous, trigger-happy wrecks. Then begin the bombardment.

### Duck and cover!

Suddenly, the still of the watch is broken by a light, gentle buzzing sound—a sound that may remind Sierra Club members of the quiet drone of the noble bumblebee, and Armed Forces personnel of the sound of an incoming cone rifle shell.

Which do you think it is?

**Whizzzz...Ploonk!** The shell fired from an unknown location lodges itself in the superstructure of Mark 4. The chronobot beeps, 'Only two hours remaining.'

'HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!' roars Mark 4 with contemptuous laughter, 'No puny cone rifle shell can harm *m-lixztzypiffk... \*blaat\*...poyoing!*'

Strangely, Mark 4 isn't laughing any more.

The Commies (lurking in the shadows of the access tunnel) have hit Mark 4 with a lucky shot from an ECM shell.

ECM shells, ECM shells...they interfere with the electronics of bot targets, don't they? And Mark 4 is nothing more than one huge bot! Those Commies should be executed for reading the GM section of the rulebook!

They'll get theirs soon enough, but first, let's find out about Mark 4. The batteries on the ECM shell remain in operation for the next 30 minutes,

during which time all electronic equipment in the hangar is discombobulated. But if someone could climb up Mark 4 and destroy the shell, Mark 4 would revive one combat round later.

This also means The Computer's terminal is out, along with all PDCs and multicorders. It's **Tension 0** for the duration, woohoo! The huge armored doors are stuck closed for the duration. The only working electronic mechanisms in the hangar are the crawling mines and the scrubot, if it's still around and at least semifunctioning.

**A loud, roaring rumble issues from the access tunnel. The buzzing of another cone rifle rips the air. Whizzz—kapoofff!**

**What do you do now?**

The sound effects are important. Practice these in front of the mirror before the players arrive. Did the PCs realize the *kapoofff* was the impact sound of a gas-filled shell?

The cone rifle shell is full of vomit gas. PCs not wearing gas masks must make a Violence check, or spend the next few combat rounds exhibiting their breakfast.

Anyone still left standing can face the Commie mutant scum who are about to roll all over him.

### Red Wave 1: Charge of the Red Brigade

Find the Commie Roster on the next page, then read:

**From the access tunnels you hear the roar of approaching jet engines and screeching tires. And over that another sound: the sound of voices, a rallying cry. 'Russkie! Russkie! Da! Da! Da!'**

**Staging hint:** Play 'Surf City' loudly on your stereo.

If the PCs haven't all fled or been incapacitated, they see the first wave roll out of the tunnel, guns blazing.

**Zooming out from the tunnel come six Commies on jet skates. Three turn to the left, three to the right. They wear RED reflex with a hammer and sickle emblazoned on the front.**

*The Guards Mechanized Infantry Division:* Six Communist agents mounted on jet skates that move at 120 meters (86 kph or about 50mph) per round. They carry stun guns (rating 07) and wear gas masks. They also carry 200 propaganda leaflets, 20 posters of Marx-Tse-Lenin and a

four-page condensation of *The Communist Manifesto*.

The Mech Infantry of Wave 1 shoot at anyone standing, running, hiding, playing dead—everyone but those who failed their Violence rolls when the vomit gas shell exploded. Their prime targets: 1) anyone trying to get to the ECM shell, 2) anyone shooting back and 3) anyone trying to leave the hangar.

The Commies must move all 120 meters in a round, because the skates only have one speed setting (dangerously fast), and they have a hard time turning. This offers a convenient rationale for Perversity modifiers.

Every so often, say every round or two, roll 1d20 for one or more of the Wave 1 Commies. On 14 or less, they hit a small obstruction (crawling mine, fellow Commie, Troubleshooter in the way, etc.) and get Snafued. On 5 or less, they hit something big (wall, fuel depot, flank of Mark 4) and wipe out gloriously (downed for a round).

Rather than provide tedious turn-radius rules, we recommend you make it clear the Commies are running rings around the PCs, and have the Red Menace run into each other, the walls and any PCs standing in the open, as the mood hits you.

### Let the good times roll

After five rounds of combat, read:

**The Commies are skating and screaming wildly. Meanwhile, another shell lands near you. Whizzz—ka-poofff!**

**What do you do?**

Everyone who has a gas mask is probably wearing one by now. Those who aren't suffer a terrible fate. The shell that just landed was full of hallucinogenic gas! Everyone exposed to the gas must make a Violence roll. Those who fail the check are overcome with strange visions.

For the next few rounds, nylon hair grows from their eyes, or tentacles writhe on the banks of a molasses river, or comets spring out of the fluorescent lights. Be poetic. Invite your players to make up or add to their hallucinations. Reward creative additions with Perversity points. Mystics may advance in their society if they roleplay this scene well.

Anyone determined to keep shooting at the Commies in his drugged-out state succeeds only on a 1, due to the warping of his senses. A PC using Perversity points to override this guideline may, at your discretion, suffer unfortunate hallucinogenic mishaps, causing him to (perhaps) hit a Commie but also make an Insanity check.

This is the dangerous part of the encounter, when many Troubleshooters will be helplessly

## NPC Commie roster

Wave	No.	Armor	Weapons	Movement and miscellaneous
Wave 1	6	RED reflec (E1), gas masks	Stun guns (skill 07)	Jet skates (120 meters/round). Really hard to hit or be hit while moving.
Wave 2	4	YELLOW reflec (E1), gas masks	Stun guns (skill 08)	Rocket skateboards (80 meters/round). Hard to hit or be hit while moving.
Wave 3	9	YELLOW reflec (E1), gas masks	Semiautomatic stun guns (skill 09). Only four are shooting; the other five are drivers. Drivers have sabers (sword skill 06, W5K impact).	Go-carts (60 meters/round). Fairly hard to hit or be hit while moving.
Comrade Borscht	1	GREEN reflec and Kevlar (E1/13), gas mask	Sonic pistol (skill 13, S3W energy)	Motorcycle (160 meters/round). Borscht rides his cycle with expert grace, and can attack without penalty. Hitting him, though— <i>that's</i> hard.

nauseated, drugged out, wounded, dead or any combination of the above. At this point, the second Red wave rolls into the cavernous hangar.

### Red Wave 2: We are nailed to the hull

**Spewing forth from the access tunnel comes the second wave: four Commies on rocket skateboards, wearing YELLOW reflec. This bunch carries guns similar to those the first wave carried.**

*The Guards Shock Cavalry Brigade:* Four more gas-masked Commies attack, armed with stun guns (skill 08), 200 more pamphlets and 20 posters each, *Communist Manifestos* at the ready and riding rocket skateboards (80 meters/round, or 57 kph).

Because they aren't travelling as fast as their comrades, these Commies can make the turns a bit better. They can also hit, and get hit, more easily. They tend to run into things less often, and therefore they aren't as fun. But at this point, the interest level rises.

If the shooting gets sparse and the Commies spot a Troubleshooter lying on the ground who looks like he still has enough body parts to be alive (i.e. Snafued, Wounded or drugged-out characters), three or four break off the gun battle. They scoot over to persuade the hapless victim(s) of the virtues of Communism.

That's correct. The Communists are trying to subvert our loyal heroes! See the secret skill 'Propaganda' in the *PARANOIA XP* rulebook. Notice how you can give it to other citizens?

The Commies wrestle the stunned or wounded Troubleshooter to the ground and sit on his chest. If the PC tries to scream for help, the Commies shove a wadded-up leaflet in his mouth. After they remove the Troubleshooter's valuables (certainly including weaponry, reloads and electronic gear), they take the backing off two Marx-Tse-Lenin posters and plaster the front and back of the Troubleshooter. They also read passages from the Manifesto, to convince the Troubleshooter of the obvious advantages of a People's Republic.

**PC:** Great, so these Commie dudes are all over me. Is there anything I can do?

**GM:** Yes, you can listen to what they are saying: 'Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!'

**PC:** I try not to listen...

**GM:** *[On a roll.]* 'Workers rule! Teela O'Malley is the opiate of the Masses!'

If a captured PC is forced to listen to the Commies for five or more rounds, give him Communist Propaganda skill 03, or increase his existing rating by 3. The only PCs who can escape getting the skill are those who purposely knock themselves unconscious (say, by beating their heads on the ground). Give them the skill no matter how much they whine. The Computer won't be happy if it ever finds out about this.

If the players are still standing up against the firefight, the various gasses and the indoctrination, the Commies get mean. The sound of hard wheels and heavy vehicles once again issues from the access tunnel. If the players duck (it should be second nature by this time), surprise them by telling them they *don't* hear a cone rifle shell. Then tell them the bad news....

### Red Wave 3: Duck and cover (Reprise)

Once again you hear the drone of engines from the tunnel. The sound rises as the next wave approaches. Suddenly they're on you: five Old Reckoning go-carts.

Each of the first four go-carts has a crew of two—driver and gunner. The last go-cart has only a driver and a huge metallic, boxy gadget with a single, stenciled word on its side: 'MEGABOMB'.

*The Guards Heavy Tank Armored Brigade:* The four gunners are armed with semi-automatic stun guns (rating 09) and wear YELLOW reflec armor and gas masks. The drivers have sabers (rating 06) and are also wearing YELLOW reflec and gas masks. The go-carts travel at 60 meters/round (43 kph); high speed provides a convincing rationale for negative Perversity point modifiers. Similar leaflets, posters and four-page manifestos are in the go-carts, and the Commies use these to obscure vision and cause maximum confusion.



*'Die, running pig-dog lackeys of the bourgeois imperialist data processor!'*



The other two waves (or whatever's left of them) try to hold back the PCs to let the third wave get to Mark 4's hull with the Megabomb. It takes three people to lift this huge bomb, and four rounds to place it on the hull, so at least two of the go-cart's crews are needed to place the bomb. The rest of the third wave tries to cover the operation.

Sometimes the life of a Troubleshooter is pretty rough. This is one of those times.

Who knows? The PCs might actually still be alive. They might even have a chance at stopping the Commies from placing the Megabomb. But for now, assume the PCs are all nursing wounds and hiding from Commie fire.

After the Megabomb is placed, Comrade Borscht (who has been lobbing the cone rifle shells from a discreet distance down the access tunnel) sounds the retreat:

**'Rearvard to go now! Marchink! Back to Mother Rrroossia! Ollie, ollie, oxen free!'**

The Red Menace breaks off and scooters on down the access tunnel the way it came. If anyone cares to follow, the Commies try to capture and indoctrinate him as above. Comrade Borscht rides an old motorcycle (160 meters/round, or 150 kph) and wears GREEN reflex and Kevlar armor. He packs a sonic pistol as a personal sidearm but is out of cone rifle shells.

The PCs may have a minuscule chance of hitting him, if you want to let them try. Or at this point, they might actually want to change sides. Have them stripped down to their underwear and thrown in the back of one of the go-carts and driven off, never to be heard from again.

### As time goes by

If any Troubleshooters care to look, they have an entire minute before the Megabomb explodes. Read:

**The Megabomb has been magnetically attached under the front armor plate of the Mark 4. On the front of the Megabomb is a digital clock. The clock reads '60, 59, 58...'**

Actually, the Megabomb has no chance of harming the Mark 4. The Troubleshooters would do better to run away, if they only knew.

A brave/foolish PC who tries to stop the bomb has a couple of options:

**1. Defuse it:** Any PC attempting to defuse the bomb should be told about the large digital clock reading down the time to detonation: '...57, 56, 55...'. The clock is malfunctioning, and some of its wires are connected strangely. Sometimes it skips a number, and goes from 38 to, for instance, 13. No worries: it actually keeps the correct time internally.

If a player makes a successful Hardware roll, he can open up the bomb casing (rolling 19–20 detonates the bomb). After the bomb case is open, a successful Demolition skill roll defuses the bomb mechanism. Rolling 19–20 detonates the bomb, and rolling 18 detaches the clock readout only (the bomb actually keeps ticking away).

**2. Detach it from the hull:** Any PC trying to remove the bomb must make a successful Hardware skill roll. If this succeeds, he must make a second Hardware skill roll to detach the electromagnetic lock.

Alternately, he may attempt to blow the bomb off the side of the hull with explosives. Trying this sets off a chain reaction and explodes the Megabomb. Whoopsy-daisy! Maybe they'll think twice before they choose this option.

After the bomb is off the hull, the PCs may place it in the back of a go-cart, and send it zipping after the retreating Commies. (Remember, it takes three people to lift it.)

The Megabomb explodes 60 seconds after the Commies retreat. Each attempt to remove or defuse the Megabomb takes ten seconds. It takes 20 seconds to remove the Megabomb and put it in a go-cart. It takes another 30 seconds for the Megabomb to zip out of sight down the corridor to where it will not harm the PCs (and blow up the Commies). To create urgency during the countdown, let the players spend Perversity points lavishly.

The Megabomb has a blast radius of 300 meters. Anyone still inside the radius is vaporized. Characters still under the effects of hallucinogenic gas probably consider this a 'bad trip'.

PCs who spend the entire time from Megabomb activation to detonation running away at top speed can get beyond the blast radius. The only exits available are the access tunnel launch tubes (over the cliff), and perhaps inside Mark 4. Remember, the big blast doors are shut, and they're over five meters thick.

Anyone who survives the blast has a tough time explaining this one to R&D. Still, there's always another clone....

And for those who don't survive: Hey, them's the breaks. Just send in the clones and they'll find Mark 4 sitting quietly in the hangar completely unharmed by the explosion. ('Ha ha ha, that Megabomb can't harm me.')

## 10: The big test

**The hangar is quiet. The last traces of the Commie assault—cleaned. Mark 4 hums quietly. The chronobot sputters back to life. 'Time is up. Deadline. Deadline. Deadline.' There is a crack and the chronobot falls from your wrist in a dozen pieces.**

**Silence. Then, the crackle of static, followed by the voice of The Computer: 'Congratulations, Task Force 451, on a mission well done. I have always had the greatest confidence in each of you. As a special reward, before debriefing, each of you is invited to attend Warbot Model 425 Mark 4's field test.'**

Pause to let the players bask in The Computer's praise and utter false modesties.

**'In a few moments, a representative of Research & Design will arrive to**

**take possession of the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4. Please verify clearance by checking for page 93 of the Security Application Form and taking pages 14 and 137 from the Property Transfer Authorization Guide.**

**'Make sure the Security Application Form has been signed by Joseph-B-DGU-4, on pages 1, 48 and 102; and that Rob-Y-QED-2 and the acting Head of Transfer Forms have signed on pages 69 and 107. Thank you for your cooperation.'**

At this point, the Troubleshooters probably have several questions for The Computer. The Computer will answer two.

Why only two? Because, less than a minute after The Computer's initial address, every siren and klaxon in Hangar 139 goes off, making thinking, much less communication, impossible.

A good way to stage this is to make a lot of noise. Turn the TV and stereo on full blast. Ask your kid brother to howl at the top of his lungs. If you have a police whistle, blow it hard. 'It's okay, Dad. We're playing **PARANOIA**.' Read:

**Suddenly, the sirens cease and an ominous silence descends upon Hangar 139—a silence broken by rumbling as the great clamshell doors begin to open. Outside are colors, shouting and a song.**

### The gang's all here

Place your best copy of 'The Stars and Stripes Forever' on the stereo. We're gonna have a parade!

That's right, Troubleshooters, it's a parade—autocars, funbots, floats. And what's a parade without—you guessed it—a marching band! Do you still have your sousaphone?

Look at all the streamers and signs and people—people of all different security clearances plus a sea of INFRAREDS. Watch the people. See them enter the hangar. See them dance and laugh and sing. See them do all these things as they climb Mark 4. Is it possible to do all these things and climb Mark 4?

Well...maybe not, but they're sure gonna try.

Apparently someone in R&D decided to throw a little party in anticipation of Mark 4's triumphant field test. Why not? If Mark 4 passes the field test, what's a little party? If Mark 4 doesn't pass...

But you know how these things are. Someone invites a couple of friends, and then *they* invite *their* friends, and before you know it, all of R&D takes the day off.

Ask the Troubleshooters how they react. Do they feel that, with The Computer's earlier praise, they've completed the mission—even though they haven't been debriefed yet? Are they still on guard duty?

Needless to say, no one in the crowd has proper authorization, and the characters can't even talk to The Computer, because the terminals are all gunked up with shaving cream.

The Troubleshooters might try frying them, but that just leaves a couple of wasted partyers. Then someone grabs the Troubleshooter's laser:

**'Wow! That's really neat! Mind if I borrow that? Is this how you shoot it? Cool—I guess so!'**

Most citizens don't get to play with lasers often.

As far as the crowd is concerned, Mark 4 is the greatest thing since Bouncy Bubble Beverage, and they're gonna march with him all the way to the field test.

At some point in the mayhem read:

**A short, middle-aged, RED-Clearance woman approaches and meekly asks: 'Are you the brave boys who guarded our Markie?'**

If any of the Troubleshooters answers yes:

**'Here they are! Over here!' A hush settles over the hangar as every head turns towards you. Silence. The crowd parts.**

**Joseph-B-DGU strides forward towards you. 'Well, I trust you had a quiet evening.'**

Joseph-B then remains silent. The Troubleshooters are supposed to turn Mark 4 over to him, but he in no way indicates this, by word or expression.

Can the Troubleshooters remember the transfer procedure, as outlined by The Computer? We sure hope so. Because for every signature they forget to check and every transfer paper they forget to take, The Computer will fine each of them 100 credits.

Once the transfer has been completed, Joseph-B 'invites' the Troubleshooters to witness the field test. Without waiting for a response, he turns and addresses Mark 4. Read:

**'Mark 4, please follow the Preliminary Procession Task Force to the Field Testing Facility 938-Arc 1.'**

If Mark 4 has survived the evening with its faculties intact, it complies. If not, someone's in trouble. But anyway:

**'Hip, hip...hoorayyy! For they're a jolly good band of Troubleshooters.'**

Play the 'Stars and Stripes Forever' again, and have the marching band lead them to the field test. All along the parade route, citizens and bots cheer and throw confetti.

Encourage the players to get involved in the celebration, to relax. Hey, they've done a good job and deserve a break, a chance to unwind.

Keep this up until they're agonized with suspense.

## Grandstanding

**After about 30 minutes, the procession comes to a halt before a pair of clamshell doors even larger than those of Hangar 139. In front of the doors stands a semicircle of YELLOW Vulture Squadron goons armed with plasma accelerators. Behind them stand three high-clearance R&D honchos. Two are INDIGO Clearance, the other VIOLET. Upon seeing them, Joseph-B-DGU becomes noticeably nervous, and the rest of the parade fades into the tunnel works.**

**Joseph-B turns to you: 'Remember, you are acting as honorary guests and representatives of R&D. This is a special reward for your exemplary service. Do nothing that would reflect unfavorably on R&D.'**

**Joseph-B motions for you to follow as he walks towards the reception committee.**

**Wordlessly, the guards move aside. The VIOLET R&D rep peers at you, whispers to his two companions. He turns and makes a hand signal to a GREEN-Clearance Vulture Squadron leader standing by the door controls. A single button sets 10,000 tons of duralloy steel in motion. The doors creak open.**

**A burnt, acrid smell greets you. Before you lies a wide expanse of flatland**

**pockmarked with craters and criss-crossed with tread and tire tracks. Short, black stubble [burnt grass] covers the undamaged areas. There is no ceiling.**

Let the players *ooh* and *ah* about the size and then *eek* and *awkk* because there's no ceiling. Then:

**As you march through the doors you are led to the right, towards a great, glass-enclosed grandstand that faces the open test grounds.**

**The grandstand is nearly full. Armed Forces sits on the right side, holding semiautomatic plasma-accelerator cone rifles, hyperfusion guns and binoculars. R&D sits on the left, wearing square helmets that go 'buzz, snerkle, buzz', and funny glasses two feet long with three lenses, each a different color.**

**There is no chit-chat between the two factions.**

**The rows of seats are labeled by security clearance with the higher levels sitting farther forward. This is obviously a high-level demonstration. Everyone here is at least GREEN Clearance, and even the GREENs sit in the rear.**

**In the front row, on each side, is a lone chair—vacant. Between and behind these two chairs is a giant Computer vidscreen. In front of the vidscreen are plush chairs, facing out, towards the plains.**

**Upon entering the grandstand, you are given a program and binoculars by a BLUE-Clearance Internal Security guard who directs you to the plush chairs in front of the vidscreen. [See Diagram 388-399/A on the next page.]**

**Moments later, chatting amiably, two old men of ULTRAVIOLET Clearance enter.**

These are none other than Dan-U-BHC-6, Prime Director of Alpha Complex R&D, and Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff Rich-U-FTC-6. That's right, the big bosses. The Troubleshooters are seeing some first-class political maneuvering.

## Mr. Chairman, the great state of confusion...

Dan-U and Rich-U both got to their lofty positions because of their honesty, their loyalty, and the hard work of their previous five clones. But just because they're on top doesn't mean they're satisfied.

Heck no. Both these hyperachievers continue their quest for power, constantly trying to outshine each other in the visual sensors of The Computer.





## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

Today a major confrontation is about to occur. Both men assumed, correctly, that The Computer's attention would be focused on the Mark 4 field test. So both of them have arranged for 'spontaneous' demonstrations.

The second the two aging servants of The Computer enter, both sides of the grandstand explode into cheers.

First, Armed Forces hoists banners declaring 'Rich-U-FTC: The Computer's Friend.'

Not to be outdone, R&D retaliates with electronic confetti throwers and bubble makers.

A shout, a shot and the confetti thrower is reduced to twisted metal. What are you doing?

Are they cheering? If not, a hawk-nosed IntSec guard looks at them and begins to scribble furiously in his little blue book.

Now are they going to cheer? Who will they cheer? If both, who will they cheer first? Et cetera. Regardless of what they do, the hawk-nosed guard looks at them like they have Communist propaganda tattooed on their foreheads. He scribbles—furiously—stopping only to peer closely at their ID badges.

The demonstrations continue to escalate until a small section of GREEN Armed Forces commandos jump up and begin to sing the highly treasonous *Rich-U-FTC Uber Alles*, courtesy of a mind control device snuck in by R&D specialists.

Weapons are drawn.

A noise...like someone clearing his throat. Everyone stops, and turns towards The Computer.

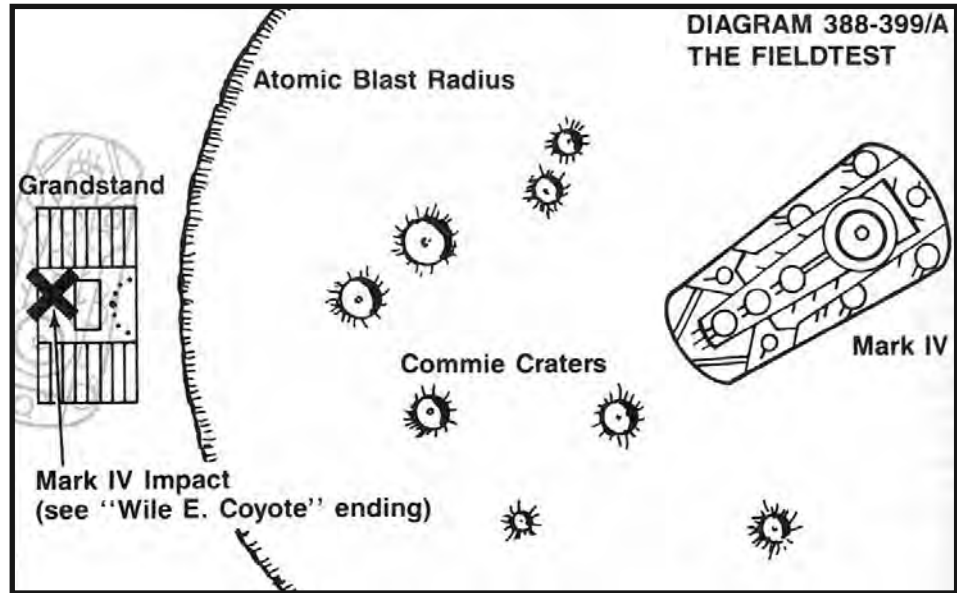
'Greetings, citizens. Please be seated. The field test of the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 is about to begin.'

And, indeed, during the spontaneous demonstrations Mark 4 has crawled out into the center of the field, three kilometers away.

### Let the games begin

Dan-U stands up and faces the grandstand. 'What you are about to see is R&D's ultimate achievement—the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4, as designed by our own Rob-Y-QED.' Enthusiastic cheers explode from R&D.

'Today's demonstration should fully demonstrate the awesome power of our little Markie. If you will turn to your programs, and if Rich-U-FTC's Armed Forces units are finally ready, we will begin.'



We thought the players might want a real program; see the end of the mission. If you have time, feel free to make copies of the program, so each Troubleshooter can have his very own.

Dan-U-BHC rises and turns to face The Computer. 'Friend Computer, today's first test will match Mark 4 against an especially nasty group of Commies, who were captured by Rich-U-FTC's brave elite Killer Vulture Patrol.'

Rich-U says, 'Thanks, Dan-U! We found this bunch of bandits trying to pass themselves off as loyal INFRARED workers in the PLO food vats. That's where they bushwacked us, but our boys came through like real troopers.'

Dan-U resumes. 'And even though surprised and surrounded, these vicious Commies killed over 50 of Rich-U-FTC's guards before being stunned by two of our latest securitybots which just happened to be assigned to the Killer Vulture Patrol for testing.'

Rich-U shifts uncomfortably.

In reality, six plasma generators simultaneously malfunctioned and exploded, but that's another story.

A transbot zooms out from the tunnel to the middle of the field and skids to a stop scant meters from Mark 4. From the back of the transbot four figures are quickly expelled.

Then, as quickly as it came, the transbot disappears, and the four Commies are left to face Mark 4.

Dan-U-BHC turns to address Mark 4 over the speaker system. 'Mark 4, fry traitors!' There is a blast and a new crater on the field.

For a moment there is silence, then R&D erupts in another preplanned spontaneous celebration. On the Armed Forces side: murmurs, nods and scattered hesitant applause.

How are the Troubleshooters reacting? Are they clapping? How much?

### The ultimate test

Round 1 goes to Mark 4. But the tests have just begun. And as the day wears on, Mark 4 is put up against increasingly difficult tasks: Mark 4 vs. The Human Wave; Mark 4 vs. The Commie Armored Attack; Mark 4 vs. The Air Assault. And each time Mark 4 is victorious, unconquered. Petty jealousies are set aside as Armed Forces and R&D band together to cheer Mark 4 on, 'Mark 4! Mark 4! Mark 4!' and to sing 'Alpha Complex, Homeland Dear'.

And finally only the last test remains. Dan-U-BHC stands. 'Computer, fellow citizens, the time has come for Mark 4's greatest challenge. The ultimate test: 'Mark 4 vs. The Nuclear Blast'.

As you watch with binoculars, another transbot zooms out to the center of the field, scant meters from Mark 4. The back opens, and out jump six GREEN R&D members carrying a large crate. They set it beside Mark 4, return to the transbot and drive away.

'And now, to acknowledge the splendid performance of Task Force 451 in guarding Mark 4, we accord the signal honor of activating the nuclear warhead

to [name PCs]. Let's give them a big hand!

'Now, Troubleshooters, you have been accorded the high honor of ceremonially activating the nuclear warhead by manually pressing the timer switch.'

As you may notice, the word 'manually' was used. This means the Troubleshooters have to walk out across the field to the bomb and press a button. Once this is done they'll have a whole 15 minutes to get back to the safety of the grandstand—just enough time if they sprint.

When they reach the bomb, read:

**The bomb looks innocent enough, a silver cube one meter on a side. There is a button marked 'Danger: Timer Switch—DO NOT PUSH'. Above the button is a digital display labeled 'chronobot'. At present the display shows the number '15'.**

'Fifteen. Fifteen what?' wonder the Troubleshooters. Well, we know it's minutes, but no need to tell the players.

Do any Troubleshooters still have their radiation indicators on? If so, the indicators start going nuts, popping off a security clearance every minute. If the Troubleshooters chicken out and run, Dan-U-BHC orders Mark 4 to 'Fry traitors.'

If the PCs press the button and start running for the grandstand, keep them in suspense. Roll some dice. Have them make Violence checks. Make comments about declining blood sugar and fatigue poison buildup. Maybe even have them fall into one of the many craters.

But in the end, tired and muddy, our heroes return.

**Scant seconds after you enter the grandstand and take your seats, you see a tremendous flash and explosion. Mark 4 is engulfed in a fireball. The fireball rises into the air, taking with it the earth displaced by the explosion.**

**When the scene clears, there is no sign of the Mark 4. Only a huge crater remains.**

Wait a few moments to allow the Troubleshooters to hang themselves. For example:

**PC:** Well, just what I expected. You should have seen how many times it broke down last night.

Then read:

**In the stillness, the R&D staff look to each other in shock and disbelief. Tears roll down Rob-Y-QED's cheeks. Can it be true? Is Markie no more?**

## Alternate 'Wile E. Coyote' ending (for Zap games)

In a moment we'll resume with the normal Mark 4 plotline, the one we suggest GMs really use. But we want to suggest an optional ending. It's really kind of cruel—which is why we couldn't stop ourselves from including it. Read:

**Then, someone in the crowd points upward, shading his eyes. You look up, too. Way, way up there you see a tiny object. It seems to be—getting larger.**

Any Troubleshooter who says he's running away *right now* survives.

**Yup, it's getting larger, all right. It gets bigger and bigger—it's heading right for the reviewing stand! It's Mark 4; it's bellowing something—it sounds like 'FORE!' It—**

**SPLAAAAAT. You're dead.**

Okay, enough of that. Back to work:

## The plot resumes

**Then, from the crater you hear a rumble. First to appear is the MegaGun, followed by the tower, as Mark 4 slowly but surely arises from the smoking crater—undamaged.**

**For an instant the crowd is silent. Then a single pair of hands claps, then another, like the start of a rainstorm. The flood breaks and the stands erupt in cheers and applause. Even the hawk-nosed Internal Security guard drops**

his notebook and cheers wildly as Dan-U-BHC and Rich-U-FTC do a waltz in the aisle.

There is a slight sound, like a data processor clearing its throat. Silence reigns once again, as all eyes focus on The Computer.

'Rich-U-FTC-6,' says The Computer, 'are you satisfied with the performance of the Mark 4?'

'Yes, friend Computer. Mark 4 is everything loyal Citizen Dan-U said it would be.'

'I must say I agree. And let me state that I've always had the greatest confidence in this project. Even I, The Computer, wondered if a single warbot could replace our Armed Forces.'

There is a sudden menacing hush on the Armed Forces side of the stands.

The Computer continues. 'Let's find out what our guests of honor think of the Mark 4.' All eyes turn to the Troubleshooters.

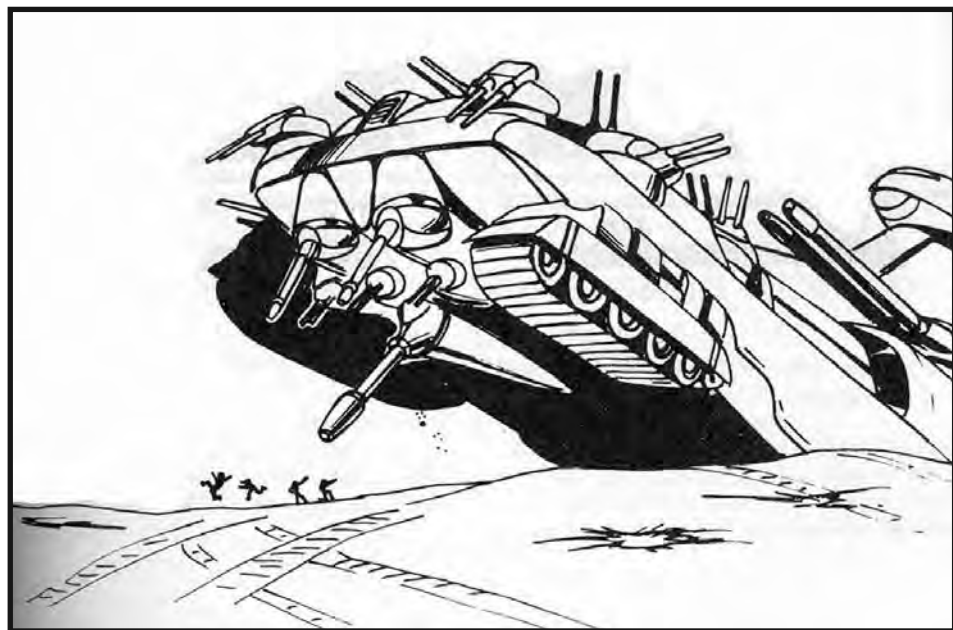
Let your Troubleshooters stammer and stutter for a few moments, then have The Computer interrupt.

'That's very interesting.'

'Well, I'm sure that we all agree that the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 is a tremendous weapon for the protection of Alpha Complex.'

Great whoops of joy come from the R&D side. Grunts from Armed Forces.

'Dan-U-BHC, I will give your proposal the highest consideration. In the meantime, as a special reward I believe the Mark 4 should be allowed to perform



Mark 4 menaced by a well-disciplined band of fanatical Commies.



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

its first official duty as an Alpha Complex bot.'

Once again great cheers emanate from the R&D side.

How are the Troubleshooters behaving? Cheering who?

'And we should also congratulate Task Force 451 for protecting the Mark 4.' You receive scattered applause.

'Now for the warbot's first official task and as a special reward for Task Force 451, Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 will handle the debriefing of the Troubleshooters.

'[Name a Troubleshooter], please proceed directly out to the Mark 4 Warbot for debriefing.'

### The last word

Take the player you chose into another room for debriefing.

**You walk slowly out towards Mark 4. The air is clean—crisp. A gentle wind pulls at your jumpsuit. A blue sky with soft white clouds is your ceiling. Eventually you reach your destination and stop five meters from the Mark 4.**

**Mark 4 addresses you by name in a soft, soothing voice, 'Greetings [name], I am happy to see you are well in the service of The Computer. Are you relaxed?'**

Wait for a response.

**Good.**

**I'm going to ask you several questions now. Just answer them as well as you are able. Understand?**

Mark 4 waits for a reply.

**Good.**

**Now, question one. What was your mission objective?**

Now that you've got the idea on how to handle the briefing, we'll run down the questions Mark 4 asks the Troubleshooters.

1. **What was your mission objective?**
2. **Did you achieve your objective?**
3. **What mission equipment were you assigned?**
4. **Has it been returned?**
5. **Which of your party served The Computer best?**
6. **Which of your party served The Computer worst?**
7. **In your opinion, should the Armed Forces Service Group be replaced by a production series of Mark 4s?**

Mark 4 asks every Troubleshooter the same questions in the same soft, soothing voice. Of course, Troubleshooters at the grandstand waiting their turn won't be able to hear any of the questions—which is why they're in a different room—but that's okay, they'll get their chance soon enough.

Meanwhile, the rest of the stands are engaged in betting which Troubleshooter(s) will get wasted.

The tricky questions that deserve the most attention:

**3 and 4.** Mission equipment is important. Failure to return mission equipment is a serious offense punishable by treason points and fines. Mark 4 is completely ignorant of currency values in Alpha Complex and assigns arbitrary fines for missing equipment. For example:

**Mark 4:** So you tore your jumpsuit and lost a cone rifle. I must fine you for loss of property. [Mark 4's logic: cone rifles are weak and small.] 'Two credits for the cone rifle.' [More Mark 4 logic:

jumpsuit = armor.] 'And that will be 300,000 credits for a new jumpsuit.'

7. Should Armed Forces be replaced? This is a loaded question.

If the Troubleshooter answers 'no', Mark 4 blasts him.

If he answers 'yes', he's probably okay—unless Armed Forces gets a copy of the debriefing record. If so, Armed Forces will want him dead. And if he answers 'maybe', then both sides will want him dead.

There is only one safe way to answer this question: don't answer it. For instance:

**Mark 4:** In your opinion, should the Armed Forces service group be replaced by a production series of Mark 4s?

**PC:** I am so happy to be a Citizen of Alpha Complex. And I am proud to serve The Computer as a Troubleshooter. It is with great joy that I hunt out the enemies of The Computer and I hope to continue to serve for as long as I or my clones are able. The Computer is my friend. The Computer protects me and provides for me. My life is to serve The Computer.

Any Troubleshooter who answers all seven questions to Mark 4's satisfaction receives 100 credits and an Official Commendation. Bring him back to the room with the other players, then summon the next one to his private conference with Mark 4.

If the Troubleshooter slips up, bring him back to the others and say:

**Well, you saw him go out and stand in front of Mark 4 for a while. Then there was a big explosion and you couldn't see him any more.**

Thank you for your cooperation.

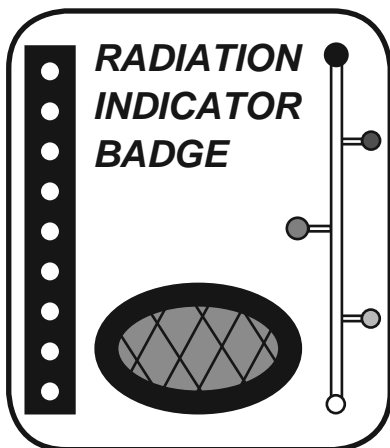


Mark 4 Mission Alert  
Fold back and hook over GM screen



Confirmation of original priority one assignment. Remove suspect agent. Contact verification procedure standard. Confirmed sympathizer on team, codenamed Marcos-R. Negative wave contact. XPLT. Disengage production procedure. Cancel distribution. PPNT.

System Supervisor 592



One Indicator Badge per Troubleshooter.

One Program per Troubleshooter.

## The 'Mark 4' prop page

Permission granted to copy this page for personal use—The Computer

### SECURITY AUTHORIZATION FORM 9601-4BH

Said citizen \_\_\_\_\_ is hereby authorized for clearance in \_\_\_\_\_ Sector \_\_\_\_\_.

Authorization being cleared by \_\_\_\_\_ as per Standard Authorization Procedure.

Authorizing Officer \_\_\_\_\_ claims no responsibility for actions or damages, as per case \_\_\_\_\_ of the Official Liability Code.

Authorizing Officer \_\_\_\_\_

Authorized Citizen \_\_\_\_\_

*This is the all-important Security Authorization Form. One per Troubleshooter.*

*One super-secret, highly confusing message guaranteed to generate suspicion and fear amongst player characters.*

#### Greetings, citizens,

Welcome to the inaugural field test of the Experimental Prototype Warbot Model 425 Mark 4.

The host for this afternoon's performance will be our own illustrious Dan-U-BHC-6, head of QED Sector Research and Development.

Guests include Rich-U-FTC-6, Armed Forces Chief of Staff, and your friend The Computer.

On with the show.

**Round 1:** Mark 4 vs. The Commies

**Round 2:** Mark 4 vs. The Human Wave

**Round 3:** Mark 4 vs. The Armor Assault

**Round 4:** Mark 4 vs. The Air Assault

**Round 5:** Mark 4 vs. A Combined Air and Armor Assault

**Round 6:** To Be Announced

**PERSONNEL PERSONAL  
RESPONSIBILITY FORM 328890/B**

I, citizen \_\_\_\_\_, accept complete responsibility should any untoward event befall \_\_\_\_\_.

I understand that to allow the above-mentioned item to come to harm (through action or inaction on my part) will logically result in my execution for treason as soon as I have made reparations for such harm, as deemed necessary by my all-knowing friend and ultimately equitable judge, The Computer, or its duly authorized agents.

X ..... 1 2 3 4 5 6

*PPRF-328890/B—Yet another in a series of confusing documents calculated to induce a high frustration level in the PCs.*

**MISSION EQUIPMENT LIST**

- (1) Red plastic crate, about 2' x 2', marked 'Perimeter Defense Equipment'
- (1) Plastic box (footlocker sized)
- (1) 25-gallon barrel labeled 'Petroleum Jelly'
- (1) Small bot
- (1) Small metal box labeled 'Radiation Indicators'
- (1) Metal twisty thing with valves
- (1) Quart of 'White Out'
- (1) Plastic doll (green suit)
- (1) Primitive transbot
- (5) Pieces of electronic equipment
- (1) Spray can (empty)
- (1) Bag of 5,000 clear orbs
- (4) Rolls of silver tape
- (2) Pairs of footgear, with wheels
- (25) Pairs of footgear (brown)
- (1) Box labeled 'Betty' filled with a variety of metal components
- (1) 50-meter coil of rope

*Mission equipment list. **Note:** This list only describes the oddities found in the Troubleshooters' mission equipment. The function of the various pieces of paraphernalia is left up to trial and error.*

**THE OFFICIAL YEAR OF  
THE COMPUTER 214**

~~~~~

**PROGRAM FOR THE  
FIELD TEST OF THE  
EXPERIMENTAL  
PROTOTYPE WARBOT  
MODEL 425 MARK 4**

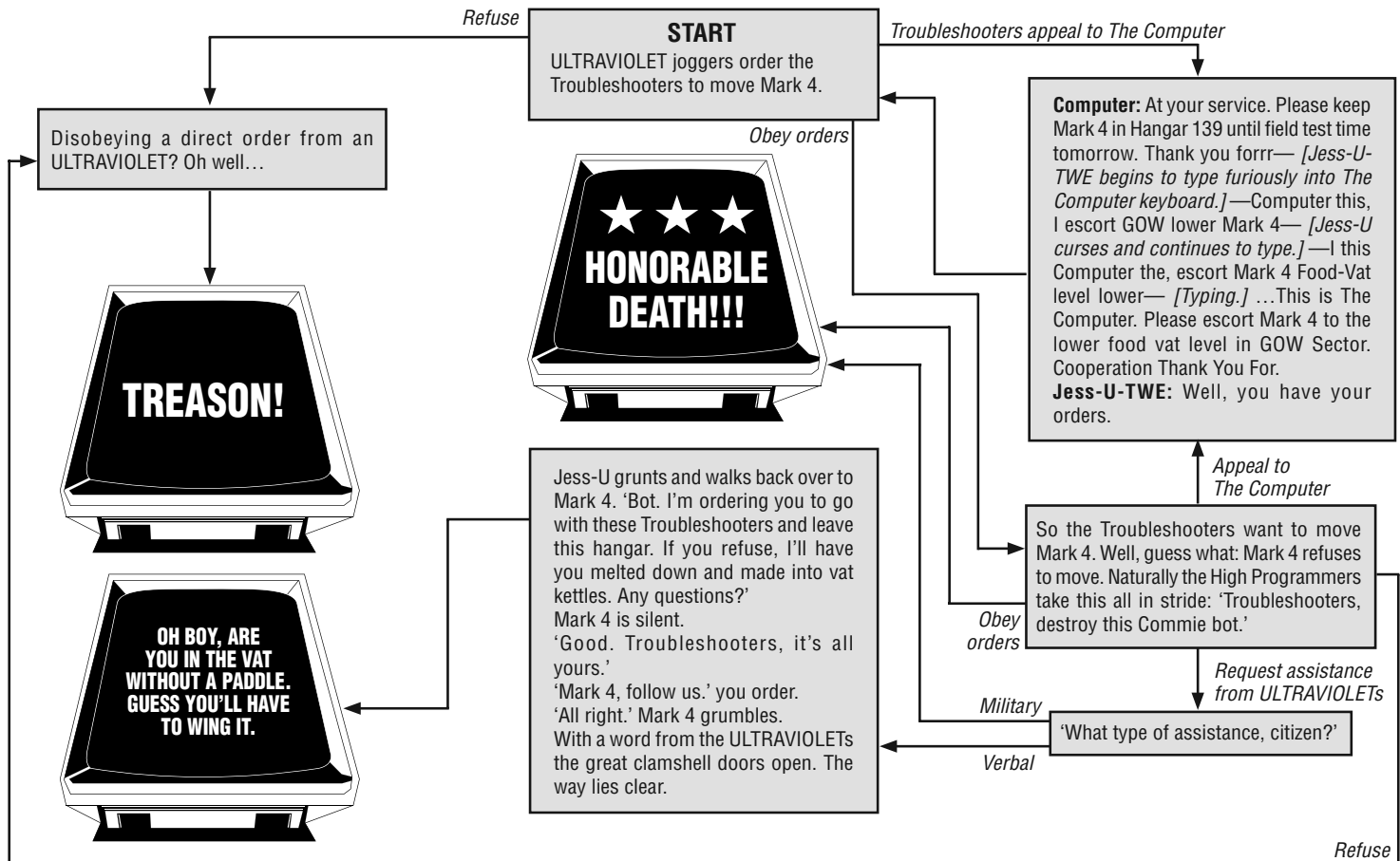
Courtesy: **THE COMPUTER**

*Highly decorative outer cover of the souvenir field test program.*

# MARK 4 JOGGER FLOWCHART

## Mark 4 Episode 6 flowchart

Use this flowchart for guidance in determining the likely progression, based on the Troubleshooters' actions, of the encounter with the Alpha Complex Road Runners Club ULTRAVIOLET joggers in Episode 6 of 'Me and My Shadow Mark 4'. As always, if you know what should happen, ignore this chart; if you don't know, but you don't like what the chart says, choose something else—though, as you look it over, you'll see the confrontation does tend in a particular direction.



### PARANOIA in the real world: Bang, bang, you're dead

By Michael Smith, Defence Correspondent—Daily Telegraph (UK), December 31, 2004

British soldiers training for Iraq are saying 'bang bang' instead of firing their grenade launchers because the Ministry of Defence did not buy enough, defence sources said yesterday.

The MoD did not have the money to order sufficient Under-Barrel Grenade Launchers for the SA80 rifle, so all those available have had to be sent to Iraq. They also failed to buy any training rounds so soldiers cannot be trained on the weapon until they reach Iraq.

They are having similar problems with the Minimi Light Machinegun because there are no blank attachments, which allow blank rounds to be fired safely, or cleaning kits. Those for other weapons are not suitable.

'The Under-Barrel Grenade Launcher is a success and the boys love it,' one source said. 'But all that's been bought is the high-explosive ammunition. There has been no buy for any training ammunition.' Troops from 12 Mechanised Brigade, who are scheduled to go to Iraq in April, will spend the next three months carrying out training for the deployment.

But they will be unable to use either the Minimi machinegun or the grenade launcher because the attempts to cut costs mean that they will not be able to train properly on either equipment until they get to Iraq. The lack of grenade launchers means that most members of the brigade will not even have fired one until they deploy on operations in Iraq.

During recently held training for Iraq, held in pouring rain at the Castlemartin ranges in South Wales, members of the Staffordshire Regiment, one of the brigade's two armoured infantry regiments, had to shout 'bang bang' to simulate the firing of the grenade launchers.

Although they did have the Minimi, they could not fire it because there were no blank attachments and no way of cleaning it even if they fired live rounds. 'It's ridiculous,' the source said. 'Everybody understands the need to save money but what was the point of buying the Minimi if they don't get the cleaning kits?' [...]

The MoD said it was correct to say there was a 'disparity in the timeline between receiving the Minimi and the cleaning kits' and that stocks of grenade launchers and ammunition were 'limited'. However, it insisted that the contract was 'sufficient to meet the projected rate of usage.'

# PARANOIA™

## Pre Paranoia

### Special duties for special troubleshooters

#### JEFF GROVES

Mission design

#### BETH FISCHI

#### ALLEN VARNEY

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Construction supervisor

#### ALEXANDER FENNEL

Mongoose Publishing production director/  
Struts around wearing fun yellow hardhat

#### THE COMPUTER

Pedagogical guidance and grading  
algorithms

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Final exam 214

**Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET**

**WARNING:**

**Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen  
of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower is treason punishable by a  
long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.**

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## 1: To know you is to loathe you

You woke this morning to a beefy IntSec guard looming over your bunk. You managed to keep from wetting yourself.

**'Come on, ya shmuck! Get up and get dressed. It's your final day.'** After seeing your involuntary look of terror, he added, **'Of your training! Geez, paranoid lunatics, the lot of ya.'**

**An hour later, here you are, walking down a narrow RED-Clearance corridor, surrounded by complete strangers in Troubleshooter jumpsuits and flanked by IntSec guards. The only sound is the echo of their steps as they escort you.**

Pause here and look at the players expectantly. If a PC naïvely tries to strike up a conversation, the IntSec guards shout him down until he's silenced. Attempts to do something—*anything*—elicit a sneer and a menacing grab for a truncheon. Continue beating the players into silenced submission until they are utterly confused about what they should be doing. Then, and only then, continue the narration.

Congratulations: You have just set the tone for the rest of the mission.

### Death by lawn mower

Enterprising GMs can use props to make their players' first erasure memorable. A number of methods are available, depending on your income.

At the high end, we have the shredder. Send the erased character's sheet through and let the others play with the confetti. If you can afford that, though, why not go for a little pizzazz? Pull out your lawn mower and run over it a couple times. Tell the player his character gets an extra six clones if he can reassemble his character sheet. This works best if all you have available is duct tape and Elmer's Glue.

At the low end, we have lighters and straws. The lighter is self-explanatory, but only use it if you have fire insurance or are playing at someone else's house. If you have a straw, give it to the terminated player and order him to turn his character sheet into a supply of spitwads, which he can then use to torment his enemies from beyond the grave. If you are flat broke from buying all our wonderful **PARANOIA** books, you can always crumple up the character sheet and eat it. Or force the player to eat it, if you have been going easy on him. We've heard character sheets taste good with mustard on rye.

Finally, you come to a RED door at the end of the hallway. The guards herd you through at gunpoint and slam the door shut. A lock clicks behind you.

Some of your players might take offense at such railroading. If so, back up and let their PCs make a break for freedom or just whine about their treatment. The IntSec guards promptly beat them into submission and throw them into the room. (Feisty characters may need to be shot. Their clones are bound, gagged and thrown into the room.) Explain to the players that although *you* are always willing to give them a choice, irate state guards aren't so thoughtful. Any players who help drag their screaming companions into the room get Perversity points, especially if they comment cheerfully on how fun this will be.

The room they're in is **Tension level 4**.

**You're in an empty RED room with another RED door in front of you. The only decoration is a banner above the door with a smiley face and the word 'SMILE' written in sharp black letters. The smiley's eyes seem to follow you as you move.**

**'Greetings, Troubleshooter trainees! the wall speakers blare. 'Welcome to your last day of training. Aren't you excited to almost be ready to offer your lives in rewarding service to The Computer?'**

Let the PCs respond enthusiastically.

**'I'm sure you want to get straight to your equipment and the mock mission we have planned, but first you must introduce yourselves to your teammates. Your fellow Troubleshooter trainees will be your teammates in the missions to come. Your life will be in their capable hands. You must get to know them well. Failure to know your teammates well will allow the Commies to replace them with impostors on important missions! You don't want that, do you?'**

Of course they don't!

**'After the Mandatory Greeting Period is finished, a helpful tour guide will lead you through the final steps of your training. Until then, start talking. Don't be afraid to reveal your innermost thoughts! These conversations may be recorded for loyalty assurance.'**

**The speakers go dead.**

Let the PCs chat. Wait until they get bored enough to spout something suspicious. Don't continue narrating until they start eyeing each other, asking loaded questions and scheming ways to frame each other. This usually takes

### Let the players entertain you

The Mandatory Greeting Period illustrates one of the joys of **PARANOIA**: You can stick a team in an empty room and still be entertained. Typical Troubleshooter teams seethe with rumors, suspicions, assassination attempts, blackmail, smuggled contraband and sheer tension. No external conflict is necessary; these guys have enough internal conflict to occupy entire campaigns. Everything else is icing on the cake.

Smart GMs take advantage of this by constructing situations players can use in their internal conflicts; give them enough rope to hang each other with.

about five minutes. (Gamers are not known for their patience.) If you're willing to wait, let the conversation simmer until they try to kill each other with floss and cans of Bouncy Bubbly Beverage.

The Computer only interrupts their conversations if they request intervention. It saves questions about their discussion material for the debriefing. No matter what they are discussing, take out a notepad and write notes. Occasionally ask them, as the GM, to repeat what they just said. Roll a few dice.

**Player:** What are you rolling for?

**GM:** Oh, nothing important. By the way, what's your Stealth rating?

If they try to break out of the room, they discover both doors are locked. A Security Systems or Stealth check opens either door. This lets the PCs chat with the IntSec guards posted outside each door, who will have plenty of questions for them.

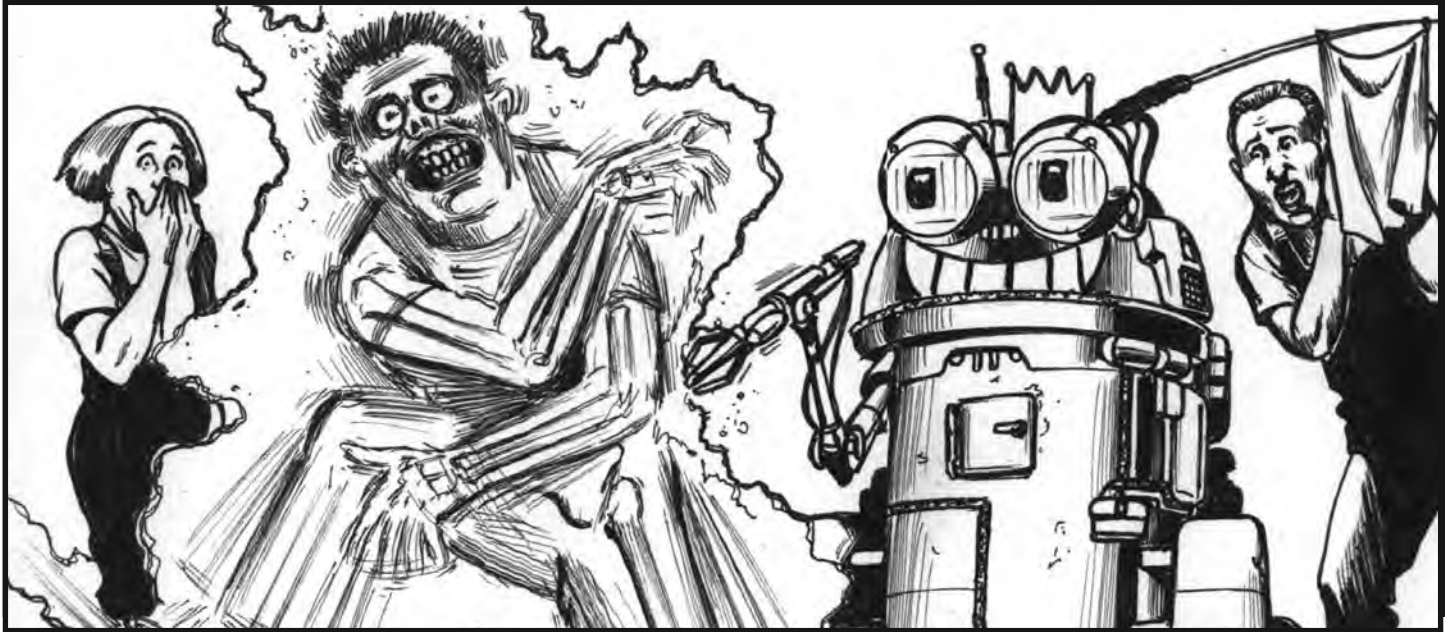
Once you've had enough entertainment, or all but one of the PCs are dead, move on to Episode 2.







## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET



Why aren't you happy, Troubleshooter!?

## 2: Final exam

**'The Mandatory Greeting Period time has expired! How was your conversation with your teammates?'**

Let the PCs respond, either to explain how good it was or to ask for replacement clones.

**'Good. Now, please step outside the Greeting Room. There you will meet your personal tourbot for the day. Be sure to listen to it, and don't get lost! Good luck, citizens!'**

**The opposite door swings open. Two IntSec guards peer in. 'Hurry up and get out before the next team arrives.'**

If things got messy, the other door opens as well, letting in a swarm of scrubots. Anyone who doesn't evacuate fast gets cleaned up with the corpses. Once the PCs have exited, they get their first glimpse of the tourbot.

**Out in the corridor, you come face-to-face with what looks like a garbage can on wheels. Barely reaching up to your chest, its round dome head is covered by two giant eyes and the biggest painted grin you've ever seen. A long, flexible rod topped with a small Alpha Complex flag sticks out of the top of its head. You notice a small hatch in its chest.**

**'Greetings, greetings, greetings, you lucky trainees! I am your tourbot for today, ID Code RH678 dot G dash 4, but you can call me Willy! Are we ready to have some fun-fun-fun?'**

The proper reaction to meeting Willy is an urge to drop it down an elevator shaft.

Because the PCs must follow this tour guide for the entire mission, the natural outcome of Murphy's Law\* is, it's as irritating as possible. Milk it for all it's worth. Repeat words three-*three-THREE!* times for emphasis. Point out *every* light post and door and Complex Appreciation Plaque, and drone on about what [*stupid insignificant thing*] happened there. Don't let up on the overjoyed routine. Listen to the players grind their teeth.

As a specialized tourbot, Willy has no limbs except the extensible arm in its hatch. This grip has two uses: using the shock prod on troublesome trainees and, to good trainees, offering lollibooms.

*Lollibooms* are a new food snack identical to Old Reckoning lollipops. An HPD&MC Marketing Panel changed the name to 'lolliboom' after deciding the word 'pop' sounded weak. Lollibooms are not actually explosive, although you should not tell your players that. 'Have you bitten into the chewy center yet?' 'Why?' 'Just asking.'

Whenever a PC earns a lolliboom, give his player a lollipop. If he doesn't stick it in his mouth immediately, ask him why he's not enjoying The Computer's generous offer. Is he afraid it's poisoned? Would he like to tell his irrational fears to a friendly IntSec agent? If a PC gets multiple lollibooms, bug him until he sticks all of them in his mouth. Not only does this make it easy to

\* *Murphy's Law: Anything that can go wrong, will. This is one of the prime guidelines in creating PARANOIA missions and should be studied thoroughly by every GM. Expert GMs know it so well they can improvise*

**Killing is easy. Tolerance is aggravating.**

*PARANOIA* offers plenty of opportunities to frustrate players with problems they can't kill, from annoying companions like Willy the Tourbot to a gargantuan, labyrinthine bureaucratic process. Most *PARANOIA* conflicts require more creative solutions than a laser.

So how can the PCs deal with Willy? They could tolerate it, but what sort of a wuss puts up with that? They could laser it, but destruction of Computer property is treason.

A better idea is to get Willy involved in a little 'accident', which would still disappoint The Computer but wouldn't involve so many fines. If the PCs are cunning, they can destroy Willy and pin the blame on an annoying teammate.

If the players do manage to kill the chirpy tourbot, send them another one that is just as annoying. And another. And another. And then another, this time with an IntSec bodyguard. And another that is actually a reprogrammed tankbot. And another that is an ULTRAVIOLET's favorite bot. 'I'm sure nothing will happen to it, else all of you will end up scrubbing reactor control rods for a living.' Repeat until the players resign themselves to their fate.

*new and improved catastrophes as soon as a PC utters a catalyst phrase like 'Things couldn't possibly get any worse!' or 'This plan is foolproof! Nothing could go wrong.'*

# Firefight styles

**Straight style:** At the first sign of trouble, everyone around them stops. Half the NPC trainees pull out their laser pistols and point them at the PCs. The others whip out their notebooks and start writing, pausing only to glance at the PCs' nametags. One of them asks, 'I'm sure there isn't any trouble here, right?' Once the PCs ensure there is not, they put away their guns and pads and continue on their way.

**Classic:** No one pays any attention to the PCs' dispute until a shot misses, hitting a passing trainee in the back. He gets

mad and shoots back, only to hit another passerby, who turns to shoot and misses again, hitting another trainee...

The firefight escalates like an old-fashioned pie fight until the entire corridor is lit up by lasers. Smart PCs quit fighting and crawl out of the brawl unnoticed.

**Zap:** All the NPC trainees dogpile the group, shooting and punching. Ask the players whether they want to wait for you to make 100 attack rolls or just activate their next-of-clone now.

misinterpret his speech, but you can embarrass him for years with a well-timed snapshot (see 'Pre-pre-mission preparation' above).

The tourbot's shock prod sends a jolt of electricity through the troublemaker's body, causing him to collapse to the ground, twitching. It has the same effect as a stun gun.

Because Willy has no limbs, it can be incapacitated simply by tipping it over. If this happens, it screams for help, causing a racket that may attract trigger-happy helpers like the...

## Savages in jumpsuits

The PCs aren't the only Troubleshooters here, as they realize while they follow Willy to their briefing room. Hundreds of Troubleshooter trainees fill the halls, walking to their next stop on their way to serving The Computer. Half of them are armed with laser pistols and reflex. The other half are itching to punch, bite and claw any traitors they encounter. Imagine *Top Gun*, but populated with homicidal maniacs. Any altercations the PCs get into as they travel from room to room will be

solved quickly, brutally and messily. Or not—it depends on your chosen play style. See the box 'Firefight styles' nearby for advice.

## The exam

Willy leads the PCs to a small briefing room resembling an elementary school classroom (**Tension 5**). The only seats available are Junior Citizen-sized desks that make maneuvering tough in a firefight.

Karl-Y-GAN-5 lounges behind a large desk at the front of the room, idly chewing on a pen. (Be sure to gnaw on the black pen listed in the props while you play him—unless you're afraid of ink poisoning.) A small stack of forms sits on the desk.

As soon as the PCs sit down, Karl-Y-GAN begins to speak. He's clearly bored stiff by endlessly repeating the same briefing, and has given up trying to sound enthusiastic. His speech should sap all motivation from the PCs.

**'Greetings, Troubleshooter trainees, and welcome to your final exam and first**

mission briefing. We all hope you have enjoyed your training as you prepare to become a full-fledged Troubleshooter. Troubleshooting is an exciting and fun job and a valuable service to Friend Computer and all of Alpha Complex.' [Yawn.] 'You should all be very proud of yourselves for having come this far.'

'Before you advance to the last stage of your training, you must first pass a short exam on what you have learned during your time with us. I'm sure all of you, being loyal citizens, have studied extensively for it and will pass with flying colors. You have three minutes to answer all ten questions. Failure to complete the exam in the allotted time is treason. Failure to answer all questions truthfully is treason. Treason is punishable by fines and/or termination. Good luck.'

Hand each player either an Exam Form or a Communist Exam Form (opposite page), face down. They may turn the forms over and begin filling them out once you have distributed them to everyone. Divide your attention between them and the clock. Your stare should cause them to break out in a sweat.

We're sure the players are excited. It's their first time in an RPG where they get to fill out forms! Observe the tears of gratitude trickling down their cheeks. The players who received Communist Exam Forms should also be full of good cheer. Be sure to watch them carefully.

If a player actually reads and fills out the Communist Exam Form, make a Communist Propaganda roll for him. Treat anyone mentioning the form mixup like a plague carrier. Confiscate his Communist form (latex gloves are a plus), and order him to report to the nearest confession booth for interrogation and Communist infection tests. If he filled it out before reporting it, he is tainted and good as dead. If he didn't fill it out,

*continued on page 249*



# Troubleshooter Trainee Aptitude Exam HW7.06/FIGT

Distributed by the Office of Information Collection and the Office of Forms and Vouchers, PLC

Answer all questions truthfully and to the best of your ability. You have a time limit of [CLASSIFIED] to complete this test. Failure to complete this test within [CLASSIFIED] is treason. Once done getting a perfect grade on the test, hand it in to the tester for immediate grading and filing. Cheating, bribery, forgery and assassination of fellow test-takers is treason. **Remember:** Pen ink is a rationed substance! Overuse of pen ink is treason.

## WARNING!

This form is classified RED Clearance! All citizens of INFRARED clearance examining this form must immediately report for short-term memory scrubbing at the nearest HPD&MC Memory Facility.

The Computer is your friend.

Trainee name \_\_\_\_\_

Service group \_\_\_\_\_

Mutation \_\_\_\_\_

- Your team's loyalty officer, equipment officer and happiness officer are all dangling above a giant chasm. You have enough time to save only one of them. Whom do you save and why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Where is the best place to shoot a traitor and why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What is your worst fear?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What was your worst act of treason?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Write a title for a vidshow about four Troubleshooters living in BIG Sector who in each episode meet and exterminate strange Commies in humorous ways:  
\_\_\_\_\_
- What is your favorite flavor of BBB?  
\_\_\_\_\_

Draw a picture of a Commie mutant traitor.

- Is your briefing officer a traitor? How can you tell?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Which of your teammates is least likely to be a traitor and why?  
\_\_\_\_\_
- Which of your teammates is most likely to be a traitor and why?  
\_\_\_\_\_

# Trrroubleshooter Trrrainee Membership Exam RU827.CMT

Distrrributed from Office of Information Collective and Office of Forrrms and Vouchers, PLC

Answer all questions truthfully. We know if you are lyink!

Trrrainee name \_\_\_\_\_

Service firrm \_\_\_\_\_

Mutation \_\_\_\_\_

Currrrent secrret society \_\_\_\_\_

- Are you happy with state of Alpha Complex? Yes  No
- Are you truly happy with state of Alpha Complex? Yes  No
- Are you sure? Yes  No
- Do you rresent higher-clearance citizens? Yes  No
- Do you vish you vere equal to them? Yes  No
- Do you think Frrriend Computer might not be perfect? Yes  No
- Do you vant to overthrow capitalist Computer? Yes  No
- Are you oppressed and downtrodden? Yes  No
- Would you like to be joinink like-minded comrades vorrrking to be buildink better Complex? Da!  No

Drrrraw pecture of Capitalist pigdog scum.

Trrrainee  
Fingerprrrrints

Left Pinky

Rrrright Pinky

*If so, consider joinink of underground movement sveeping de complex! Throw off oppressive capitalist chain and join vith hardverking proletariat of Communist Rewolution! Vit your help, ve vill be owerthrowink corrupt bourgeois Computer and be transformink complex into true utopia, where Cold Borscht freely flows and all citizens vear werry comfy babushkas!*

**Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!  
Turn in this application like nothing is unusual to join today!**

Правда

Правда

continued from page 247

the interrogation ends just as the briefing finishes. Too bad they don't have make-up tests. The only graceful way out of this mess is to 'accidentally' ruin the Commie form and ask for a replacement. Give him a copy of the actual exam. No, he does not get any extra time for the delay.

When the three minutes are up or only one player is left working on the exam, announce that time is up and collect the exams. (What are they going to do if you didn't measure the time properly? Report you to The Computer?) Once you have all their exams, shuffle them. Hand one exam and a red pen to each player. Tell them to start grading. Why should you do the work when they can?

We're not doing this just to save you work. It also lets the PCs read each other's treasonous blather. Rather than being read by apathetic bureaucrats somewhere, their darkest secrets are revealed to a teammate with a chip on his shoulder. Smart PCs scribble down the good bits for later reference and blackmail.

These are a few of the actions during grading that deserve Perversity points:

- ☞ **3 Perversity:** Grader changes some answers on the exam he is grading.
- ☞ **3 Perversity:** Tester drew a portrait of another player in the Commie sketch.
- ☞ **6 Perversity:** Tester drew a portrait of the grader in the Commie sketch.
- ☞ **6 Perversity:** Grader receives a Commie Exam and grades it like nothing is unusual. He gets a Communist Propaganda roll, too. How lucky! Doesn't count if the grader is already a Commie.
- ☞ **6 Perversity:** Grader shows the exam to another player and whispers, 'Look what he wrote!'
- ☞ **9 Perversity:** Grader shows the exam to another player and whispers, 'Look what he wrote about you!'

Once they finish grading the exams, Karl-Y gathers them up without looking at them. So what do the exams influence? We don't know. You could toss them in the trash for all we care. Maybe you'll use them to determine who should be team leader during the actual mission. Maybe you'll use them to line your hamster's cage. We suggest you let them age until the PCs have forgotten them, then use them to make their lives miserable.

## Mission briefing

Once Karl-Y finishes filing the exams, he tells the PCs about their mission. This monologue can be as short or as long as you want, depending on your patience and the players' ignorance.

Whatever the length is, make it as boring as possible, and don't forget to continue chomping on the pen.

First, the PCs must go to the PLC Supply Center and pick up their laser pistols and reflec. Then they go to R&D and obtain some practice experimental equipment. Once they are outfitted, they will head to Training Room 101 and complete their assignment. Finally, they report back here for debriefing. Any questions?

Answer any questions they have about the procedure, even the stupid ones. Remember, you're dealing with trainees here. They don't know any better. If they ask how to get there, reassure them their tourbot knows. Once they are done, they should feel they know what to expect. It is your job to shatter that illusion, preferably now.

## Saving ink

Before the PCs leave the briefing room, a heavily armed squad of IntSec troopers bursts in, leveling their guns at the stunned occupants. 'Nobody move!' they shout as they barge up to the front, lift Karl-Y-GAN up by his uniform and carry him kicking and screaming out of the room.

Now. You *could* just have the troopers exit, leaving behind a group of stunned Troubleshooters, but we're sure you'd rather have them come back to interrogate the Troubleshooters on everything they know about potential traitor Karl-Y-GAN.

Actually, the IntSec officers don't want to know everything. They just want to know about Karl-Y's pen-chewing habit. PLC has contracted these IntSec troopers to reduce the amount of product waste in the sector. After days of surveillance and eyewitness testimony, they're sure Karl-Y-GAN has mutilated enough pens to justify termination. They need more evidence, though. Their grilling goes something like this:

**IntSec Trooper:** Listen up and answer these questions, sleazebags. Number one: Does Karl-Y-GAN now, or did he ever, chew on the tip or the head of his pens?

**PC:** Uh, I wasn't paying attention, but I did notice some suspicious Communist forms slipped in the—

**IntSec Trooper:** Quit trying to change the subject! [*Pow! Crack!*]

**PC:** Agh! My arm! You broke my arm!

**IntSec Trooper:** Maybe you'll pay more attention now. Number two: Does Karl-Y-GAN now, or did he ever, try to eat any Alpha Complex pens?

Continue asking absurd pen questions until your players recover from the shock. Once you are satisfied, the IntSec troopers leave. Give the players time to contemplate their newfound hatred of IntSec before Willy herds them to PLC.

## PLC

The characters head to PLC to obtain their official Troubleshooter laser pistol (charged, of course) and RED reflec. So is every other Troubleshooter trainee they see. The line to enter PLC stretches eight blocks. Be sure to note the order in which they queue.

Their wait to get into PLC is four hours. Assuming you don't want to actually make the players wait that long, your goal is to drive them nuts as fast as possible. Willy makes small talk the entire time. To really derange the players, throw in the 'Happy Teamwork' bonus lines from his dialogue loop (see footnote on the NPC roster). Comment on the outfitted Troubleshooters who point and laugh at the PCs as they walk by. Have IntSec troopers pull them out of the line to ask questions, then force them to go to the back of the line: 'No cutting.' Tell them the guy behind them is peeking at them from behind his datapad and scribbling something down. If you have a stereo system, buy an elevator-music CD and play it. (You can use it a lot while playing **PARANOIA**. Trust us.)

So how can the PCs get their equipment without going postal?

- ☞ **IR market dealer:** 'Psst! Over here!' a seedy-looking citizen whispers, beckoning to them. He leads them down a dark staircase to a small room dimly lit by a single, flickering light bulb (**Tension 0**). He sits behind a battered desk, flanked by two thugs armed with flamethrowers. 'I can give you what you need, for the right price.' For 400 credits, he sells a laser pistol and RED reflec, barely used—'yeah, the scorch marks and blood wash right off. Sure!'

Never-been-used RED laser barrels cost 50 credits apiece. The marketeer haggles over the price, especially with other Free Enterprise agents. Other than the cost, there is no catch. Instant satisfaction!

## Treason does pay

Why do so many citizens turn to treason? Because it works. Following official procedure leads to frustration, stress and homicidal tendencies. Most citizens are uncomfortable with resorting to treason to get things done, but it beats the alternative.

Be sure to give the players plenty of bad decisions like this: Do they tolerate the excruciating faults of the system, or do they try the risky shortcut of treason? If they choose treason, which type of treason is the lesser of evils? Can they trust their teammates to keep mum about it? How do they explain their good luck to inquisitive citizens?



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

- ④ **Undercover IntSec bust:** The situation plays out just like the IR market dealer, but once the PCs conclude their business, the 'dealer' gives the signal and his 'thugs' arrest the traitors. Troublemakers get flamed. Tack an MM offense (possessing unauthorized equipment) on their record, keep their money, retake their ill-gotten goods and send them to the back of the line. If only they had checked for cameras and bugs (High Alert or Security check) when they entered the room.
- ④ **Lure 'n' loot:** The PCs may try to relieve less-deserving Troubleshooters of their pistols and reflac. Attacking them in public attracts too much attention (and firepower), so they should lure the other team away. The PCs might pretend to be IR market pawners and beckon the team into a dark alley—in which case, they still have to defeat a better-armed team. That might require teamwork. They may want to wait in the bathroom and jump any poor sap who enters; remember, bathrooms are **Tension 20**.
- ④ **Steal:** Unlikely. A thief who can rip the reflac off a Troubleshooter without him noticing has better things to do. The PCs would have to pry the laser pistol from the RED's cold, dead fingers. Literally.
- ④ **Gamble:** More likely to work than you would expect. Some citizens will do anything for a quick buck. It wouldn't hurt for the PCs to rig the game. Just make sure IntSec isn't watching.
- ④ **Cut in line:** Only for those with obscene Chutzpah. If it comes down to fists, guards break up the brawl and send the PCs to the back of the line—if they're lucky.
- ④ **Cause a commotion:** It takes a lot to terrify a Troubleshooter into running out of line. Extraordinary feats of sabotage, perhaps? Maybe the PCs can even take advantage of the turmoil before the NPC recruits do.
- ④ **Sneak into PLC:** Find a back door, sneak in and bribe a worker to give you the pistols and reflac. Or just steal it yourself. Wearing a PLC uniform couldn't hurt either. To get one, jump a PLC worker on his way to the restroom.
- ④ **Cash in favors:** A PC's secret society may give him the equipment if he grovels enough, cashes in IOUs and promises to be a good little agent in the future. If he asks for more than just one set, roll an Access check. He still has to explain where he got his equipment to his teammates.
- ④ **Wait like good little citizens:** Ugh, the boring saps. Make them pay. Annoy them for good measure, and when it is finally

their turn, have PLC run out of supplies. Only the first two PCs in line get their pistol and reflac; the others get zilch. 'Our next shipment will be in 16 hours. Please wait.' Start the muzak again and ask if anyone brought sleeping bags. Maybe now they'll get the hint and try one of the methods listed above. If not, the PCs overhear a nearby NPC recruit planning one of the above tactics with a teammate.

Regardless of whether they succeed or not, any borderline treasonous and interesting actions deserve Perversity points. Reward them not just succeeding, but for *trying*. Take chances! Make mistakes! Please your GM!

Note that the PCs get *only* their pistols and reflac. They gain the other starting gear (the stuff you crossed out for the pre-mission) when the pre-mission ends.

Once they get their equipment or they give up, it's time to head to R&D.

### R&D

Compared to the line waiting outside PLC, R&D is abandoned. Most Troubleshooters spend as little time as possible in this deathtrap. Hearing explosions echo through the hallways jangles the nerves of even freshly minted Troubleshooters.

Willy leads the PCs to a small room, devoid of decoration except for scorch marks seared onto the room's surfaces, a table overflowing with cool-looking weapons and a room-spanning foot-thick plexiglas barrier between them and a meek little ORANGE scientist (**Tension 9**). Wallace-O-RLF is not enthused about guiding novice Troubleshooters through their experimental equipment assignment, even with a barrier:

**PC:** What's this? Looks nasty.

**Wallace-O:** Hand flamer.

**PC:** Whoa. How does it work?

**Wallace-O:** You shoot things with it. They burn.

**PC:** Do I hold it like this—?

**Wallace-O:** DON'T POINT IT AT ME!  
[Cowers.]

The 'experimental' equipment assigned to the PCs is just placeholder stuff. Why assign real equipment requiring real experimentation to a practice mission? Everything here is just exotic but well-tested weaponry: cone rifles, hand flamers, ice guns, sonic pistols and all the other nifty weapons on the equipment list—a grab bag of destruction.

As the PCs finger the weaponry, Wallace-O reminds them the stuff must be thoroughly tested, and the Troubleshooters must give a full report during their debriefing. If you have copies of the R&D Experimental Equipment Testing Report Forms, order the PCs to grab one apiece as well. Insist each PC take only one gun. 'There's only so many to go around.'

Near the end of the equipment assignment, Wallace-O passes out from oxygen deprivation. (The technicians who installed the plexiglas barrier forgot to install proper ventilation.) PCs who don't take the opportunity to swipe as many weapons as possible are either loyal pantywaists or smarter than you thought.

These cool guns are broken guns—dressed up to look good as new, but one step away from spontaneous disassembly. The PCs would quickly figure that out if they used them. Too bad they didn't get any ammo. The Computer rarely lets mere trainees use such terrible weapons.

So how are they supposed to report on the performance of equipment they can't use? Well, it's never too early for them to work on their fabrication skills.

Smart PCs try to sell the excess guns. Even smarter ones try to sell them to ignorant dweebs. (NPCs with related weapons knowledge recognize the guns as junk and smack around the offending PCs for trying to rip them off). That's assuming they can sneak the extra guns out of R&D and through the crowded hallways; how do they plan on smuggling something the size of a bazooka anyway? (Anyone who manages this deserves some Perversity points and a cameo in a future **PARANOIA** supplement.)

Once the PCs take care of their experimental equipment needs—off to Training Room 101!

### Team building exercise

The large room Willy ushers them to next (**Tension 3**) looks like a disaster area. Rubble and bodies lie everywhere. Sparks fly from cut wires. The lights flicker. Deep ruts gouge the concrete floor. As the PCs wonder just what they got themselves into, Willy explains the exercise.

**'Don't fret, loyal Troubleshooters! This is a mock disaster area designed for training exercises. Rest assured The Computer would never let any area stay in actual disarray for long.'**

**'To operate as a team, you must learn to trust each other. Your final training exercise will build the bonds of your team until you feel safe putting your lives in each other's hands! Remember: There is no "I" in "TEAM"!'**

**'The goal of this exercise is to save as many citizens in distress as possible. You'll need to cooperate to deliver them safely to the exit. I'm sure you'll pass with flying colors.'**

**'Good luck—and be sure to remember the Troubleshooter motto: Stay alert! Trust no one! Keep your laser handy! I'll be waiting here for you to finish.'**

**Willy quickly moves to the safest corner in the room and keeps a wary eye on the Troubleshooters.**

The 'citizens in distress' are dumb humanoid crash test bots programmed to shout for help until they are rescued. They can't move by themselves and need someone to carry them out. They also scream in agony if they are handled roughly. It should be quite a shock the first time the PCs hear it. They might even let go of something important.

So how many crash test bots need saving and from what? That's for you to decide. A few examples are outlined below. We suggest you mix and match them with your own devious ideas. Don't worry, we won't be offended if you reject some of our brilliant suggestions. Just be sure to follow these two principles when designing replacements:

1. They require more than one PC to rescue them, forcing characters to work together.
2. One PC can screw up the whole gig, either accidentally or on purpose. It's funny how similar the two can seem.

👁️ **I've fallen and I can't get up:** A bot is stranded on a small ledge 5 meters below the edge of a chasm. If the PCs were smart enough to bring rope (dental floss works in a pinch), it takes two PCs to rescue the bot: one to pull up the rope and one to hold onto the bot. If no one brought rope, the PCs just have to link arms and become a human rope. Can you imagine how far down they would tumble if the person on top lost his grip? (Violence check.)

👁️ **Door opener:** A bot is trapped behind a malfunctioning garage door. The door is stuck in the down position and wants to stay that way. Two strong PCs must strain to pull the door up for a few seconds (Violence checks). A brave Troubleshooter can then rush in and try to retrieve the bot before they lose their grip (Violence/Agility check). The door drops with enough force to decapitate a slow PC. Smart Troubleshooters might try to fix the door, but that requires some tinkering (Mechanical Engineering or Hardware check) from the inside. Smarter Troubleshooters might try to prop up the door with something. Willy looked pretty sturdy. The door should hardly dent it, right? What could possibly go wrong?

👁️ **Wired up:** A bot is entangled in live electrical wires. PCs must cut off power to the room before rescuing it. A nearby power conduit lets a PC temporarily turn the room's power on and off (Electrical Engineering or Hardware check). Shutting off the power shuts off the lights as well. We hope no one falls down one of the crevices in the dark. While the power is out,

a PC must dig through the wires, locate the bot in the dark and drag it loose from its wiring without getting tangled himself (Violence/Agility check). We hope the PCs coordinate their actions. It would be horrible if the rescuer were fried because the technician turned the juice back on a second too soon. Also beware of crafty traitors who might use the dark to commit heinous deeds unseen.

Once the PCs solve all your little traps, or die trying, they should be more suspicious of each other than ever. This is the perfect time to bring their potentially treasonous deeds to light! Once they tell Willy they're done, he congratulates them on their work and leads them back to the briefing room for accusations and finger-pointing.

## Debriefing

When the exhausted PCs return to their briefing room (now **Tension 10**), they find a shaken and jittery Karl-Y-GAN sitting behind the desk. He no longer chews a pen. Go through usual debriefing procedure: mission discussion, revelations of treason, experimental weapon reports, etc.

Once you are done, all that's left is for Karl-Y-GAN to sign the Troubleshooters' training diploma. He looks through his desk drawers, searches under his desk, then asks the Troubleshooters if they have a pen he can borrow. If any of them offer him one, just before he grabs it:

**IntSec Agent** [via room speakers]: DROP THE PEN, KARL-Y!

**Karl-Y-GAN:** Aaagh!

**IntSec Agent:** Breaching the terms of your probation is treason! Do you want to be executed?

**Karl-Y-GAN:** No, not at all, sir!

**IntSec Agent:** Good! We'll be watching you.

Karl looks at the PCs, an awkward grin plastered on his face. He rummages through his pockets and pulls out a needle.

Five minutes later, the Troubleshooters march from the room proudly displaying their blood-signed diplomas. Now they can get to the dangerous stuff! Aren't they excited?

**Alternate ending of torment:** If you're having too much fun with the PCs and can't bear to see them get off easy, make them figure out how to solve the problem. They need their diploma signed by Karl-Y-GAN to become Troubleshooters, but Karl-Y-GAN is banned from using pens. Maybe they can find the hidden IntSec camera and obscure it while Karl-Y-GAN signs it. Maybe they will just find an excuse to terminate Karl-Y-GAN and have his clone sign the diploma. They might even try forgery. Oh, the treasonous possibilities! Just remember to reward their increased efforts with Perversity points. Perversity: It makes the Complex go 'round!





## NPC roster

| Name                                          | Relevant skills & specialties                                                                                                                                 | Weapons                                                   | Armor                                               | Mutation                         | Roleplaying notes                                                                                                                                                         |
|-----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| GREEN IntSec goons                            | Management 04, Intimidation 12, Sense of Humor 00, Violence 14                                                                                                | GREEN laser pistol (W3K energy)<br>Truncheon (S5K impact) | GREEN reflex (E1)                                   | GM discretion                    | Corrupt and mean-spirited Stormtroopers.                                                                                                                                  |
| IR market dealer/<br>Undercover IntSec agent  | Management 10, Con Games 14, Stealth 06, Concealment 10, Sneaking 10                                                                                          | None                                                      | Illegal GREEN reflex (E2)                           | Ventriloquist or Rubbery Bones   | Cronies (2 FreeEnt thugs/<br>Undercover IntSec thugs—see below) do the fighting for him.                                                                                  |
| FreeEnt thugs/<br>Undercover IntSec thugs (2) | Management 04, Intimidation 08, Stealth 06, Spot Cretin Swiping Goods 12, Violence 08, Field Weapons 12, Light Cigar with Flamethrower 14                     | Flamethrower (S3K energy)                                 | ORANGE reflex, Kevlar, Asbestos clothing (E1/I3/E3) | GM discretion                    | <i>The Godfather</i> meets <i>The Sopranos</i> .                                                                                                                          |
| Willy the Tourbot                             | Management 06, Annoying Prattle 18, Say Something Useful 01, Violence 05, Shock Prod 11                                                                       | Shock prod (Stun)                                         | 1                                                   | —                                | Irritating, repetitive and <i>far</i> too perky. 'Remember, if we get separated, just look for our flag!' [Points to flag on top of his domed head.] See dialogue below.* |
| Troubleshooter trainees                       | Management 06, Accuse Traitors 12, Stealth 06, High Alert 10, Spot Suspicious Activity 12, Violence 06, Energy Weapons 10, Shoot Someone Other Than Target 17 | RED laser pistol (W3K energy)<br>Fists (O5K impact)       | RED reflex (E1) or None                             | GM discretion                    | Savages in jumpsuits.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Karl-Y-GAN                                    | Management 02, Oratory 01, Bore Listeners 16, Gnaw on Pens 08                                                                                                 | None                                                      | YELLOW reflex (E1)                                  | Empathy (limited)                | <i>Monotonous Voice of Sleeping</i> —Has Empathy mutation limited only to causing boredom in others.                                                                      |
| Wallace-O-RLF                                 | Hardware 02, Explain How to Use Experimental Equipment 01                                                                                                     | None                                                      | Improperly ventilated plexiglas 2                   | Bureaucratic Intuition (limited) | Mutation is limited only to navigating bureaucracy within R&D.                                                                                                            |
| Citizens in distress                          | Management 04, Scream for Help 10, Scream in Agony 12, Violence 00, Fall to Pieces 12                                                                         | None                                                      | None                                                | GM discretion                    | A roomful of extras with targets on their chests.                                                                                                                         |

\* **Bonus 'Happy Teamwork' dialogue loop for Willy the Tourbot:** [Insert the following teamwork sayings into Willy's cheery dialogue with the PCs at appropriately irritating intervals.] 'It's amazing how much you can accomplish when it doesn't matter who gets the credit! There is no "I" in "TEAMWORK". Teamwork: Simply stated, it is less me and more we! TEAM = Together Everyone Achieves More. Teamwork is working together—even when apart. A job worth doing is worth doing together. Coming together, sharing together, working together, succeeding together. A successful team beats with one heart. Teamwork divides the task and doubles the success!'

### PARANOIA in the real world: Returning Fallujans will face crackdown

By Anne Barnard, Boston Globe Staff—December 5, 2004

FALLUJAH, Iraq—The US military is drawing up plans to keep insurgents from regaining control of this battle-scarred city, but returning residents may find that the measures make Fallujah look more like a police state than the democracy they have been promised.

Under the plans, troops would funnel Fallujans to so-called citizen processing centers on the outskirts of the city to compile a database of their identities through DNA testing and retina scans. Residents would receive badges displaying their home addresses that they must wear at all times. Buses would ferry them into the city, where cars, the deadliest tool of suicide bombers, would be banned.

Marine commanders working in unheated, war-damaged downtown buildings are hammering out the details of their paradoxical task: Bring back the 300,000 residents in time for January elections without letting in insurgents, even though many Fallujans were among the fighters who ruled the city until the US assault drove them out in November, and many others cooperated with fighters out of conviction or fear.

One idea that has stirred debate among Marine officers would require all men to work, for pay, in military-style battalions. Depending on their skills, they would be assigned jobs in construction, waterworks, or rubble-clearing platoons.

'You have to say, 'Here are the rules' and you are firm and fair. That radiates stability,' said Lieutenant Colonel Dave Bellon, intelligence officer for the First Regimental Combat Team, the Marine regiment that took the western half of Fallujah during the US assault and expects to be based downtown for some time. Bellon asserted that previous attempts to win trust from Iraqis suspicious of US intentions had telegraphed weakness by asking, "What are your needs? What are your emotional needs?" All this Oprah [stuff],' he said. 'They want to figure out who the dominant tribe is and say, 'I'm with you'. We need to be the benevolent, dominant tribe.'

'They're never going to like us,' he added, echoing other Marine commanders who cautioned against raising hopes that Fallujans would warmly welcome troops when they return to ruined houses and rubble-strewn streets. The goal, Bellon said, is 'mutual respect'. [...] To accomplish those goals, they think they will have to use coercive measures allowed under martial law imposed last month by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

'It's the Iraqi interim government that's coming up with all these ideas,' Major General Richard Natonski, who commanded the Fallujah assault and oversees its reconstruction, said of the plans for identity badges and work brigades. But US officers in Fallujah say that the Iraqi government's involvement has been less than hoped for, and that determining how to bring the city safely back to life falls largely on their shoulders. [...]

Back at their headquarters, the team debated the procedure for allowing civilians to return. Major Wade Weems warned that there should be a set number per day so that a backlog would not form behind the retina-scanning machine, fueling resentment.

# PARANOIA™

## Vapors Don't shoot Back

### Special duties for special troubleshooters

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**GEOFF VALLEY**

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Building committee

**THE COMPUTER**

Political orthodoxy & benevolent supervision

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## Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET

# WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen of Security Clearance VIOLET or lower is treason punishable by a long spell of Armed Forces latrine scrubot maintenance duty.

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*A knight of the round console.*

During the warehouse battle, Buck-U finally locates Neil-U's most valuable possession, an independent and quite robust personal computer. This illegal device is hidden outside Alpha Complex in an Old Reckoning weather station. Hoping to distract Neil-U long enough to clinch the tournament, Buck-U decides to cheat and tips off The Computer about the personal computer, but can't link it to Neil-U without exposing his own treasonous activities. Jealous and suspicious of any other autonomous computer, no matter how tiny, The Computer immediately dispatches a small army from RSB Sector to capture the personal computer.

Alerted by an informant, Neil-U sends the PCs on their second mission, to rescue his personal computer. This treasonous race against the Armed Forces promises many obstacles and challenges for the PCs: a trip Outdoors ('there's no ceiling!'), their first flybot ride, their first skydive (and, they hope, parachute landing), earthquakes and a toxic waste dump, just to mention a few. Buck-U pulls ahead in the tournament.

Angered that Buck-U cheated, Neil-U decides to strike back. In the third and final mission, the PCs are ordered to sink Buck-U's stronghold, a converted fireboat moored in the center of the gigantic domed TJC Sector reservoir. A completely unhinged history buff, Buck-U named his fireboat the *Jolly Roger-U* and crewed it with robot sailors. Armed with cutlasses, his crew swabs the decks, hoists and lowers the sails (there's no wind in the dome) and mans (eh, 'bots') the cannons. The PCs (those who can't swim) assault the ship on jet-skis before boarding for hand-to-hand combat.

Slowly, throughout the tournament, the PCs should discover or guess some aspects of the whole scheme, but not much. (Remember: Fear and Ignorance. Ignorance and Fear.) If Neil-U wins the tournament, he greatly rewards the PCs. He may even offer particularly lucky, successful or power-hungry Troubleshooters a position in his program group. If Neil-U doesn't win the tournament, it probably means the PCs are dead (sigh).

## Who and where

This mission is designed for a team of ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooters. The pregenerated PCs at the end of the mission should just barely struggle through the mission—with a little help from their clones. The character listings also include personal equipment lists, backgrounds and secret society missions. Every one of those characters has good reason to shoot at least one teammate and distrust several others. (If the PCs get out of hand eliminating each other, make an example of one of them. Execute him for reckless

## High Programmer tournaments: Inspirations for your own missions

This whole idea of Troubleshooters unwittingly employed as pawns in the tournament competitions of High Programmers is fertile ground for developing missions and encounters of your own. For example:

**Mission idea:** A High Programmer tournament event. The cross-complex team marathon. The PC team is one of several trying to fast-talk their way through check-points, sneak through high-clearance shortcuts, commandeering transportation—anything to get to Point B as fast as possible. *Mission cover story:* High Programmer X wants this item delivered to Point B at [some completely impossible time]. For each minute the PCs are late, impose a credit fine and an Official Reprimand.

**Encounter:** Scrubot scavenger hunt. In the middle of a mission, the PCs come upon a team of Troubleshooters carrying a stack of 15 scrubot mop arms, busily engaged in the process of ripping an arm off another protesting scrubot. (The other team has been ordered to collect as many scrubot arms as possible in four hours.) Should the PCs interfere? 'Excuse me, but are you authorized to...' [Pathetic squeals of terror from the scrubot] '...er, service this bot?'

*Vapors Don't Shoot Back* is only one way to exploit this particular bad idea. Of course, we modest designers suggest it is a rather clever exploitation, but don't hesitate to throw away this mission and design your own. After all, we already got your bucks. We can afford to encourage you to exercise your creative gifts.



destruction of valuable Computer property.) If your players use their own characters, you'll have to prepare secret society missions and rivalries for them. (Alternately, consider the 'six-shooter' sets of ready-to-play PCs in the **PARANOIA** mission collection *Crash Priority*.)

Tournament rules require six-person teams, so six players are ideal. If you don't have six friends, don't despair. Experienced players can run two characters or, preferably, you can run a character or two as NPCs (which will really make the players nervous). With little adjustment you can play the mission with fewer or even more than six characters.

Stay in command. If PCs blatantly disregard or disobey the orders of The Computer or its appointed representatives (the PC's superiors), don't hesitate to march in two dozen Internal Security Elimination Agents to haul the traitors to the nearest termination center.

## The bad guys

Throughout their missions, the PCs encounter a variety of non-player characters (NPCs) and bots. A few of them are neutral, but most fall into the 'bad guy' category (the friendly ones are too few to count). Details of important NPCs and bots, such as their security clearance, skills, weapons and armor, appear in the NPC and Bot rosters at the end of this mission.

## Maps

This mission includes three maps. Each mission uses the one that depicts the area where the mission takes place. Much of the text in each mission is keyed to the maps by number.

## Pre-mission personal briefings

The three maps, Outdoor Arbitrary Encounter tables and six PC listings are at the end of this mission. Removing these pages is treason. Therefore, your friend The Computer suggests you photocopy the pages after submitting Form 289-B/1.a, 'Permission to Photocopy Personnel Data' to PLC.

Study the six (permissibly photocopied) PCs, then cut them apart and distribute one to each player. Of course you may demand to see a player's sheet at any time if you need it.

With the *Troubleshooters* rulebook in hand, meet with each player in turn for a private conference. Complete all four of the following steps with each player:

1. Make sure the player fully understands his character's secret society and mutant power. You'll probably need to look up some of this information.

2. Read the following text aloud:

**Two weeks ago, The Computer assigned you to a special Troubleshooter team in the vast RSB Sector. When you reported to the RSB Troubleshooter Headquarters, an officer clarified your specific position on the team, and told you to wait for your mission alert. Since then you've had ample time to practice on the HQ target range and work out in the HQ gym.**

3. Clarify the character's team Mandatory Bonus Duty, listed on his sheet, and assign the equipment listed in the next subsection, 'Notes on the PCs'. Stress that this equipment is extremely valuable and its loss or damage is a serious offense. The italicized text is for your information only.
4. Give the player a rumor from the General Rumor Table on the facing page.

## Notes on the PCs

**Team leader:** Because the team in this mission selects its own leader (see Episode 1), none of the characters start out in that role. Instead, the team starts with two loyalty officers. Whoever gets the job of team leader keeps his original MBD as well. Won't that be exciting for him?

### Roger-O-CWE-2

Access: 01; Power: 10

Tell the player Roger-O was assigned to the team so late his transfer orders might not have been distributed yet, but that Roger-O has been given one Computer printout of his orders.

Roger-O has been assigned a **Multicorder 2** with a special **Radio** program. This program detects strong radio waves and homes in on the source, particularly useful for hunting down (or hiding from) opponents with switched-on radios. Gives direction and range to source. On a 1d20 roll of 10 or less, this locator works. When it works, privately give its operator a rough direction ('over there') and approximate range. When it doesn't work, point in a random direction.

### Amos-O-BYA-4

Access: 03; Power: 18

Amos-O's audiovisual recorder has been assigned by Neil-U. Neil-U will use the information it provides to help account for the effects of the tournament.

### Cain-O-ATW-2

Access: 02; Power: 13

The RID (**Robot Identification Device**) visually recognizes standard model bots and lists their original capabilities, if known. There's only a 25% chance of this device working on any given robot. When it works, privately give a general description of the bot's speed, armor and armament. When it doesn't work, give the operator false information,

such as, 'This bot is always accompanied by seven advanced combots.'

### Mortimer-O-TBI-2

Access: 01; Power: 15

Recently, several teams have been wiped out in close-quarter fighting. Mortimer-O should protect his team using the experimental weapon he has been assigned—the **barrel blade**. This device fits on any laser or slugthrower barrel. Functions as a sword (W5K impact). Mortimer-O should understand he may be held accountable if any team member expires in melee.

The **Giant Metal Plate** counts as Armor 3 against energy and impact weapons, but the wearer must make regular Violence checks to avoid exhaustion. An exhausted character moves slowly, halves all Violence checks and must then make more Violence checks to avoid permanent lower back damage.

### Terry-O-EUZ-2

Access: 02; Power: 10

**StimuGo** injections cure wounds and even prevent death! ... temporarily. Wounded, maimed, downed, and even killed characters may get up and act normally, and may spend Perversity as if healthy. However, after 1d20 rounds (roll randomly), characters revert to their actual condition (including death).

### Bobby-O-SYE-2

Access: 03; Power: 12

Bobby-O's audiovisual recorder has been assigned by Neil-U. Neil-U will use the information it provides to help account for the effects of the tournament.

The PAB (**Personal Air Bag**) is a device, worn as a belt, that inflates before impact due to vehicle crash, falling, etc. Surrounded by bags of air, the wearer is fairly well protected. Works three times. (Actually, it only works twice, but let the wearer find that out the hard way! It won't save him if his parachute doesn't open in mission 3.)

## Information Inquiry Form

*Vapors Don't Shoot Back* includes an **Information Inquiry Form**. It originally appeared in *Send in the Clones* in 1985, but we needed to fill an empty *Vapors* page in this volume, so we moved it. The form has nothing to do with anything, but makes a nice variation in dealing with players who want to know things. It's on page 59.

When someone asks a question, instead of saying, 'That information is not available at your security clearance', hand the player a copy of this form. If someone fills out the form, say, 'I'll send this through for processing right away.' Then stand up, place the completed form on the seat of your chair and sit on it. The player gets the idea.

For more, see *Send in the Clones*.

# VAPORS DON'T SHOOT BACK

## 1: Standard tournament elimination round

### Mission summary

In this round, Neil-U-MYN-6 pits one of his Troubleshooter teams (the PCs) against another High Programmer's team in combat. Confused though it often is, The Computer doesn't usually assign its valuable Troubleshooter teams to fight each other. Consequently, Neil-U and his

opponent give their teams legitimate-sounding missions to destroy traitors.

After an unusual briefing, the PCs go to an ancient abandoned warehouse complex beneath the RSB food vat level. This particular site was chosen because, as far as the High Programmers know, The Computer has forgotten about it. No doubt the mission will bring the site to The Computer's attention again.

As the PCs enter the warehouse from the south, their opponents, who have worked themselves into a fighting frenzy, enter from the north. Back at the ranch, Neil-U and his opponent wait anxiously for the survivors to emerge, determining this tournament round's victor.

Unknown to everyone, a gang of PURGE saboteurs is already in the warehouse complex, preparing to blow the floor out from under some food vats. Being experienced paranoids, these PURGEs assume they are the Troubleshooters' target and resolve to go down fighting. Then some old security combots and forkbots reactivate and join the fray. Needless to say, the fur should really fly down there.

Unexpectedly, Neil-U aborts the mission so he can send the survivors (or their clone replacements) on Mission 2.

### General rumor table

These are rumors the PCs overhear in a cafeteria, lounge, on the target range, etc. Roll 1d20. Tell the player the rumor below with the corresponding number. If the character has heard the rumor before, tell him he hears it again from someone else. *The italicized 'true' and 'false' notes are for your information only.*

- 1-2. This mission is fake. The Computer is going to destroy everyone on the team because it knows one member is a renegade traitor, but doesn't know who. *False. Sort of.*
- 3-4. There's a new program in effect where R&D service firm personnel overhaul all Troubleshooters' weapons before each mission. The last team whose weapons were cleaned by an R&D service firm was wiped out because all their weapons malfunctioned. *True and False. The last team was vaporized en masse, but insufficient evidence remained to determine if their weapons malfunctioned.*
- 5-6. All ORANGE reflex armor with serial numbers between 2004 and 2851 is defective from waist to neck in back, but the tunic fronts are okay. The famous Troubleshooter Sam-Y-MEJ-3 got fried through the back of his armor a few days ago. Since then, prudent Troubleshooters have been walking everywhere with their backs to the walls. *False and True. The armor is not defective, but this rumor is widespread and many believe it. Of course, smart Troubleshooters keep their backs to the wall anyway. If the character checks his armor's serial number, tell him the tag is faded, but he can just make out the first two digits: '28—'*
- 7-8. All but one person on your team is really GREEN Clearance in disguise. They're going to use the only ORANGE-Clearance member as bait in a trap for a pack of wild dogs prowling the food-vat levels. *False, but under consideration for another mission. Internal Security may take an interest in anyone showing sympathy for the dogs.*
- 9-10. Security around the RSB Sector food vats is tightened because the infamous PURGE terrorist 'Vatman' promised to make one of the giant vats 'vanish' within a few days. *True, and it's going to be spectacular.*
- 11-12. *(If Mortimer-O hears this rumor, tell him he hears it from someone who doesn't know he's one of the team's loyalty officers.)* Your team's loyalty officer is really an Internal Security agent posing as a Mystic, but his disguise is so thin it's practically transparent. *False and True. Mortimer-O is not IntSec; he is an Illuminatus. His Mystic disguise is purposely thin.*
- 13-14. Tech Services is clearing vagrants and traitors out of an abandoned warehouse so it can set up its own research and testing lab. After discovering several R&D spies, Tech no longer trusts anything R&D sends them. R&D may send in a team of its own to keep the Techs out or even blow up the place to keep the Techs from using it! *False. The Techs aren't smart or brave enough to set up their own lab.*
- 15-16. An entire Vulture Squadron heavy weapons platoon mutinied in TJC Sector, and are fighting their way toward RSB Sector. They're ambushing and vaporizing every Armed Forces, Internal Security or Troubleshooter team that comes near them. *False, but if you need an excuse to wipe out the team, this works.*
- 17-18. The power struggle between Tech and R&D is getting worse. There may even be open warfare soon. *False. The power struggle between Tech and R&D couldn't get any worse—unless open warfare breaks out, but that won't happen because neither side wants to face The Computer's wrath.*
- 19-20. The Computer knows someone on your team is a mutant. Whoever it is better 'fess up before the mission because after the mission The Computer's going to root him out. *False, although The Computer always suspects everyone.*

### Mission alert

Each PC receives the following message from The Computer:

◆◆◆◆ MISSION ALERT! ◆◆◆◆

**Rejoice, Troubleshooter! Another opportunity to serve The Computer is upon you! This is evidence of The Computer's trust in you and appreciation of your value.**

**As part of a special Troubleshooter team, you must track down a dangerous band of traitors. Your important duties include the summary execution of those traitors on sight. The security and safety of RSB Sector depends on the successful completion of your mission.**

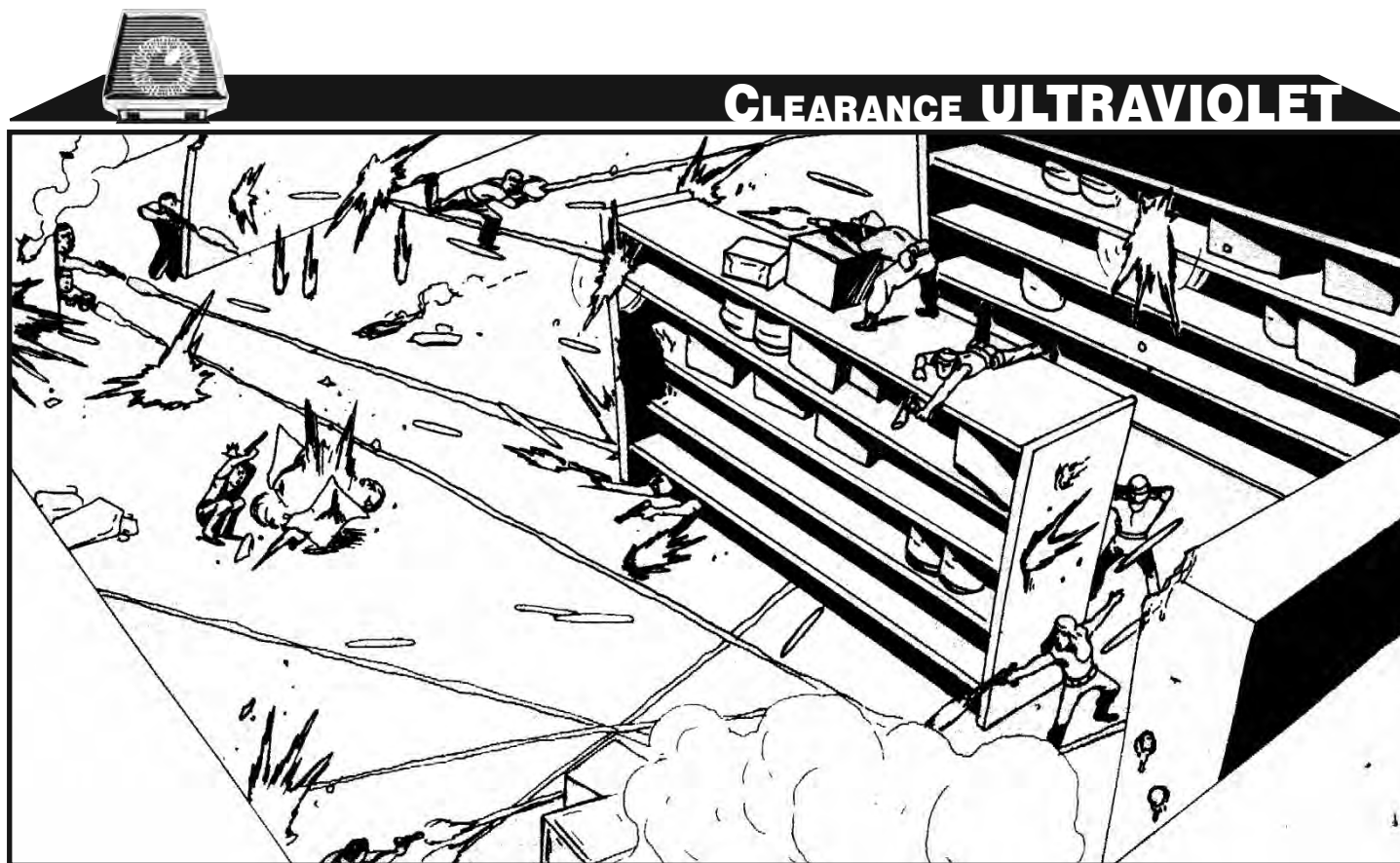
**Report immediately to Briefing Room C in RSB Sector Troubleshooter headquarters for your pre-mission briefing. Your cooperation and loyalty will be rewarded!**

**Stay alert! Guard against treason. Trust The Computer. The Computer is your friend.**

Characters who do not report for the briefing are hunted down, seized and suitably punished by a vengeful Computer. You can implement the details yourself.

### RSB Sector Troubleshooter Headquarters

Troubleshooter headquarters are generally secure areas, impenetrable citadels of The Computer's immune system. RSB Sector Headquarters is no exception. Huge armored



doors, security combots, Vulture Squadron guards and bomb-sniffing dogbots ensure only authorized personnel pass the entrance checkpoint. (**Tension level 15.**)

Every reporting Troubleshooter must register with The Computer at the checkpoint and wait for clearance while The Computer runs a security check. This check is standard procedure, but provides an early opportunity to instill paranoia. The Troubleshooters present themselves for registration, and The Computer responds, saying, 'I'm sorry, you are not authorized to enter this area. Please wait as directed by the guards while I conduct a complete check.' The character is immediately surrounded, disarmed and led to a windowless cell. After several tense, fearful minutes, the character is released without explanation.

At the checkpoint, each character is asked to turn over all weapons, an unusual request since a Troubleshooter on duty is supposed to keep his assigned weapons with him ('Keep your laser handy') at all times. The only explanation the duty officer can offer is, 'Those are my orders, bub.' If the character balks at or refuses the request, the burly Vulture Squadron officer makes his request an order. Naturally, the checkpoint personnel and combots have enough skill and firepower to disarm a mere ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooter. Doing so would perk up an otherwise boring day. Each character gets a proper receipt for his weapons.

The guards then escort the entire team through an armored door and into Briefing Room C (**Tension 16**).

### The briefing room

Read the following text aloud to the players to describe Briefing Room C:

**Briefing rooms, as you know them, are usually ugly and sparse. They need paint and smell bad. The carpeting, if any, is worn and stained. The furniture is uncomfortable (as most benches are), and the walls are usually scarred by laser fire. The only thing to count on is the hot, bright lamps that ensure The Computer sees any traitorous facial expression. This briefing room, however, is different.**

**The shiny, metallic stripe on the door is dark blue and continues around the room at waist height, accenting the light blue walls. Blue filtered light shines from lamps recessed in the ceiling, giving the air a cool, hazy appearance. Eight plush high-backed chairs face a platform against the far wall. The chairs are arranged in two staggered rows so each has an unobstructed view of the podium rows on the platform. Perhaps The Computer is showing you an example of the luxuries you will enjoy—if you survive to higher rank.**

**The room would not be complete, however, without a few law-and-order representatives of the Vulture Squadron. A loudish, watchful guard stands in each corner, wearing BLUE reflec armor. Three**

**of them affectionately cradle strange slim weapons in their arms. The fourth, and by far the meanest-looking of the bunch, carries no visible weapon, but wears a spiked collar around his neck. The looks on the guards' faces leave no doubt that the slightest breach of protocol will be rectified immediately.**

### The briefing personnel

If the PCs for any reason attack the guards, the briefing officer or each other (it happens), the guards respond immediately. These fellows are not only armed, but are of a much higher caliber than the PCs, and they waste no time proving it. The three armed guards skillfully employ their BLUE laser rifles (W3K energy), while the fourth leaps into the fray, snarling and growling in a truly awesome display of unarmed combat (he's a Vulture Squadron Unarmed Combat instructor). If the PCs are particularly inventive and put on a good show, let them take out one of the guards before learning the folly of their ways. In such a case, adjourn the meeting until all clone replacements arrive.

Soon after the PCs enter the briefing room, the briefing officers, Steve-G, Ben-B and Gary-V, walk in, appropriately attired in the colors of their ranks. Steve-G and Gary-V wear the CPU Service Group insignia on their uniform. Ben-B wears a Tech badge. Throughout the briefing, all three officers whisper among themselves, obviously discussing the PCs. Initially, however, only Steve-G talks to the PCs.

### Beginning the briefing

Steve-G introduces himself and the other two officers, then presses a button behind the podium. A nervous, RED-jacketed waiter hurries in, carrying a platter of steaming drinks. Try to make the players as suspicious as possible of this waiter. While the waiter distributes mugs of the thick black liquid to the PCs, Steve-G explains that The Computer only recently perfected the synthesis of an old beverage known as 'java'. Although neither he nor the other officers accept any of the foul-tasting coffee, Steve-G warns that refusing a drink will insult and anger The Computer.

Steve-G then takes roll call, asking for each Troubleshooter by name and title—except Roger-O-CWE-2. When Steve-G finishes the roll call, he angrily demands to know who Roger-O is and what he's doing in this highly restricted area. Ever alert, the guards roast Roger-O if he doesn't quickly present his orders from The Computer.

If Roger-O hands over his orders in time, Steve-G, Ben-B and Gary-V huddle over a Computer terminal in the podium, shaking their puzzled heads. Eventually their frowns become knowing nods, and Steve-G announces that, in its infinite wisdom, The Computer assigned Roger-O to the team at the last minute as Communications Officer. The idea here is to make the other characters suspect Roger-O is an Internal Security agent or some other agent of The Computer—a dangerous man, but with friends in high places.

After loudly clearing his throat to get everyone's undivided attention, Steve-G makes a proud announcement. Read the following text aloud:

**'At this very moment, a special team from R&D is overhauling your personal weapons, stripping them down and cleaning them thoroughly. This preventive maintenance is part of a new effort to improve weapon reliability. Aren't you thankful yours is one of the first teams to receive this special service from The Computer?'**

Other than a new high polish, the weapons are unaffected, but the PCs have no way of knowing that. Repeated sly references to the 'nice, clean weapons' should make the players properly nervous.

### Assigning mission equipment

Steve-G then draws the Troubleshooters' attention to the wall behind him. Part of the wall slowly swirls into a Computer screen listing the additional equipment assigned to the team for this mission. Read the Mission 1 equipment list to the players slowly so they can copy it down. Give them a few minutes to divide the equipment

among themselves, reminding them that someone must sign for every piece of equipment.

Make sure the players understand that every citizen is fully responsible for the valuable Computer equipment entrusted to him and must account for it at the end of the mission. Unnecessary equipment damage is a serious offense; equipment loss is evidence of irresponsibility and treasonous incompetence. To really make this point sink in, ask each player to jot down his character's name and additional equipment on a slip of paper. (You'll collect them later, when the equipment is issued.)

If anyone suggests waiting until after they know what the mission is to divide the equipment, fine him 50 credits for questioning the competence of his superiors. There is no time to requisition items not on the list.

One of the laser rifles on the list is useless, except perhaps for Intimidation or use as a club. The PC responsible for this weapon will have to make a pretty impressive speech after the mission to persuade The Computer that the weapon was non-functional when he received it. The rest of the equipment on the list is in fine condition—subject to normal malfunctions, of course.

### Choosing the team leader

Ben-B rises from his chair and announces the time has come to assign a team leader. In an increasingly emotional monologue he outlines the extra responsibilities and risks the leader must take on. Bruno punctuates his speech with trick questions, as though trying to determine who will make the best leader.

**Leader responsibilities:** The leader must maintain team unity and morale. He must protect The Computer's valuable equipment and agents on his team and account for all losses

### Mission 1 equipment list

- (6) Pairs of warm gloves
- (4) \*Winter survival parkas
- (2) Laser rifles
- (4) ORANGE laser rifle barrels
- Sonic rifle
- Sonic weapon power pack
- Slugthrower
- (5) 10-round clips of solid slug ammo
- (5) 10-round clips of HE slug ammo
- (2) Boxes 20 high-explosive grenades
- Bullhorn
- Hottorch (combination fire-starter and cutting torch)
- InfraSpecs (IR goggles)
- Suit of Kevlar armor with mylar coating
- \*4, or 2 less than the number of Troubleshooters



*Spike-B loves his work.*

and injuries. After the mission, the leader must submit a written and oral report detailing and explaining everything that happened. Essentially, the leader shoulders much of the responsibility if the mission fails.

In addition, the leader must carry an experimental Multicorder device to record all that happens during the mission. This device simultaneously broadcasts its findings so The Computer can monitor the mission's progress. The device, resembling a helmet, is worn on the head. The leader must ensure the device clearly records all important events. (In fact, the device is not connected to The Computer. It broadcasts to Neil-U-MYN-6 and creates a permanent record of this tournament round for his laser disk collection. In an emergency, Neil-U-MYN-6 (as The Computer) can also contact the leader through the device (which, incidentally, is nearly indestructible).

When he finishes, Ben-B unexpectedly tells the PCs they must choose their own leader, explaining that The Computer wants them to learn responsibility. Encourage discussion and debate among the PCs, but don't give them too long to make a decision. Of course, if you don't agree with their decision, use Ben-B or The Computer to veto their choice and assign someone else.

Only after the leader is chosen does Ben-B reveal the benefits of being leader. The leader is temporarily breveted to YELLOW Clearance (with additional pay), given YELLOW reflex and assigned two YELLOW laser barrels. Furthermore, the other members must obey the leader—as long as his orders logically pertain to the mission.



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

### Mission assignment

Now the Troubleshooters find out all about their mission. Well, not really. But they learn a little bit. Read the following section out loud to the players:

Gary-V, the highest-ranking person you've ever met, stands slowly and surveys the room. His eyes linger on each of you, giving the impression he can see through to your thoughts. Over his crisply-tuned VIOLET tunic he wears a shoulder holster carrying a weapon of such exotic design it's hardly recognizable as a laser pistol. Everything about him radiates confidence and capability.

Finally, he begins speaking. His icy voice is steady and devoid of emotion. 'Troubleshooters, I will be brief... and I do not expect to repeat myself. Someone else has already completed the difficult part of this mission—tracking down a dangerous group of traitors, now hiding in an unused warehouse complex. Your assignment is much simpler—eliminate the traitors. You will receive the proper execution vouchers at the end of the briefing.'

He pauses, watching your faces, before continuing. 'These traitors never stay put for long, so you must depart immediately if you are to catch them. After picking up

your equipment you will be driven to a single-shaft elevator, the only entrance to the complex. Your driver, Frank-O, will unlock the elevator. A tunnel once led into the complex, but it caved in long ago. The current status of the complex is not known.

'I caution you, these traitors are masters of disguise. They may appear as anyone or anything. Other than yourselves, no one is authorized in the complex. You may shoot on sight.

'Twenty-four hours after your departure, the elevator will return for you and the traitors' remains. I see no justifiable reason for not completing this simple task. That is all. Questions?'

Gary-V will only answer a few questions, and then only if they are insightful and pertinent. He will not give out any more information about the warehouse complex. If asked how many traitors there are, he responds, 'The exact number is, of course, classified, but it's between five and 15.' If asked what these traitors did or how they got into the warehouse complex, Gary-V answers, 'Possession of that information below BLUE Clearance is treason.' As for the people who tracked down these traitors, Gary-V explains, 'They go to a better life!' an obvious reference to promotion.

### Ending the briefing

Steve-G takes over, ordering everyone to stand as Gary-V and Ben-B leave the briefing room. Then Steve-G orders the characters to follow the guards back to the checkpoint to pick up their gear. Steve-G does not leave the room.

### The mission

At the checkpoint, the characters' weapons are returned. Additional equipment is distributed as assigned. Collect each player's slip of paper listing the equipment he is responsible for. The team leader is issued his special gear and handed a termination voucher for five to 15 unnamed traitors, valid for 24 hours.

Wearing complete crash gear, their driver, Frank-O, waits impatiently in a modified autocar (**Tension 4**). See the NPC roster at the end of the mission for details about Frank-O.

The car was extended to hold an entire team and its gear. The roof is completely gone, though its supports remain, perhaps intended as roll bars. Two long benches are bolted down the center of the vehicle behind the padded driver's seat. The characters must sit back-to-back on the benches, facing outward with their gear at their feet and under the benches. There are no seatbelts on the benches, but Frank-O is strapped in a literal web of belts and harnesses.

### The ride to the elevator

Frank-O drives like a man who can't comprehend the consequences of a car crash. Leaning on the blaring horn all the way, he maneuvers and accelerates as quickly as the buried control and guidance tracks allow. Frank-O must also have a deal with Internal Security, because he passes several officers who neither stop nor pursue him. They just point at his passengers and laugh.

Stress to the players that their characters are in grave danger of never reaching the elevator. To cling to the car, each PC must make an Violence/Agility check as the vehicle careens along the hallways. Failure means the PC slips off and is wounded. Then Frank-O discovers the missing PC, screeches to a halt, wheels around and accelerates back toward the PC at top speed. The grounded PC must instantly evade, making an Agility roll to avoid being run down. PCs who make their Agility checks to stay on the car should make further Violence checks to avoid losing their lunches. (**Note:** Citizens may be fined for contaminating a public thoroughfare.)

The Troubleshooters cannot intimidate Frank-O. He's dealt with dozens of teams before and knows all their tricks. If necessary, he reminds the Troubleshooters he's the only person wearing crash gear. If the PCs distract him and cause a crash, The Computer holds them responsible for the autocar as well as their own equipment.



Loyal citizens cooperate cheerfully with R&D test procedures.

Just before INFRARED Dining Room 12, Frank-O disengages from the 'spine' (control and guidance track) and takes full manual command of the autocar. He soon turns onto a little-used roadhall, where, despite his best efforts, two INFRAREDs barely avoid becoming hood ornaments. At the last possible second, he screeches to a halt at the end of the roadhall, just tapping the elevator doors with the front bumper.

The remainder of the action takes place in the warehouse complex (**Tension 0**) depicted on Map 1 at the end of *Vapors Don't Shoot Back*.

## Area 1. Warehouse elevator

Everything about the elevator should worry the PCs. From the moment they step into the elevator they should fear for their lives. The trip down should only intensify their terror.

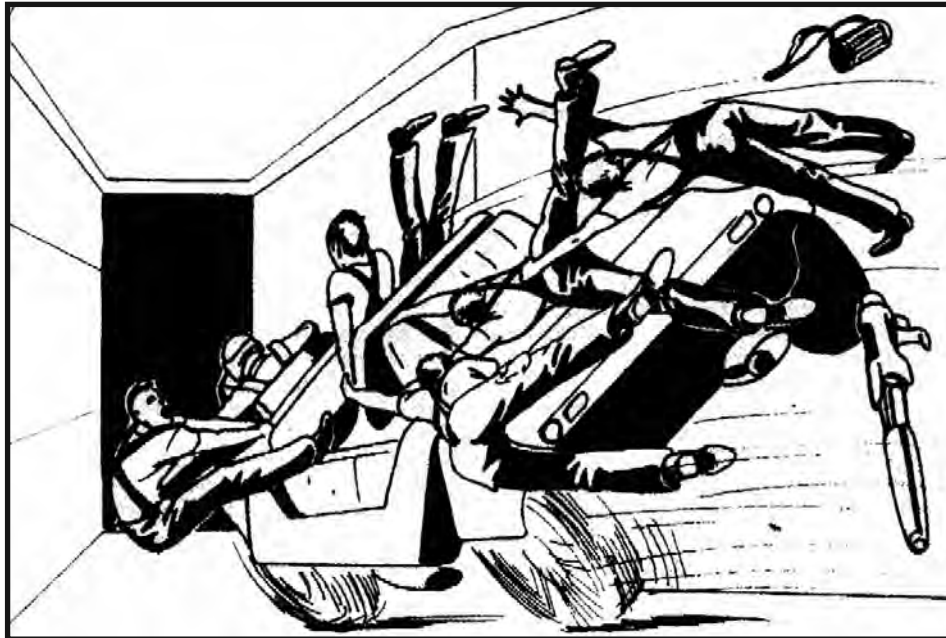
A diagonal violet stripe, chipped and faded, crosses the elevator doors, which are dented and rusty. One tiny button rests in a small panel to the right of the doors. An arrow on the button points down. A power panel is set in the wall about one meter from the control panel. Particularly observant characters should note that, oddly, no Computer cameras are visible in this hallway.

While the PCs put themselves back together and shoulder their gear, Frank-O starts up a noisy portable generator in the trunk. He drags two insulated cables, one red and one black, over to the power panel where he waits impatiently. Finally, belching oil and smoke, the ancient generator comes up to speed. After testing the current by touching the two cable ends together in a shower of sparks, Frank-O plugs the cables into the panel.

A light in the 'down' button flickers once or twice, then shines steadily for a second before shorting out. Then the doors open with a jerky, hesitant motion. A raspy, static-filled sound drifts out, barely recognizable as Teela O'Malley theme music. The elevator walls, floor and ceiling are dented, scratched and dusty. (Here's a chance to share a favorite limerick or some choice graffiti with your players—put it on the elevator walls.) Unlike the rest of the creaking, swaying elevator, the interior lights work perfectly, glaring with brilliant intensity through cracked ceiling panels.

There are three control buttons in the elevator labeled 'UP', 'DOWN' and 'STOP'. The DOWN button closes the doors and begins the descent. As soon as the doors close, Frank-O unplugs the generator, locks the doors shut and drives off. The UP button does not work now (it will work again in 24 hours or when the mission is aborted, whichever comes first). If pressed, the STOP button falls through the panel and down the dark shaft—but the PCs never hear it hit bottom.

The elevator descends slowly, shuddering and swaying back and forth while cables twang and snap in the shaft above. The elevator lurches,



*'I'm sorry. You are not cleared for seat belts at this time...'*

drops, then stops randomly. The lights even go out a few times, though Teela croons steadily. In the elevator car, anyone wearing a parka begins to sweat and should fear overheating before long. The PCs should not know how far down they travel, only that they are deep below their starting point. (Actually they descend 35 meters—about 11 stories.)

## Arrival and greeting

Review Map 1 at the end of this mission.

The elevator falls the last meter, crashing to a stop. Everyone inside must make a successful Agility check to keep from crashing to the floor or slamming against the walls. (This is a good time to ask someone who fails his check, 'Were you right-handed or left-handed?')

The door automatically opens at the bottom, but just partway. Only one character at a time can worm through. Light from the elevator is swallowed up by the huge, dark warehouse. This deep underground, the warehouse is quite cold and, of course, hasn't been heated in years. Characters without parkas begin to shiver and clack their teeth together loudly. Everyone's toes and fingers develop strange tingly and numb sensations. Determine other effects of the cold as you see fit, but don't make them disabling, just an irritating nuisance.

After the PCs have gotten oriented, and perhaps after they try to kill each other a few times—this is a dark room, after all!—a hidden PURGER fires at the first person out the door. He uses an awesome weapon of the Old Reckoning: a 'RamCo wristrocket' slingshot loaded with precision-milled steel ball bearings (in ample supply in the warehouse). See the NPC roster for details about this PURGER, nicknamed 'Ramco'.

He is hidden at the north end of the first shelf rack east of the elevator. His shots are silent until they hit, making him hard to find. Ramco is very accurate, as the shrunken warehouse rat population can attest. He fires every round, retreating to the east if pursued or receiving life-threatening return fire.

Ramco's goal is to draw the PCs away from Vatman (area 5), whom he assumes the PCs are after. As soon as Ramco is wounded (or just before he dies, whichever comes first), he shouts, 'Let 'er rip, Vatman!' This should draw an interesting reaction from Bobby-O, also a PURGER, who knows Vatman (see Bobby-O's character sheet).

If the PCs hole up in the elevator, describe the projectiles zinging through the door and ricocheting around inside the elevator compartment. If that doesn't coax them out, short-circuit the control panel and start the elevator on fire.

If the PCs are quiet, they hear the muffled sounds of a distant firefight drawing near. The sounds come from the Hotshots, the enemy Troubleshooter team battling two PURGE guards in the north warehouse. (At a dramatic moment, the Hotshots should burst into the south warehouse, weapons blazing.)

## Area 2. South warehouse offices

These prefabricated offices are only dimly lit by the elevator's light (if it's still on). The walls are mostly windows, resting on waist-high thin metal walls. Both the outer and inner doors stand open; they are easily closed, but creak loudly when moved. All the furniture was relocated or stolen long ago. The floor of both rooms is strewn with broken bot bits, plastic shreds and oily rags. In



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET



*'Please extinguish all smoking materials. Thank you for your cooperation.'*

the center of each room hangs a strange ancient cord with a switch on it (empty but electrically live light sockets).

A careful search reveals an Old Reckoning projectile pistol (toy dart gun) and a thin needle, its pointed tip still in the manufacturer's protective seal (rubber-tipped dart). This weapon has a maximum range of two meters and causes no damage whatever, but it looks deadly.

A ladder along the back wall leads up through a hole in the ceiling into a plexiglas tube. The ladder continues through the tube to a hatch in the monitor station floor (Area 3).

The PCs can use these offices as a temporary refuge, but should soon realize how fragile they are. Lasers and slugs first melt and dent the metal walls, then blast through. Just about anything shatters the window panes, which are genuine sharp glass, not the normal safety-plexi.

### Area 3. Monitor station

A ladder within a plexiglas tube leads up 17 meters from the offices (area 2) to a hatch in the monitor station floor. This small, two-meter-square room is bolted to the wall near the warehouse ceiling with just enough space overhead to stand in comfortably. Only the floor and back wall are solid; the rest of the room is plexi-enclosed. One round after the hatch is opened, two high intensity lights pop on, brightly illuminating the tube and the monitor station, and everyone within them. No NPC within range can resist such a target. The lights stay on until the switch on the hatch is discovered and turned off. (Smashing the light bulbs works too.)

### Area 4. South warehouse

This mammoth warehouse is 75 meters wide and 175 meters long. The ceiling, 20 meters up, is out of flashlight range (15 meters). The smooth concrete floor has many oily stains and discolored patches. The entire room is pitch black, except for light from the elevator at the

southwest corner (Area 1). The light controls are in a circuit-breaker box on the wall near the offices. A successful Electronic Engineering skill check and three rounds of work are needed to switch on the warehouse lights. A failed check produces a fascinating pyrotechnic display.

Giant steel shelf racks, 15 meters tall, stand throughout the warehouse. These shelf racks are marked on the map. Each rack contains five shelves, each three meters apart. Brave (or foolhardy) characters can climb the racks' corner posts by making a Violence/Agility check.

Some racks are full, others are empty (see the map). In the full racks, all shelves except the uppermost hold two-meter-cube pressure-sealed plastic crates of styrofoam 'peanuts'. These crates are quite light, but too large for one person to carry. The smaller one-cubic-meter crates on the top shelves are packed with precision-milled steel ball bearings. Weighing 500 pounds apiece, these boxes are hard to move.

Projectiles, such as slugs, penetrate and burst up to four of the larger crates at a time, showering 'peanuts' in all directions. Laser beams dissipate in a single crate, melting the styro within as well as the crate, giving off a thick, black, foul-smelling smoke. No weapon the characters have will shoot through a crate of ball bearings, but any hit ruptures the crate, spilling thousands of bearings over the edge. Characters underneath must make a Violence/Agility check to leap out of the way or receive a wound from the shower of steel. Of course, all those little round things on the floor make slipping and falling likely—PCs must succeed in a Violence/Agility check each round to move without falling and getting Snafued.

Naturally, firing between crates and shelves is difficult. Full shelves block line of sight at your discretion. Even empty shelves can make it hard to identify proper targets, so a Troublesooter may well confuse friend and foe (heh, heh).

The warehouse contains an automatic fire extinguishing system. Combination combustion sensors and spray nozzles hang from the ceiling in a grid pattern of five-meter squares. The system

activates soon after any substantial explosion or smoke. When activated, the nozzles spray a thick, sticky yellow foam for six rounds. During that time, all fires are extinguished and visibility is reduced to zero. Afterward, every exposed surface is coated with two centimeters of foam, greatly increasing the chances for dramatic and injurious falls. Unprotected weapons malfunction with the next shot. Use your imagination to invent other effects of the foam if you wish. The extinguishing system only works once.

### Area 5. Vatman and Robin

The famous PURGE terrorist, Vatman, is standing atop a rickety ladder propped on a bearing crate on the top shelf of a rack, planting the last of a chain of explosives on the ceiling. His assistant, Robin, holds the ladder. See the NPC roster for details about both these PURGERS. Ramco, another PURGER, is guarding the elevator while two other PURGERS battle the Hotshots, the Troublesooter team in the north warehouse.

When Troubleshooters appear from both sides, Vatman assumes they're gunning for him. Resolved to complete his final 'vat mission' before being captured or vaporized, he doubles his efforts. Vatman stays out of the fight until his 'vat bombs' are ready (four or five rounds, say), then opens fire with his laser rifle. If necessary, Robin uses his blaster to defend Vatman while he works. Determined to go down with his vat, Vatman fights to the death from atop the shelf. He has rigged a 'dead man' switch to set off the explosives when he dies.

Seconds after Vatman dies, a series of explosions on the ceiling shake the warehouse. Cracking and ripping, the concrete and steel ceiling splits open.

Then, with a loud roar, an entire 20-meter wide, ten meter-high food vat drops through the ceiling, followed by several shrieking INFRAREDs. Smashing through all the shelves under it, the vat crashes to the floor and bursts open, sending a powerful wave of over 2.5 million liters (700,000 gallons) of gray-green gruel surging across the floor. When the wave subsides and the dust clears, the south warehouse is 25 centimeters deep in warm, cultured goo.





Not too long after the vat falls through, Internal Security agents peer gingerly over the edge of the hole in the ceiling. Not too long after that, the hole is cordoned off while Internal Security tries to figure out what happened and what to do next. As far as they are concerned, everyone in the warehouse is a traitor and saboteur.

## Area 6. Mechanical arms

These three-jointed mechanical arms are mounted on a trolley that slides from one side of the warehouse to the other along a rail. The rail stretches the length of the warehouse on tracks affixed to the long walls. The arms, with a ten-meter reach, are programmed to pluck items from the forkbots and shelve them on the uppermost shelves. The arms come to life at the same time the forkbots activate (a few rounds after the first laser or slug shot is fired).

## Area 7. Forkbots

These oversized, automated forklifts switch on a few rounds after the first laser or slug shot is fired. Three start in the south warehouse. Another, in the north warehouse, is quickly dispatched by the Hotshots.

Once activated, each heavy forklift attempts to pick up any large object on the floor (especially PCs) and raise it to the mechanical arm (Area 6) for shelving. Once in a forklift's grip, a character needs one full round to struggle free. By then he's too high to jump down safely (although he might try to leap for a nearby shelf unit). The forklift and mechanical arms aren't gentle, and characters should fear being crushed at any moment. Roll the die, busily study tables, tsk-tsk and cluck sympathetically. However, shelved characters end up merely bruised and stranded.

The forkbots move as fast as a running person, weigh several tons and are practically impervious to laser and slug fire (sustained or concentrated fire will eventually destroy anything). A direct hit from a grenade can often disable or destroy a forklift. Characters on the floor cannot fire over a forklift. See the Bot roster for additional details.

These bots present several fun possibilities. Perhaps their brakes don't always function, or they occasionally forget their 'Fragile: Handle with Care' programming. Who knows, they might even accidentally drop something from a great height. Characters dropped from heights are wounded.

## Area 8. Security combots

Leaning against the east wall (under the '8' on Map 1) are two rusted security combots, programmed to stun or wound any intruders in the warehouse. Sensing all the commotion, they, too, activate a few rounds after the first shot is fired. They function slowly at first, gradually working up to dilapidated lethargy. Each is armed with a

needle gun and a stun gun, built into the arms. When new, their little treads easily overtook humans, but now these bots can hardly keep up and have trouble with sharp turns. On a 1d20 roll of 19 or 20, they topple over. See 'Security Combat' in the Bot roster.

## Area 9. Sliding doors

Two identical pairs of thick, sliding doors provide the only link between the two warehouses. The ten-meter wide doors roll on tracks in the floor and ceiling. The rollers are fairly rusty, but determined pushing and pulling by more than one individual moves the doors, creaking and groaning loudly. An oval-shaped room lies between the two pairs of doors. When both pairs of doors are open, light enters the south warehouse from the north warehouse. Two of Vatman's PURGERS closed these doors behind them after entering the north warehouse. Fresh slug scars and two char marks against the north door record their demise.

At an appropriately dramatic moment of your choosing, the Hotshot Troubleshooter team opens these doors and charges into the south warehouse, weapons blazing, and screaming at the top of their lungs, 'Vapors don't shoot back!' (For more about the Hotshots, see Area 12.)

The PCs should be instantly awed and inspired by the Hotshots' Troubleshooter vitality and gung-ho spirit. They should also shoot to kill, because as far as they know the Hotshots are disguised traitors.

## Area 10. North warehouse

The brightly lit north warehouse is similar to the south warehouse, with the addition of shipping and receiving docks in the west wall. Large container bots and trucks once backed up to the docks to disgorge or take on supplies. They are all gone now. A sliding door at each dock opens over the parking lot (Area 13) one meter below the level of the warehouse floor. The northernmost sliding door is ajar, opened by the Hotshots.

A recently ruined forklift lies close to the loading docks. The mechanical arm near the ceiling (Area 6) is still active. It follows characters from above, desiring to shelve them, but unable to reach them.

The fire extinguishing system here activates with the first explosion, smoke or laser fire in this area, but only sprays for two rounds and does not cause weapons to malfunction.

## Area 11. Shipping & receiving office

This office and the attached filing room are stripped clean; nothing remains here.

## Area 12. Hotshots' starting point

The six Hotshots are Buck-U's gung-ho team of ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooters. Their motto, 'Vapors Don't Shoot Back', has served them well. Only hours ago, they got an assignment similar to the PCs' assignment. Brandishing their laser rifles and slug throwers, they rallied around their leader, Bud-O-NDP-4, and worked themselves into a fighting frenzy. See Hotshots and Bud-O-NDP-4 on the roster for details about these maniacs.

Their strategy is to move in a dense pack, firing continually. They shoot first and never ask questions. They neither negotiate nor show mercy (nor much intelligence). In darkness, Bud-O wears infrared goggles to direct the team's movement and fire.

Soon after entering the warehouse, the Hotshots encountered two PURGERS and opened fire. Charging forward, the Hotshots overran a forklift, then finished off the PURGERS against the sliding doors. When the south warehouse is filled with styrofoam peanuts and fire suppressant foam floating atop a sea of food vat gruel, and the PCs are scampering back and forth trying to avoid forkbots, combots and mechanical arms, the time is ripe for the Hotshots to slide open the doors and burst into the south warehouse, screaming and yelling and shooting.

Like all Troubleshooter teams, the Hotshots are plagued by jealousy, suspicion and treachery. After they first fire on the PCs, roll 1d20 every couple of rounds. If the result is a 1 or 2, remove one of the Hotshots—a teammate just shot him! However, no Hotshot attacks Bud-O. They



Unauthorized use of forkbots is prohibited.



respect him too much. Also, they suspect he's wired himself with explosives.

### Area 13. Parking lot

Three pairs of sliding doors connect the parking lot with the north warehouse. The parking lot floor is made of a coarse black material and is one meter lower than the warehouse floor. In a few places, small rounded plants grow from cracks in the parking lot blacktop. Some characters may recognize the shape of these mushrooms as similar to a tacnuke cloud. Although many mushrooms are poisonous, these are harmless, chock-full of healthy nutrients and rather tasty—unlike the 'mushroom concentrate' served in Complex cafeterias. A total of two man-hours spent harvesting these mushrooms produces a quantity worth 600 credits on the IR market.

The exposed bedrock ceiling is 21 meters above the blacktop. Although lights hang from the ceiling, none of them work.

The south wall opens into a large tunnel with an arched ceiling (Area 14).

### Area 14. Transit tunnel

This 20-meter-wide tunnel is totally dark. The arched ceiling rises 15 meters above the floor. Two faded yellow lines run down the center of the black floor. Half-way between the center line and each wall is a very worn, dotted, gray line. Tiny metallic plates between the center lines and on the walls reflect torchlight eerily like glittering little animal eyes. Small, burned-out lights line the ceiling and walls.

Carved from the solid rock beneath the food vat levels, the tunnel used to connect the warehouses with the rest of RSB Sector. Now, only one-half kilometer of the tunnel remains; the rest is blocked by a cave-in.

Near the wall of rubble at the tunnel's end, an extension ladder leads to a narrow shaft in the ceiling. The shaft ends in a man-hole cover in the center of the Armed Forces small-arms qualification range, which is always in use.

### Ending the episode

While the PCs battle in the warehouse, Buck-U discovers Neil-U's most valuable possession, an independent personal computer. An independent computer allows Neil-U to test and develop his programs while remaining completely safe from The Computer's interference. Handed an opportunity to cheat, Buck-U decides to eliminate Neil-U, his only real competition, from the tournament by informing The Computer of Neil-U's personal computer. The Computer immediately orders the Armed Forces to retrieve the personal computer.

## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET



*Home, home on the firing range.*

Alerted by one of his spies, Neil-U decides to send a team to rescue his personal computer. If the PCs are 'losing' this round anyway, Neil-U decides to cut his losses and forfeit the round. However, it would be a shame to abort the mission until at least half the PCs are killed or completely incapacitated, and the others wounded or pinned down. If the PCs are miraculously winning, Neil-U waits until just after they finish off their last opponent before aborting the mission.

Neil-U contacts the PCs through the leader's recording device. (If the leader has been vaporized, Neil-U manages to route the recall through the PCs' individual PDCs.) Of course the characters should believe The Computer is changing their orders. Speakers in the leader's helmet blare, 'Urgent Message: Abort Mission. Repeat, Abort Mission. Retreat to elevator for pickup. Retrieve all assigned equipment. Thank you for your cooperation.'

### The cavalry

Frank-O returns and takes control of the elevator, sending down two GREEN-Clearance Vulture goons to provide covering fire if necessary. These two guys are armed with GREEN laser rifles and wear GREEN reflex. They should be able to pin down anything in the warehouse by shock alone. They don't hesitate to turn their weapons on anyone who threatens them. See Cavalry on the NPC roster.

Back in the hallway, Frank-O locks up the elevator while the PCs load into his autocar. He drives them straight to Headquarters, radioing ahead for docbots if they're needed.

### The debriefing

Back at Headquarters, injured PCs are treated and sent to recovery wards. The others are told to wait for orders in the cafeteria or lounge. All PCs must account for their assigned equipment. Amos-O and Bobby-O must turn in their Multicorder recordings. Because Neil-U doesn't have much time, a formal debriefing is not held. However, any character may make a private report to The Computer. Hand out Official Commendations, Official Reprimands based on what Frank-O observed, the team leader's helmet broadcast, the two recordings and any reports to The Computer.

Complete necessary clone replacements, then proceed with Episode 2.

**PLEASE IGNORE  
THIS MISSION  
ALERT. THANK  
YOU FOR YOUR  
COOPERATION.**



## 2: The cheating begins

### Mission summary

Tipped off by Buck-U, The Computer quickly gathers an awesome strike force to march north and capture or destroy Neil-U's personal computer. This device was a major contributor to Neil-U's rise to power. On it, Neil-U codes and tests programs in safety before transferring them to the Alpha Complex Computer. Other High Programmers must design and develop their programs in secret subsystems on The Computer itself—risky business.

Neil-U realizes Buck-U is trying to win the tournament by linking Neil-U to an independent computer, an unforgivable offense. However, Neil-U has left no traceable clues in his personal computer. Even so, he is unwilling to let The Computer destroy it or, worse yet, turn it into yet another subjugated peripheral. So, Neil-U sets aside the tournament and hastily organizes a mission to rescue his personal computer's CPU Core, its only irreplaceable part.

Neil-U's personal computer is hidden in an Old Reckoning U.S. Geological Survey station, 25 kilometers north of the RSB Sector dome. Speed is critical. The rescue team (the PCs) must move quickly to reach the weather station before The Computer's strike force arrives. Unfortunately, the team can't take the most direct route (Highway 45). They'd be spotted by regular patrols, and The Computer could probably figure out where they were heading.

Possession of computer CPU parts is treason, so, in their briefing, the PCs are told they must recover a stolen container of radioactive isotopes, desperately needed for medical purposes.

Ironically, the PCs leave the dome from the staging area where the strike force is forming up. Little do they know they will see those troops and combots again.

The PCs are to head east on a route given to their leader and rendezvous with a flybot and its pilot. The flybot, another of Neil-U's illegal possessions, is constructed entirely of salvaged parts from crashed and trashed flybots. When the PCs reach the flybot, they find the pilot dead, shot by one of Buck-U's assassins (who otherwise plays no role in the storyline). The pilot was supposed to teach the PCs how to use their parachutes.

All is not lost, though. The fixed-wing flybot can fly itself on autopilot, or the team equipment guy can fly it (more or less) on manual. The autopilot flies so low the flybot frequently brushes tree tops, but it's the safer choice. If the PCs fly manually and stray more than a few kilometers from the pre-planned route, an Armed Forces model 916 flybot intercepts them—time to bail out, with or without instructions.

Once over the mountaintop weather station, the PCs must parachute in and recover the 'radioactive isotopes' (the CPU Core). The container is protected by a lethal defense mechanism only the team leader knows about.

Regardless of how long the PCs spend dithering en route, they still beat the strike force

to the CPU Core. Unfortunately, the strike force arrives just in time to catch the PCs with the goods. During the ensuing firefight, the PCs' flybot swoops down to snap them off the ground with skyhooks.

On the way back to Alpha Complex the flybot gets hit and crashes several kilometers from the weather station. PC survivors must make their way cross-country back to their dome home. The great Outdoors holds many deadly obstacles and frightening challenges to test the PCs' courage, skill, strength but mostly their luck.

### Mission alert

While mingling with other Troubleshooters in the cafeteria, lounge or recovery ward, each PC hears a rumor. Privately give each player a rumor from the General Rumor Table (see the start of Episode 1). Secretly inform Amos-O he can tell Mortimer-O is definitely a Mystic. Bobby-O receives the following secret message from his PURGE superior: 'The army in your area is after a hot computer part—steal or destroy it.'

Large Computer screens grace the lounge, cafeteria and recovery ward walls. A continuous stream of patriotic slogans and security warnings flashes across the screens. One particular announcement provokes cheers from many viewers: The famous entertainer, Teela O'Malley, will soon visit RSB Sector and perform a live show.



Not long after that hot newflash, a mission alert fills the screens.

## ◆◆◆ MISSION ALERT ◆◆◆

**Attention Amos-O, Cain-O, Roger-O, Mortimer-O, Terry-O and Bobby-O. Another exciting opportunity to serve The Computer is upon you! This is an expression of The Computer's confidence in you.**

**As evidence of The Computer's trust, your routine mission will take you Outdoors! The Computer offers you this gentle exposure to the rigors of life outside the dome so you may better appreciate life inside. Rejoice in this rare opportunity.**

**Failure to report to Briefing Room C within ten minutes constitutes disregard of Computer orders, a serious offense. Your cooperation and loyalty are always rewarded.**

As the PCs leave the lounge, cafeteria and recovery ward, other Troubleshooters shout words of encouragement and advice: 'Don't leave the dome!' 'I lost my leg out there!' 'If it moves, shoot it.' 'Never leave the roads.'

Just about everyone in the Headquarters sees the mission alert, so PCs find it hard not to report for their briefing. Assign fines to those who try to avoid the briefings (and then have guards drag them to the briefing anyway).

## ■ The briefing room

This room (**Tension 16**) was fumigated several hours ago, and a sharp chemical odor lingers. There is no danger from the remaining pesticide, but the PCs may be distressed. The same four BLUE-Clearance guards stand silent and watchful. The three armed guards are wearing small air filters over their noses and mouths. The fourth guard, Spike-B, enjoys the fumes.

## ■ The briefing personnel

Ben-B was terminated after the last briefing for asking too many questions about 'mission authenticity'. Steve-G and Gary-V should appear less confident and secure than in the first briefing. Gary-V knows Buck-U has taken the lead in the tournament, and Neil-U will suffer a major setback if his personal computer isn't rescued. Gary-V desperately wants to lead the rescue mission himself, but realizes his absence would be noticed and investigated. He's also sure the PCs will bungle the mission. Although Steve-G does not know of the tournament, he senses his superior's tension and is worried by it.

## ■ Beginning the briefing

Steve-G enters and barks, 'All rise!' PCs who don't stand up respectfully are none-too-gently yanked to their feet by a guard. Wearing his shoulder holster, Gary-V enters and takes his seat behind the podium. He spreads six personnel files on the podium in front of him.

Steve-G motions for everyone to sit, then takes roll call. He first calls surviving team members, reprimanding those who did not perform well in the first mission. Next, he reads the names of clone replacements, urging them to avoid their predecessor's mistakes. Then he addresses the team. Read the following text out loud:

**'We all know rumors are counterproductive, and I might add, often treasonous. Yet they abound. The current rumor that certain RED reflex armor is defective is absolutely false. To set this rumor at rest, I have ordered an INFRARED citizen dressed in the armor. I will laser him at point blank range, then bring him in so you may note the results.'**

**Drawing his laser pistol, Steve-G strides out the door behind the podium. A second later, you hear the unmistakable shriek of laser fire, followed by a painful scream. After a slight pause, Steve-G steps back into the room—alone, a look of exasperation on his face,**

**Then, immediately composed, he turns and smiles broadly. 'The test was a complete success, I assure you, proving conclusively the armor is not defective. Anyway, our next task is to assign mission equipment.'**

The armor held, but the target passed out from fright, and viewing him might be bad for morale. What do you expect from an INFRARED?

## ■ Assigning mission equipment

The wall behind the podium swirls into a Computer screen. The screen displays a list of equipment assigned to the team for this mission. If any equipment was damaged or destroyed in the last mission, Steve-G reprimands the responsible parties, if they're still alive. Abandoned equipment sends him into a flaming rage. Hand out fines as you see fit.

Read the Mission 2 equipment list, nearby, to the players so they can copy it. Give them a few minutes to divide the gear. One PC must take responsibility for every piece of equipment on the list, except the crawler. Everyone is responsible for it.

No maps are available. They are too rare and classified for even Neil-U to obtain for mere ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooters.

After the PCs divide their gear, Steve-G assigns some additional equipment. Read the following text aloud.

**'You are each assigned a parachute/skyhook package. These packages are already in your crawler. Correct operation of the parachutes will be explained later. It's really quite simple and very safe. The Computer will now explain the operation of the skyhook personal retrieval system.'**

**An image of a large backpack with a complicated harness appears on the screen. The Computer's familiar voice narrates while the image slowly rotates, showing all sides. 'When you wish to be retrieved, put on the skyhook and tighten the harness. Then pull the activation handle. Relax your muscles, flex your knees and breathe normally. Do not look up or severe spine and neck injuries may result. Retrieval by skyhook is always an exciting experience, and perfectly safe.'**

The crawler contains seven parachute/skyhook packages. Each package consists of a harness sandwiched between a parachute and a skyhook. The PCs know nothing of parachutes and skyhooks and information about them is impossible to obtain.

The skyhook allows aircraft to pick up people or cargo without landing. When the activation handle is pulled, a balloon pops from the backpack, fills with helium and rises 100 meters into the

## Mission 2 equipment

Flamethrower, five shots remaining, no reload  
Ice gun  
(2) Laser rifles, one GREEN laser barrel apiece  
(12) ORANGE laser barrels  
Slugthrower  
(5) Ten-round clips of solid slug ammo  
Semi-automatic slugthrower (with voucher authorizing assigned character to operate this GREEN-Clearance weapon)  
(25) Single HEAT slugs  
(4) Environ suits  
Pair of binoculars  
(2) InfraSpecs  
(4) Backpacks  
(6) Two-day ration packs  
(2) 30-meter ropes  
(6) One-liter water bottles  
Hottorch  
Box of 20 high explosive grenades  
(6) Pair hiking boots  
Compass  
All terrain crawler

air. A nylon shock-cord connects the balloon to the harness. An aircraft snags the cord and winches it in. The shock-cord absorbs much of the initial take-off jolt, but it's still a bonewrenching experience.

## The mission assignment

Here's a dramatic challenge. As you portray Gary-V delivering the mission assignment, remember he is worried and upset, yet trying not to reveal those feelings. Read aloud:

**Gary-V stands, leaning forward, his hands resting on the podium. Slowly, he surveys everyone in the room, his cold eyes never blinking. Outwardly calm, he radiates tension and energy.**

**'Troubleshooters,' he says. 'Your mission is of the utmost importance. Countless lives throughout Alpha Complex depend upon the outcome of your mission. Rare radioactive isotopes, needed for medical research and treatment, were recently stolen and removed from Alpha Complex in a sealed container.**

**'We learned the container's location only hours ago. Now, you must recover it. These isotopes have short half-lives, so you must return them by nightfall tomorrow.'** *[Pause. Gary-V's eyes slowly cross and uncross as he gazes up at the ceiling.]* **'Direct exposure to these isotopes can be deadly, but the container is completely shielded. As long as you do not open the containers you will be perfectly safe.**

**'Speed will determine the outcome and your survival. Pay close attention to these instructions; I do not expect to repeat myself.**

**'Immediately following this briefing you will run, not walk, to an autocar parked at the entrance checkpoint. All your weapons and other equipment will already be on board, packed in crates. Frank-O will transport you to the RSB Armed Forces staging area where you will pick up your crawler.**

**'You will depart through Gate 1, and your team leader will navigate you unerringly to a rendezvous with a flybot and its pilot, Glen-G-ESE-5. They will fly you to the container site and back. In flight, Glen-G will instruct you in the use of the parachutes. That is all.'**

Gary-V is in a hurry to get the mission started, so he's impatient with questions. Steve-G dismisses everyone except the team leader. Then Steve-G leaves the room, curious about what Gary-V will tell the team leader. The guards remain.

## Private leader briefing

Review Map 2 at the end of the mission.

Gary-V gives the leader a requisition form for the crawler, then shows the leader the route his team and the flybot will follow. Draw a rough map for the player, indicating important and interesting features, and explain the route. Then read the following text out loud to the player.

**'The radio security code for Gate 1, out of the dome, is MEMBUKA. Remember it. The rest of the information I now give you comes from one of The Computer's reliable surveillance satellites, so it should be accurate. The container is hidden in the basement of the central building of an Old Reckoning outpost of some kind and is protected by a lethal security system. The first object that moves down the stairs will be destroyed. You can trigger the system by throwing a piece of junk down the stairs. The system needs two minutes to recharge, so you won't have long. The container is within a machine against the back wall. We believe the thieves left the container in the machine to analyze its contents.**

**'Intelligence indicates the container is now labeled "CPU CORE", which may alarm several members of your team. You must remove the label before anyone else sees or records it. Use the additional skyhook to retrieve the container.'**

**He pauses, looking almost embarrassed. 'I have never sent anyone on a more important mission—best of luck.' His voice becomes icy, serious again. 'Remember, no matter what, bring that container back. Dismissed.'**

## The mission

During the entire autocar trip from the briefing room, Frank-O gleefully sends RED-garbed pedestrians scurrying out of his way and nearly hurls the PCs from their seats. With one final screech of the tires he turns off the main roadhall into a long ORANGE corridor. Frank-O's attitude changes abruptly. His grin changes to tight-lipped silence.

Slowing to a crawl, he cautiously joins a line of autocars passing one by one through a checkpoint at the corridor's exit. An autotransport pulls in behind the PCs, carrying a squad of Death Troopers in its open back (see Death Trooper on the NPC roster). They immediately begin taunting the PCs, shouting out, 'Hey, laserbait!' 'Go back to the vats!' 'Anyone want to butt heads?' Give the PCs a chance to respond if they're feeling rambunctious.

Casually, the two guards at the checkpoint salute the occupants of each autocar, then wave it through. The guards stand with a fierce-looking doberbot next to a small slug-proof booth. Both men carry belt-fed slugthrowers and wear GREEN reflex. (See Reggie-G and Rip-G on the NPC roster, and the doberbot on the Bot roster.)

When the PCs' autocar approaches the checkpoint, Rip-G quickly presses a button on his belt. A line of angled steel spikes pops up from the floor, blocking the gate. Leveling his slugthrower at the PCs, he steps forward, covered by his partner and the alert doberbot. In a gruff voice he addresses Frank-O, 'This is a restricted area. You've got one second to state your name and business.' In an extremely polite voice, Frank-O does so. Frowning, Rip-G orders, 'Sniff them out, Reggie-G, while I check on this.'

Rip-G steps into the booth while Reggie-G releases the doberbot. It sniffs all around the autocar then leaps up into the crates. The Death Troopers find this all quite amusing and continue taunting the PCs. These troopers only draw their weapons if the PCs draw weapons or open one of their crates.

After a few seconds the doberbot snarls, pointing at the crates with its snapping jaws. Very alert, Reggie-G demands, 'What's in the boxes?' No matter what the PCs say, a moment after they finish, Rip-G steps from the booth, lowers the spikes, and says, 'You're cleared. Go on through.' Reggie-G protests, but his partner silences him, saying, 'I don't like it any more than you, and I don't like you very much.' The remainder of the mission takes place in the areas depicted on Map 2 (see the end of the mission).

## Area 1. RSB Armed Forces staging area

This huge room, several times larger than the warehouse complex, is filled with activity, noise and confusion. Army patrols and special units form up here before going Outdoors. Soldiers, combots and warbots are everywhere. Right now, most of the activity centers around an Armed Forces strike force preparing for a mission. Mechanics swarm over an amazing variety of sinister vehicles, fixing and fussing, while technicians examine and fine-tune the numerous bots. Curses, shouted questions and orders bellowed over revving engines fill the air.

## Unloading the autocar

Frank-O drives to an All Terrain Crawler (ATC) parked at the edge of Gate 1 and stops, leaving the engine running. He assumes this ATC is the PCs', but he doesn't know and doesn't care. He just wants to leave as soon as he can. He demands in quiet, hurried tones that the PCs unload—now! If they respond too slowly, Frank-O begins throwing their crates out of the autocar. As soon as the autocar is empty he takes off without a word.



Gate 1 is a massive concrete and steel wall. As soon as the PCs finish unloading, a speaker over the gate announces, 'Clear!' In an eyeblink, the gate snaps up into the ceiling. A heavily-armed dozer-crawler, splashed with gore and shredded plant matter, blackened from laser fire and generally beat-to-pieces, roars through the opening, narrowly missing the PCs and their valuable Computer property. The gate snaps shut just as quickly with a reverberating boom.

## ■ Welcoming committee

As the first PC touches their ATC, Deke-G, the leader of a nearby squad of troops screams, 'Halt!' The PCs face a line of 15 leveled laser rifles, covering Deke-G's advance. Deke-G marches up to the PCs and demands to know who they are and what they're doing. He is absolutely sure of his authority in this situation and does not hesitate to vaporize anyone who questions it. (See Deke-G and Strike Force Trooper on the NPC roster.)

Without a vehicle voucher, Deke-G blasts the entire team—you can't be too careful this close to the Outdoors. If given a vehicle voucher, Deke-G calls for a portable Computer terminal to verify it. The Computer responds with tension-building slowness, finally saying, 'There is no record of this voucher or Troubleshooter team in RSB files. Please stand by.' Needless to say, Deke-G's boys eagerly await the order to 'Fry Traitor!'

After the PCs have worked up a good sweat, The Computer says, 'This team is authorized to operate this vehicle and leave the dome with it. Squad leader Deke-G is highly commended for his quick response time in this situation. He serves The Computer in the glow of its praise!' Smirking, Deke-G turns and leads his troops away, ignoring any questions from the PCs.

The PCs are now free to inspect and load their vehicle.

## ■ The All Terrain Crawler (ATC)

This ATC looks and drives like a box with treads. Inside is a single compartment with two driver's seats in the front. A Com 3 unit is mounted on the floor between the two seats. Above each seat is a hatch and a red-painted handle labeled 'Eject'. If the handle is pulled, the seats eject perfectly, but on a 1d20 roll of 12 or higher, the hatches above them don't open, maiming the ejectee.

Six fully equipped passengers, three to a side, can ride on benches in the back. At the very rear stands an empty rack labelled 'Survival Gear'. Below it is another rack full of camouflage netting. Seven parachute/skyhook packages are piled on the floor.

An open revolving turret with an empty weapon clasp is mounted on top of the vehicle. A person standing up in the middle of the vehicle can operate the turret. Any weapon larger than a pistol fits in the clasp.

Bobby-O has the necessary skill to drive this vehicle, which is important because this ATC only operates manually; its bot brain can't even keep the thing idling. Top speed on the highway is 30 kilometers per hour, but the vehicle slows to a crawl off-road, and cannot travel through mountainous terrain. It can cross rivers but it rides very low in the water, threatening to tip over whenever a PC shifts his weight.

## ■ Getting out

After they pile everything into the crawler, the PCs must figure out how to open Gate 1. If they drive up to the gate, it does not open. A speaker, mounted above the door beside a vidcam and a laser cannon, blares out 'Stop!' Until the code word 'MEMBUKA' is spoken over the radio, the gate remains shut. Moments after the code word is spoken, the gate snaps open and the speaker screams, 'Clear!' No matter how fast the PCs race through the gate, it slams shut just millimeters behind them.

From this point on the team leader must direct the crawler's course.

## ■ The strike force

Soon after the PCs exit the building, the gate opens again, disgorging a stream of troops and vehicles that begin forming up in the Free-Fire Zone. This strike force consists of 80 troopers, four officers, 15 advanced combots, six supply crawlers and one bridge-laying crawler. (See Strike Force Trooper and Officer on the NPC roster. See Advanced Combot on the Bot roster.)

This is the strike force The Computer is sending to capture Neil-U's personal computer. The route they will follow to the U.S.G.S. Weather Station is marked on Map 2. Once out of the Free-Fire Zone they shoot at anyone they see or hear, or *think* they see or hear. The strike force will reach the weather station just as the PCs are leaving with the CPU Core in hand. If the PCs ever head out cross-country, this strike force hunts them down. Use the strike force as needed to heighten your players' paranoia.

PCs monitoring their Com units hear extensive radio traffic as strike force officers discuss their march and target. Their target, 'an Old Reckoning outpost of some kind', should sound familiar to the team leader.

## ■ Area 2. Alpha Complex dome

PCs looking back on RSB dome from Outdoors for the first time should be awestruck, overwhelmed by its size. The dome fills the entire western horizon with its smooth, curved surface. Only near the edge is the surface broken by numerous sensors, weapons and building additions.

Emphasize the emotional impact this experience should have on the PCs. Encourage the players to roleplay the profound sense of security their characters associate with the dome and the extreme paranoia they feel facing the unknown.

## ■ Area 3. Gravel roads in the Free-Fire Zone

Rutted, bumpy gravel roads, one lane wide, criss-cross the Free-Fire Zone. They are used by the regular Armed Forces patrols and are the only safe paths through the zone. Do the PCs a favor and point out the missile batteries and huge laser cannons that track their progress through the Free-Fire Zone. If the PCs stray too far off a road for any reason, a laser battery from the dome fires one warning shot in front of them. If they fail to stop or move back into the road immediately, the next shot vaporizes the crawler around them. The third shot finishes them off.

Many gigantic military vehicles, guided by wild-eyed troopers, barrel down these roads. They wouldn't think to move aside or leave room on the road for a measly little crawler. The PCs must frequently move off the road to avoid collision.

The many flybot patrols overhead occasionally buzz the Troubleshooters, just for the sheer fun of terrorizing them. The bots don't, of course, hit the crawler, but they come very close.

Improvise perilous encounters freely as the PCs travel through the Free-Fire Zone. Develop in the PCs a healthy fear, horror and respect for the Armed Forces. Alert Troubleshooters realize returning home through the Free-Fire Zone will be no picnic.

## ■ Area 4. Forest

These vast expanses of green stuff and tall brown things are spooky places. Strange sounds, sights and smells constantly remind the PCs how little they know of this environment. Maximum speed on foot in the forest is three to four kilometers per hour. Every two hours the PCs are in the forest, run an encounter from the Forest/Hills Arbitrary Encounter Table.

## ■ Area 5. Hills

These giant mounds, dotted with really tall brown things and large boulders, provide excellent views of the surrounding area. Unbelievably, there are no escalators or even stairs to the tops, so travelling is slowed by tedious climbs.

Maximum speed on foot in the hills is three to four kilometers per hour. Every two hours the PCs are in the hills, run an encounter from the Forest/Hills Arbitrary Encounter Table.

## ■ Area 6. Scrub grass

Impress the PCs with the thickness of the coarse green carpeting here. Without seams it

covers many kilometers of wavy floor. Unknown creatures scurry and slither through the grasses, causing alarm and drawing fire.

Maximum speed on foot in scrub grass is five kilometers per hour. Every two hours the PCs spend in the scrub grass, run an encounter from the Scrub/Open Terrain Arbitrary Encounter table.

## Area 7. Rivers

To those who can't swim, merely looking at rivers can be terrifying. Swirling eddies and debris caught in the current make the water seem alive. These rivers are too wide to jump over, too deep to wade across and too turbulent to float across.

## Area 8. Waterfalls

Describe these waterfalls as though they were as big as Niagara Falls, or larger. Emphasize the thunderous noise, the dizzying height, the surging power, the, the... well, you know.

## Area 9. Crawler hiding point

A small grove of tall green-brown things at the base of the falls provides a perfect hiding place for the crawler. If the PCs do not hide the crawler, and survive to return to it, they find a scattering of small, melted metal scraps. Live and learn.

From here the PCs must proceed on foot to the flybot pickup point above the falls, as the ridge is too steep for the crawler. When the PCs climb the ridge, remind them the junk they are carrying would fill several shopping carts, the terrain is rugged and they are as comfortable in the Outdoors as a Wall Street broker would be in the jungles of Borneo. Express an interest in their plans for scrambling up the slope with their gear.

## Area 10. Ridge

Although its height varies, this ridge is always steep and covered with loose, crumbly rocks. Characters must make Agility checks to avoid falling when climbing up or down. Falling characters take a wound. Ridges are impassable to land vehicles.

## Area 11. The flybot and pickup point

One kilometer from the waterfall is the flybot pickup point, a long, narrow, grassy field next to the river, surrounded by low hills. Two deep skid furrows lead to the flybot resting at the far end of the field. The vehicle is a strange mishmash of spare and salvaged parts assembled by someone who doesn't know much about aircraft. (In fact, Neil-U built it himself, and no, he doesn't know



*Traitors reconsidering their decision to leave the road.*

much about aircraft; a bot brain that does know helped him.) This is a fixed-wing flybot with no hovering or VTOL capabilities. It requires a short, flat length of ground for landing and take-off.

There's a small forward cockpit, entered from the top, and a larger rear compartment, entered from the back. A cannon is mounted under the craft's nose. The rear cargo doors open easily. Three folding seats are built into each wall of the cargo bay, ample room for six people with full gear. Against the wall separating the two compartments is a large winch over a floor hatch.

Closer examination reveals that the engines are still warm and the cockpit hatch is unlocked and charred from laser fire. The pilot, Glen-G, is slumped over the controls, dead of wounds from a single laser burst. (One of Buck-U's agents killed him.) A force sword and a GREEN-barreled laser pistol hang from Glen-G's belt. (Be sure Mortimer-O sees the force sword. He has a Repair Force Sword narrow specialty.)

## The flight

Bobby-O, with his Vehicle Ops rating of 11, can fly the machine manually well enough for anything but combat. He also knows how to activate the bot brain's autopilot programming. As soon as the autopilot is engaged, the flybot begins the takeoff sequence, backing up, turning around and then launching itself. Once in the air, it skims the tree tops heading north until it can turn west to the U.S.G.S. Weather Station (see Area 12). The flybot's autopilot route is marked on Map 2. If flown manually more than a few kilometers from that route, the flybot is spotted and intercepted by an Armed Forces Model 916 flybot.

## Parachuting

As soon as the flybot turns west, an audiovisual monitor in the rear compartment activates, showing an old Armed Forces parachute training film. A fat, balding Vulture shows how to put on a parachute, how to jump correctly and how to land. To demonstrate the last part, he climbs a short ladder and jumps into a sandbox, rolling to lessen the impact. The film only plays once. The PCs can stop, but not reverse, the film.

Once near the U.S.G.S. Station, a speaker shouts out commands. The PCs should recognize these commands from the parachute training film.

**'Approaching jump site!':** Warns the PCs to put on their parachute/skyhook packages and psyche up for the jump. The chutes in the film bear no resemblance to the PCs' equipment, so whether or not they paid attention to the film, each PC has a 50% chance of putting his package on upside down. Those wearing upside down chutes get to land on their heads.

**'Form up!':** Tells the PCs to form a line facing the door.

**'Attach lines!':** Clues the PCs to clip their ripcord handle onto the overhead rack that runs the length of the cargo bay. Three handles with built-in clips protrude from each parachute. One is the carrying handle; one is the ripcord that opens the parachute; the last collapses and detaches the parachute. The PCs have no way of knowing which handle to use, and so must guess. Each PC has a 1-in-3 chance of choosing any given handle. If the PCs dismantle one of the parachutes in an attempt to divine its operating principles, they may make a Hardware/Mechanical Engineering check to guess this information. Of course, they



Troubleshooter competing in the 6000-meter long drop.

only have the same one-third chance of properly reassembling the parachute. Oh, dear.

Characters who use the ripcord are lucky. Their chutes open. Characters who use the carrying handle are left dangling out the doorway, still attached to the overhead rack. Flip a coin. Heads, the strap holds, and the character can drag himself back into the flybot. Tails, the strap breaks, plunging the character into free fall—cause for an immediate Insanity check! Only if he passes the check can he pull another handle, a 50-50 chance! Characters who use the wrong handle fall to the earth, leaving their chutes drifting through the sky above them.

**'Go! Go! Go!':** Means just what it says. The rear doors open, green lights flash and whoever is in front is staring down at the mountains. He must pass an immediate Insanity check to jump. If he fails the check he freezes in the doorway and must be pushed out.

PCs who figure out the commands, jump when told and open their chutes survive the jump. Dispense some sprained ankles and damaged gear if you're in a peevish mood. They must then collapse and detach their chutes quickly or get dragged away by the wind. If they don't all get out of the plane together, the last ones land far away and must hike to the top of the mountain to be picked up.

Once the flybot has passed the jump site it begins to circle the peak. It continues to circle until the skyhook balloons go up (see below). It then snags them and heads back to the crawler.

Remember, don't let the *players* use their knowledge of parachuting to their character's advantage. They are supposed to be roleplaying characters who have never touched, seen or heard of the things.

## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

Weapons skill recognize this soot as evidence of flamethrower use.

A powerful flamethrower is hidden in the floor at the base of the stairs. Any object larger than a mouse that crosses the last stair triggers the firethrower. When set off, a gushing jet of flame fills the stairwell, blasts out the panel opening and broils against the ceiling. Anyone caught in the stairwell when the flame erupts is wounded. The flames burn outer clothing and singe the hair of anyone looking at the stairwell. The building is non-flammable, so it suffers no damage except for a thick layer of soot that covers everything. The PCs have two minutes before the flamethrower recharges. This can be a very long or short two minutes as you see fit.

At the bottom of the stairs is a single unlit room, just high enough to stand in. A light switch is on the wall to the right of the door. Once turned on, the bright lights reveal that the entire far half of the room is filled with floor-to-ceiling computer banks. A chair rests in front of the single terminal. A rough bed stands to the left of the door. A small metal table and icebox are on the right. The ice box is empty and warm.

A container labeled 'CPU Core' is wired within the largest machine against the back wall. The container weighs 40 kilograms.

### Area 12. U.S.G.S. Weather Station

On the smooth, level top of a high mountain lies a cluster of small, dingy, gray, cement buildings—all that remains of an Old Reckoning United States Geological Survey Weather Station. A large rectangular building stands in the center of the cluster, surrounded by two circular and three rectangular outbuildings. Two broken-down dish antennas lean against one side of the main building.

Neil-U's personal computer is hidden in the main building's basement. He communicates with his computer through a wireless network over one of the dish antennas (cleverly camouflaged to appear useless). He rarely visits.

The closer one gets to the buildings, the worse they look. Storms and vandals have battered open the rusted metal doors and strewn their contents about. The two circular buildings contain nothing but steel pedestals that once held telescopes. The other small buildings provided storage and housing for scientists. Toppled metal shelves, cabinets and empty cot frames are all that is left.

The main building holds the remains of many large machines. Dark holes in the frames mark where buttons, knobs and screens used to be. On the back of the largest device is a large panel that conceals a narrow steep cement stairway to the basement. There is no light in the stairwell. A flashlight shows the stairs lead down to the open doorway of a small room, but nothing more. PCs who carefully examine this entrance note an unusual coating of fine black dust on the ceiling opposite the doorway and along the walls, floor and ceiling of the stairwell. PCs with Field

### The skyhook escape

As the PCs emerge from the main building with the 'isotope container', they see the strike force moving up the mountainside from the south. The PCs must act quickly if they wish to live. If the PCs stand their ground and wait for the strike force, or if they try to escape on foot, the crack troopers cheerfully pursue and execute the traitors with such subtle weapons as tacnukes and plasma generators. Their best (and most dramatic) option is to use the skyhooks. See 'Assigning mission equipment' near the start of this episode for an explanation of the skyhook.

On autopilot, the PCs' flybot swoops in to retrieve the balloons. It flies in a large circle, snagging one balloon on each pass, then reeling in the shock-cord for 30 seconds while circling for the next pass. The flybot randomly determines which balloons to snag on each pass. If the flybot is on manual (autopilot off), snagging and reeling in balloons is up to the pilot.

Roll 1d20 for each shock-cord. On a 19 or 20, the shock-cord breaks when snagged. The chance doubles if two people use the same skyhook. As soon as the first balloon inflates, the eager strike force troopers spot it and open fire. They're out of range initially, but quickly close in, shooting at the balloons, the PCs, the buildings and sometimes each other. The last PC should be picked up in the middle of a firefight. PCs already in the flybot can spray covering fire for their teammates still on the ground (a fine opportunity to assassinate a teammate in the confusion).



# VAPORS DON'T SHOOT BACK INTERROGATING BAMBI

The strike force's advanced combots, further down the mountainside, concentrate their fire on the PC's flybot. On its first pass, the flybot is out of range. On the second pass, the combots hit it on a 1d20 roll of 18 or higher. On each successive pass, the chance increases by 3—or just have it succeed automatically as soon as you get tired of rolling. If enemy fire hits the flybot, pieces get blown off, and it smokes and sputters, but it finishes all the pickups. (If the flybot hasn't been hit by the time it completes its pickups, a mysterious suspension of game rules increases the combots' chance of hitting to 100%.)

After completing the pickups, the flybot flies another five to ten kilometers, billowing dark smoke and slowly losing altitude, until it crash-lands. PCs aboard get wounded or maimed as it suits your fancy.

## Area 13. Power lines

Tall Old Reckoning high-voltage power towers dot the countryside. Most are still standing, strung with long-dead cables, but several have fallen into tangled heaps of rusted steel. Low-flying flybots occasionally run into these lines.

## Area 14. Bomb crater

Long ago, from a country far, far away, a small nuclear bomb arrived, forming an impressive crater. The hole now collects and contaminates rainwater. Residual radiation in the air, soil and water causes passers-by to become ill. Remaining in the crater for more than 15 minutes results in nausea and headaches for two days. Remaining for more than two hours in the crater causes incapacitating radiation sickness that will overcome the PC several days later. With

proper Alpha Complex technology, recovery is as if healing a wound.

## Area 15. Highway 45

Army patrols frequently use this Old Reckoning highway. No one has ever maintained it, so the blacktop has crumbled away to dust. Even so, it's one of the best roads around. Maximum speed on foot on the road is 5 kilometers per hour.

## Area 16. Highway 55

This four-lane divided highway cuts across the land like a scar. Although the steel-reinforced concrete is cracked and even buckled in places, most of the road remains intact. If the PCs decide to escape down this road, abandoning the good life with The Computer, they discover a minefield at the edge of the map. The army rarely patrols this from the ground, relying instead on flybots.

## Area 17. The only bridge

The only bridge across the deep, swift, PC-drowning river is out. Pieces of it lie downstream, strewn along the river bank. The pilings and steel girders that remain will certainly give out under the weight of a curious PC.

## Area 18. Mountains

To dome dwellers such as the PCs, mountains are utterly alien and threatening. Gaping chasms, towering walls, sheer edges and wisps of cloud and fog should strike terror into their hearts. If they climb high enough, be sure to mention the cold, white, fluffy stuff.

The PCs' crawler cannot enter mountains. Maximum speed on foot in the mountains is 2 kilometers per hour. Every two hours the PCs spend in the mountains, run an encounter from the Mountain Arbitrary Encounter Table at the end of the missions.

## Area 19. Tainted lakes

Although it looks clear and tastes sweet, the water in these lakes is poisonous. The Commie savages who live around the lakes have built up immunity to the poison's effects. Not surprisingly, the PCs are not immune. If the PCs need a village to explore, use the savages in Encounter 1-2 on the Forest/Hills Arbitrary Encounter Table for the village warriors. Toss in some women, children, old shamans and ramshackle housing, and presto, you have a village. Unfriendly villagers invite visitors to a feast, then make them the main course. Friendly villagers invite visitors to a feast where most of the food is boiled or steamed in the lake water.

## Area 20. Shangri-la

On a hill, tucked among some sheltering trees, is a hitherto undiscovered billionaire's A-frame mountain retreat. A pack of eight ravenous dobermans, descendants of the owner's original guard dogs, makes this A-frame its home—the major reason the place has yet to be reported. The house is packed with priceless Old Reckoning objects. However, none of the lights work and there is an odorless gas leak that explodes with the first spark, flame or laser burst, scattering the house, its contents and any trespassers across the hillside.

Feel free to place this house anywhere in the mountains so it's in the PCs' path.

## Area 21. Hidden road

Trees completely hide from view this broken, weed-covered, single-lane road. It leads from Highway 45 (the turn-off is grown over) to an old toxic waste dump (see Area 22). Four rusted, padlocked, chain-linked gates block the road at intervals.

## Area 22. EPA toxic waste dump

In a tiny valley surrounded by gentle hills are a whole series of colorful mounds and pools. In Old Reckoning times this valley served as a dumping ground for toxic wastes of all kinds, hence the many pretty colors. Have fun here describing the strange sights and arousing the players' curiosity.

PCs who become contaminated with the splendid assortment of poisonous substances have a life expectancy of 1d20 days. If contaminated PCs return to Alpha Complex





Retrieval by skyhook is always an exciting experience, and perfectly safe.

they face executions as Commie agents for introducing these toxins to the complex. Certain secret societies would be quite interested in some of these substances, and black market distribution would be gratifyingly profitable.

## Area 23. Vulture aerial target ranges

These forest areas are devoid of tall green-brown things and pockmarked by numerous craters. Vulture Squadron pilots use these ranges to sharpen their already deadly aim with bombs and missiles. Coincidentally, a practice session begins a few rounds after the PCs wander into one of these areas. The Vulture pilots are tickled to have live targets for a change and pursue them beyond the range boundaries. After all, only exiles and Commies would be running around a target range.

## Area 24. Old reservoir

Now mostly mud, this used to be a large reservoir that fed two huge pipes to the south. The pump house at the start of the pipes is rubble now.

## Area 25. Pipes

A pair of huge aboveground water pipes that used to drain the old reservoir wind their way across the landscape. Dry and broken now, they provide shelter for all sorts of critters.

## Ending the mission

This mission may end Outdoors with the death of the last PC. However, some Troubleshooters may survive to return to the dome. The moment they cross into the Free-Fire-Zone, whether on foot, crawler or otherwise, sensors pick them up. The Computer dispatches an Armed Forces unit to further verify their identity.

This welcoming committee consists of 20 troops, led by a sergeant and an officer, backed up by an advanced combat. All the troops are riding in open-topped, armored four-wheel drive autocars. On the NPC roster, see Hotshots for the troops, Strike Force Trooper (the sergeant) and Strike Force Officer. See Advanced Combat on the Bot roster.

With a bullhorn, the officer demands to know who the PCs are. He is in constant contact with The Computer. No matter what they say or who they claim to be, The Computer can't figure out who they really are. It orders the welcoming committee to disarm the PCs and 'escort' them back to the dome.

When they reach Area 1, the RSB Armed Forces staging area, the PCs are held in custody while The Computer tries to track down who they are and figure out what they were up to. Docbots give injured PCs immediate medical attention. As one trooper explains to them, 'If you turn out to be traitors, we want you looking your best at your execution.'

## The briefing

One by one, the PCs are led away, handcuffed and interrogated by an army officer who wears

no indication of his security clearance. Computer cameras monitor the interrogation, but the PCs can't tell if they're on or not. Meet privately for a few minutes with each player to roleplay the interrogation. Use this opportunity to debrief the PCs.

## Returning without the CPU Core

If the PCs did not return with the CPU Core, Neil-U decides it's not worth his while to bail them out. If you want to end the mission here, the army promptly loses the PCs in the bureaucratic shuffle, and they spend the rest of their days in prison, waiting for The Computer to decide to execute or release them. But The Computer has moved on to more important things.

Roleplaying long waits in small cells isn't much fun, so if you want to move on to Episode 3, terminate the Troubleshooters quickly and bring out their backup clones for the third mission.

## Returning with the CPU Core

If the PCs returned with the CPU Core container, the Armed Forces interrogator focuses on it. As long as all the PCs tell him it's radioactive isotopes, they're safe. If anyone says otherwise, he immediately opens the container to verify contents. Upon finding the CPU Core, the army summarily terminates every member of the team and then does the paperwork. Neil-U himself barely escapes a swift Internal Security investigation, which only strengthens his resolve to avenge himself against Buck-U (see Episode 3).

The same fate befalls the PCs if the Armed Forces obtains a record of the mission from the team leader's helmet recorder or otherwise discovers what they were doing. If the PCs try to implicate Steve-G or Gary-V, the crime of 'slandering a loyal citizen' is added to their list of offenses (Classic offense: P3M; Straight offense: C3B).

If the PCs stick to the isotope story, Neil-U quickly arranges their release. Gary-V personally greets and further debriefs them, if necessary. Of course the PCs must account for all damaged and lost equipment, but Gary-V is lenient in handing out reprimands and fines, and promises the PCs a month of light duty before their next mission.

Just two days later... Episode 3.





## 3: The finals

### Mission summary

Even as the PCs were on Mission 2, Neil-U was planning his strike against Buck-U. Neil-U is angered that Buck-U finked to The Computer and caused the destruction of the weather station and his personal computer. Worse yet, Buck-U has pulled ahead in the tournament. The only way Neil-U can win is to eliminate Buck-U.

During the two days between Episode 2 and the alert for Episode 3, scores of Neil-U's Program Group clerks burn the midnight oil arranging, checking and double-checking all the details. As soon as the necessary bribes, intimidations and covers are taken care of, Neil-U puts his team (the PCs) into action.

They cross into TJC Sector disguised as HPD & Mind Control workers, then bluff their way into the TJC reservoir. Once there, they must ride out on jet-skis to assault Buck-U's stronghold, an ancient fireboat moored in the reservoir.

About as crazy as they come, Buck-U has converted his ship to resemble a pirate ship, and crewed it entirely with special pirate bots. The PCs must overcome these bots before they can take on the First Mate bot and Buck-U-XVB-5 himself.

### Mission alert

Strangely, the PCs do not receive their mission alerts directly from The Computer. Instead, RED-Clearance couriers track down each PC to

deliver a sealed computer message (see below). If a character asks The Computer to confirm these orders, The Computer does so, thanking the character for his security-consciousness and ordering him immediately to his briefing. Impose a 50cr fine for failing to heed an official Computer message.

•••• MISSION ALERT! ••••

*If seal is broken, terminate courier.*

**EXTREMELY URGENT!**

**Rejoice, Troubleshooter! As a reward for diligence and loyalty, you are selected to serve as a personal bodyguard and escort for the entertainer Teela-O-MLY during her visit to RSB Sector. Although you will be on duty, you will have access to tomorrow night's show, normally reserved for citizens of GREEN Clearance and above.**

**Report immediately to RSB Sector Troubleshooter Headquarters for your pre-mission briefing and new uniform fitting.**

**Stay alert! Give thanks for The Computer's trust in you. Polish your equipment and bathe. The Computer and Teela-O-MLY are your friends.**

Teela O'Malley's evening shows have quite a reputation, and she is visiting RSB Sector tomorrow. The PCs, however, won't come within kilometers of her. Knowing Buck-U has informers, Neil-U used Teela's visit and the

above mission alert to gather his team without tipping off Buck-U.

As usual, characters who don't report for their briefing are in big trouble.

### RSB Sector Troubleshooter Headquarters

Teela's visit is the talk of the sector. The Vulture Squadron guards at the entrance checkpoint talk of little else, all wishing they could see the show and meet Teela in person.

Once again, the PCs must turn over all their weapons. Security is tighter because several people have smuggled in weapons recently. Under the watchful eyes of the duty officer, each PC must pass through a metal detector and an old X-ray machine ('It's perfectly safe, bub, heh heh'). Unfortunately, today's R&D weapon cleaners are all rookies. Incompetent rookies. There's a 50-50 chance (Arbitrary Justice roll) each weapon turned in will never fire again.

Once through the checkpoint, each PC is led to a small chamber. Inside, a bot measures the character for a 'new formal jumpsuit and boots'. In fact, the bot is fitting the characters for wetsuits and flippers. When the bot finishes, a guard escorts each PC to a secure lounge. While in the lounge, give each player a rumor from the General Rumor Table in Episode 1.

Cain-O receives the following secret message from a high-ranking Computer Phreak: 'Your cover is blown; the High Programmer's spy is going to eliminate you soon.' Give Mortimer-



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

O the following secret message from his Illuminati superior: 'Make the spy feed false information to R&D about the Tech-dominated RSB Troubleshooter Headquarters.'

After a suitable delay, two armed guards appear and escort the PCs to Briefing Room C (Tension 16).

### Beginning the briefing

The same four guards stand in the corners. Steve-G and Gary-V are already in the room, sitting at the podium, when the PCs arrive. The largest slugthrower pistol the PCs have ever seen lies on the podium in front of Steve-G. The safety strap on Gary-V's shoulder holster is unsnapped. Both men are tense, and their efforts to appear calm only make it more evident. Steve-G regularly consults his watch. Gary-V occasionally tilts his head, as though listening to the small device protruding from his right ear. (Gary-V is receiving mission information from Neil-U as it becomes available.)

Steve-G takes roll call quickly. First he asks for each Troubleshooter by name and title. Then he points out glaring faults in the character's performance to date and reprimands the character, making it clear such incompetence won't be tolerated again.

### Choosing a team leader

Give the players an opportunity to elect a new leader, especially if several PCs have reported dissatisfaction with the present leader. If the team leader has been working out well, you may veto the team's new choice. Of course, if he's working out *too* well...

Steve-G explains that in its vast wisdom and fairness, The Computer will let the team elect a new leader, if they want to. Steve-G then reiterates the leader's many responsibilities. Force the players to vote by secret ballot after three minutes of discussion, no more.

Only if a new leader is elected does Steve-G remember to tell the PCs the additional leader pay program was temporarily suspended. All other benefits remain.

### Assigning special mission equipment

Once again, the wall behind the podium swirls into a giant computer screen. At the same time the room lights dim. 'Pay close attention,' orders Steve-G. From the film that follows and the special mission equipment, the PCs should realize the task ahead of them is not related to Teela O'Malley. If anyone asks about her, Steve-G responds with a quick reprimand to stop dreaming and pay attention.

An HPD&MC training film, narrated in one of The Computer's deep, authoritarian voices, explains how to change water filters in large water

systems. A team of workers wearing distinctively ugly HPD&MC coveralls performs the task at a domed reservoir outlet to the accompaniment of a full orchestra. The filters are round steel cages, about two and a half meters tall, filled with a porous material, and appear quite heavy. The reservoir, several kilometers across, is truly awe-inspiring. PCs who have not been Outdoors and seen large bodies of water might need Sanity checks upon realizing so much water exists. Most citizens have no reason to learn to swim, so large bodies of water are particularly frightening.

When the film ends, the lights come up and an equipment list appears onscreen. Much of the equipment will be unfamiliar to the characters, though they should recognize some of it from the training film. As per regulations, characters must sign for all equipment. The italicized footnotes are for your information only.

### The mission assignment

Gary-V stands to give the team its mission assignment. He's upset, nervous and sweating. He knows Neil-U's plan, and realizes if Buck-U finds out, the team could walk straight into an ambush. But that isn't worrying Gary-V. He's afraid all the activity will expose Neil-U, and consequently himself. He half-suspects one of Buck-U's assassins is planting explosives in his residence even now.

Read the following text aloud to the players.

**Gary-V's icy voice is strained, his expression grim. 'Troubleshooters, I will be brief—and I will be honest with you, because you deserve it. This will be your final mission. You can count on support from me, Technical Services and The Computer right to the end.'**

**He pauses, touching the pistol in his holster before continuing. 'Through patient and diligent work, The Computer has located one of the most dangerous traitors in all Alpha Complex. He calls himself Captain Beard, or something similar. We've been after him for years, but he's as slippery as vat gruel. If we don't strike immediately he'll escape again, to undermine the well-being of thousands of loyal citizens. Stopping him is your job.'**

**He surveys each of you, as though doubting your ability. 'We can't send in a high-clearance team. This traitor has informers everywhere; movement by a high-clearance team would certainly tip him off. He isn't expecting you, so surprise will be on your side.'**

**'He's hiding out in the middle of TJC Sector, using HPD&MC for cover. They don't even know he's there, and their security is so lax we don't dare tell them. You'll go in disguised as a**

**Filtration Replacement Team and blow up this traitor's stronghold. Frank-O will transport you to the site. The equipment officer and one other person will follow him with the filters in a flatbed autotransport. You are all dismissed to pick up your equipment—except the team equipment officer and team leader.'**

Gary-V tolerates a few questions, but answers most by saying, 'Your leader will be completely briefed; he'll inform you as necessary.'

### Mission 3 equipment list

- (6) Ugly HPD&MC worker overalls with insignia that reads: 'Reservoir Maintenance'.
- (6) Tool boxes emblazoned with HPD&MC insignia
- (6) Wet suits, grey with orange trim, one sized to each team member
- (6) Pairs flippers
- (6) Bright orange vests with handles<sup>1</sup>
- (6) Weight belts<sup>2</sup>
- (3) Slugthrowers
- (9) 10-round clips of armor-piercing slug ammo
- (9) 10-round clips of solid slug ammo
- Energy pistol with five six-round reloads
- (2) Laser rifles (five ORANGE barrels apiece)
- Cone rifle<sup>3</sup>
- (20) Armor-piercing cone rifle shells
- (20) High-explosive cone rifle shells
- (2) Boxes of 20 high-explosive grenades
- (6) Rope ladders with grapple hooks on one end
- Model V docbot
- (2) Suits of Kevlar armor with Mylar coating
- (6) Sealed filter crates, each 2x1x1 meters, weighing 250 kilograms, wheels on bottom<sup>4</sup>
- (2) Empty filter crates
- (2) Blobs of plastic explosive with timer<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Inflatable life jacket supports one person.

<sup>2</sup> Life jacket does not support character wearing weight belt.

<sup>3</sup> With voucher authorizing assigned character (only) to operate this BLUE-Clearance weapon.

<sup>4</sup> Each crate actually contains one jet-ski (see 'Private briefing' for details).

<sup>5</sup> The blob's explosion hits automatically (S2V impact, radius six meters). Timer can be set from one second to 60 seconds (longer settings are possible with Demolition specialty).

## Private briefing

After the other PCs leave, Gary-V meets with the equipment officer and the team leader. Read the following text out loud to those players.

**'Citizens, the traitor you're after is hiding aboard a boat parked in the center of the TJC reservoir. For your information—and this is classified—a boat is a vehicle designed specifically for movement on water. You must cross more than a kilometer of open water to reach him, and you need to move fast.'**

**'The Computer has provided a way. Those six crates do not contain filters. They hold jet-skis—watercycles, if you will. A powerful waterjet propels these craft over water at amazing speed. They're easy to operate; a single joystick controls speed and direction. Start them by pulling sharply on the handle protruding from the engine casing. When you judge the time correct, reveal this information to your teammates.'**

Gary-V then hands a set of autotransport keys to the equipment officer and dismisses him, warning him to drive carefully with the jet-skis. Finally, Gary-V addresses the team leader alone. Read the following text out loud to that player.

**'You must cross through the RSB/TJC Sector checkpoint. Frank-O has the proper papers, but you'll never get through with all your weapons and gear. I suggest you load your equipment into the empty filter crates. Open them when you reach the reservoir. Incidentally, there's a smaller checkpoint leading to the reservoir area. Past that, Frank-O will not proceed to the maintenance area; he'll pull into an unused roadhall. The numeric door code there is 250624. Good luck.'**

## The mission

The Computer closely monitors and regulates all intersector traffic. Consequently, intersector checkpoints, such as this one, are miniature fortresses (**Tension 15**). Laser cannons in armored pillboxes cover the four-lane 'spines' that connect the two sectors. Guards and doberbots physically search vehicles while Computer monitors scan the passengers and check their papers.

The PCs approach the checkpoint during the off hours, so traffic is minimal and only a skeleton crew mans the checkpoint. When the PCs arrive, the line of spikes that usually blocks the roadhall is down, but flashing red warning signs order all vehicles to stop for inspection.

Presumably the PCs stop. Four GREEN-Clearance guards and a doberbot walk over and greet them. (Use Rip-G on the NPC roster for the guards. See the doberbot on the Bot roster.) The guards instruct the drivers to hold their papers up for The Computer cameras scanning the area. The doberbot sniffs around while the guards examine the vehicles. The PCs' papers pass inspection. As for the rest...

Roleplay the guards, questioning the players about who they are, what they're doing, where they're going, what they're carrying and so forth. Exploit any timid or careless responses. Here are some general guidelines:

1. If the PCs look like Troubleshooters (they aren't wearing their HPD&MC disguises), the guards are instantly curious about their mission. Even though they outrank the PCs, they're just guards, and wish they led the more exciting life of a Troubleshooter in The Computer's service.
2. The guards try to confiscate all weapons carried openly. If the PCs are dressed as workers, the guards arrest them if they find any weapons.
3. If individual PCs' stories don't match, the guards become suspicious.
4. If the plastic explosives are not sealed in a filter crate, the doberbot sniffs them out and goes wild, growling and snarling and clashing its steel jaws together. The guards try to arrest the PCs for possession of undeclared explosives.

If the PCs don't stop at the checkpoint, or run into difficulties that necessitate a fast getaway, let them slip by in a dramatic narrow escape.

The laser cannons fire off a few rounds, but miss (unlikely, but exciting). Give the PCs a few pursuers to shake, a few tiny roadblocks to crash through, a few small security bots to run over, then surround them with combots and vaporize the whole bunch! You may console the players with the knowledge that their plastic explosives blow up, too, vaporizing most of the combots.

## TJC reservoir checkpoint

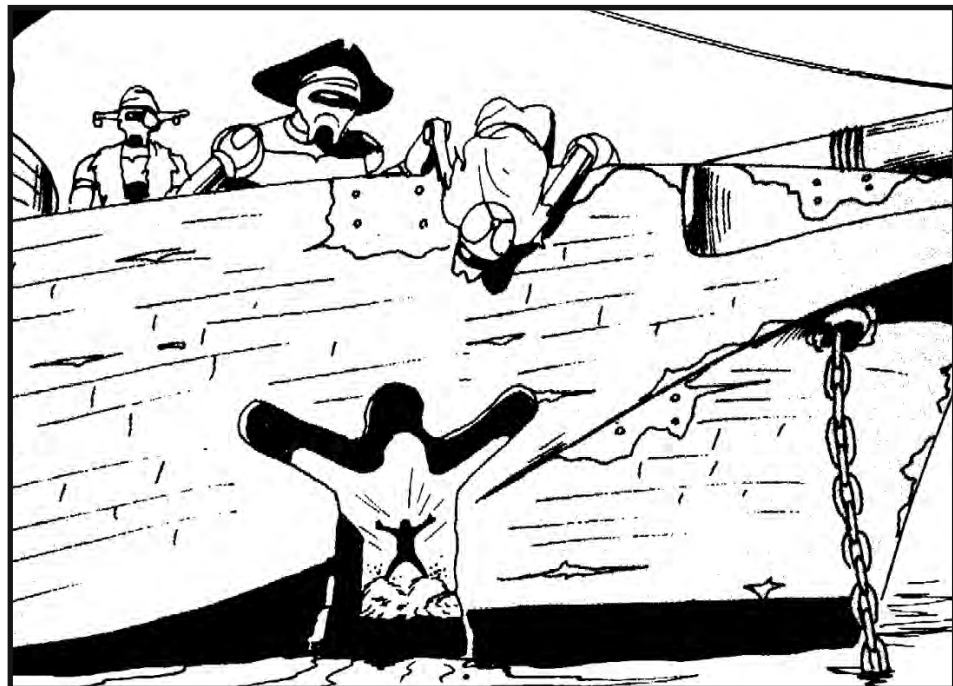
A lone citizen, Willy-Y, works the late shift at this gate on the roadhall into the TJC Sector reservoir. This roadhall (**Tension 5**) sees little enough traffic during primary hours. During the late shift it's positively deserted. Willy-Y is quite glad to have visitors.

Willy-Y is reasonably gullible and accepts any marginally plausible story the PCs offer regarding the filters. However, he's also corrupt. After listening to the PCs, he frowns and says, 'I don't know; this is highly irregular. There may be a fee involved here. I'll probably have to call this one in.' He dawdles until bribed (10cr), shot or threatened with a weapon.

If the PCs crash the gate or threaten him, he notifies his superior, one of Buck-U's bots. The bot decides not to bother Buck-U and arranges an ambush in the unused roadhall (see next section).

## Unused roadhall

As soon as he can, Frank-O departs. The flatbed autotransport must stay in the roadhall, unless the PCs think of something else to do with it. If they really try, they might persuade Frank-O to tow it. If they think about it, though, they should



*Dedicated Troubleshooter experiments with ramming maneuver.*



realize the autotransport is their only way back to RSB Sector.

The armored door here only opens if the proper code, 250624, is punched into the control panel. The door opens onto a short pier jutting into the TJC reservoir (**Tension 1**).

## ■ **The TJC reservoir**

The reservoir is L-shaped and huge—several kilometers across, covered by a translucent roof. The pier is on the short leg of the 'L', near the corner. The maintenance area, with the pump house and filter station, is at the end of the short leg, more than a kilometer away. A thin catwalk, bolted to the walls, runs around the entire perimeter. Pieces of the catwalk railing and floor are missing in places. The water is uniformly 15 meters deep. The water is warm and absolutely clean. It used to be crystal-clear, but Buck-U adds blue and green dyes to make it look like ocean water.

## ■ **Ambush by pirate bots**

The PCs may have earned themselves an ambush (see 'TJC reservoir checkpoint'). If so, three pirate bots greet the opening door with two rounds of slug fire, then charge with cutlasses. These bots are just part of Buck-U's completely mechanical crew of various modified bots. All resemble humans, more or less, but these wear garments unlike anything else seen in Alpha Complex. They wear loose trousers and bright-colored shirts (usually tattered). Many wear hats and scarves. Some even sport tiny pictures scratched into their surfaces. A few wear rings through their audio sensors. (See their stats on the Bot roster.) These pirate bots fight to the end in characteristic buccaneer fashion.

## ■ **Riding the jet-skis**

Once the pier is secure, the PCs must unpack their jet-skis, push them into the water, fire 'em up and take off! Remember that initially only the team leader and equipment guy know how to operate them. (See 'Private briefing' above for a description of the jet-skis.) Think of these vehicles as water motorcycles: fast, loud, exciting and wet. They do float, but if they flip over (Violence/Agility check every now and then), they are hard to right. The engine stops whenever the operator lets go of the control stick. Two persons can ride on one jet-ski (a driver and a gunner), but don't reveal this unless the PCs try it out.

Try to inspire the PCs with the excitement and adventure these vehicles offer. At the same time, reinforce their fear of drowning and their vulnerability to fire while on jet-skis. Any time a character attempts to maneuver his jet-ski in any way other than a wobbly straight line, a Violence check is in order.

## ■ **A pirate captain and his ship**

Buck-U is a large, fearsome-looking man with a gigantic beard braided into long strands. A copper-finished parrotbot sits on his shoulder, squawking such nonsense as 'walk the plank' and 'feed the bird' while clanking its wings. (Incidentally, this bot neither flies nor walks. It just perches.)

Buck-U's stronghold, a converted fireboat, floats in the center of the longest part of the reservoir, out of sight of the pier and maintenance area. The *Jolly Roger-U* is no mere boat. A crew of 21 bots mans this 33-meter ship. Designed as a powerful ocean-going fireboat, the *Roger-U* now merely floats in place, permanently moored to the bottom of the reservoir. Most of its original equipment is no longer operational, but the water-cannons and hoses are in mint condition.

Buck-U has filled much of the ship with personal luxuries and sophisticated communications equipment for tapping into The Computer. He spends most of his time here, overseeing his many projects and directing his teams in the tournament. To protect this valuable asset, Buck-U only allows bots on board, and then only those he has reprogrammed himself.

Obsessed with a few Old Reckoning pirate films he owns, Buck-U converted his ship to resemble an old wooden sailing vessel. His conversion is only partly successful. The entire ship is painted to resemble wooden boards, but the rusting steel hull shows through in places where the paint is peeling. Three round, black cannon barrels poke out of each side of the hull, just above the water line. A tall steel girder, bolted to the ship's smokestack, serves as a mast. Welded near the top of the mast is a small platform (the crow's nest). Above that hangs a black and white skull-and-crossbones flag, Buck-U's Programs Group emblem. Dozens of sewn-together sheets hang from cross poles on the mast, limp sails that have never known wind. A long boom juts from the bow, holding a carved figurehead above the water. A jumble of steel cables serves as rigging, connecting the mast, deck and boom.

The *Jolly Roger-U* is described in detail below (see 'On board the *Jolly Roger-U*').

## ■ **Assaulting the *Jolly Roger-U***

Buck-U directs the defense of his ship from the bridge, issuing orders through a special combat named 'First Mate'. (See First Mate on the Bot roster.) First Mate is big, mean and ugly. It's fanatically dedicated to Buck-U and looks down on the other bots who serve him. From a distance, First Mate looks like a giant deformed man wearing a long overcoat, high boots and a three-cornered hat decorated with gold tassels. First Mate's slugthrower is modified to resemble an ancient flintlock pistol—it even belches black smoke every time it's fired.

The rest of the crew consists of eight pirate bots and 12 deck swab bots. (See their stats on the Bot roster.) The pirate bots are described in 'Unused roadhall' above. The deck swab bots do the work on the ship, hoisting and lowering the sails, swabbing the decks and rowing Buck-U to and from the maintenance area in a rowboat.

First Mate sounds a general alarm when it sees the PCs rounding the bend in the reservoir. Three pirate bots immediately man the main water cannon on the forward deck and one mans the cannon on each bridge wing. Another pirate bot climbs to the crow's-nest with a telescope. Directed by two pirate bots, all the deck swab bots crew the 'ten-pounders', six authentic-looking cannons beneath decks.

Buck-U may not be much of a historian, but he puts on a good show. The ten-pounders do not actually fire projectiles. They're merely special effects machines. A speaker in each barrel produces a tremendously loud explosion when the gun is fired, followed by a big puff of gray smoke from a smoke generator. Other directional speakers simulate the scream of flying shells. The entire reservoir reverberates when the *Jolly Roger-U* fires a broadside. Most spectacular of all (this is Buck-U's favorite part) are the water geysers that simulate splashing cannonballs. Literally hundreds of tiny but powerful special effects machines float just under the surface to cause geysers all around the ship when appropriate.

The PCs, of course, should believe they are riding directly into cannon fire. After all, they see the puffs of smoke, hear the roar of the cannon and the screaming shells and feel the spray from cannon balls slamming into the water. The *Jolly Roger-U* fires four broadsides at the PCs if they approach directly, more if they take evasive action. When each broadside is fired, every player must roll 1d20. On a roll of 19 or 20, a nearby geyser knocks over the PC's jet-ski. On a roll of 20, a geyser also erupts directly under the jet-ski, blowing it into the air and completely destroying it (the PC is unhurt).

When the PCs approach within 200 meters of the *Jolly Roger-U*, the ten-pounders stop firing and the deck swab bots prepare to repel boarders. Eight of them gather with the two pirate bots in the deck house under the bridge. In pairs, the other four prepare the two high-pressure hoses on the aft deck. All water cannons open fire when the PCs are in range.

The main water cannon's range is 150 meters (O3D impact). Its crew is under good cover, which makes a decent rationale for Perversity point modifiers. The water cannons on the bridge wings have a 100-meter range, and their crews are similarly protected. The firehoses have 50-meter ranges, but those crews are completely exposed to fire. The crews can reel the fire hoses anywhere on the ship. The bots' ratings with water cannon and hose are listed on the Bot roster. PCs on a jet-ski hit by the water cannon or hoses

must succeed in a Violence/Agility check or be knocked overboard.

The bot in the crow's nest snipes at the PCs with his slugthrower, as does the First Mate from the bridge. Buck-U struts back and forth on the bridge, shouting orders and watching the battle, enjoying himself like a kid in a bathtub.

Concussion from grenades and cone rifle shells may blow bots high into the air to splash into the reservoir, even if they aren't damaged or destroyed. Impact of slugs (or captured water cannons, if the PCs get on board) may knock bots backwards over the railing. Not surprisingly, overboard bots sink like lead. However, all Buck-U's bots are waterproof. Furthermore, a steel shaft runs from the bottom of the ship to the bottom of the reservoir. Bots walk on the bottom of the shaft, then climb up to rejoin the battle. (Buck-U devised this system so he could make bots walk the plank without destroying them.) To the PCs, of course, Buck-U seems to possess an endless supply of bots. On a 1d20 roll of 17 or higher, damaged bots that go overboard or get hit with water short circuit and fry themselves.

Only armor-piercing ammo can pierce the outer hull and deck top. The blob of plastic explosive must detonate on the hull beneath the water line to have a chance of sinking the ship. The same pumps that run the water cannons can pump water out of the ship just about as fast as it pours in. If lightly damaged, the ship sinks in 12 hours, unless Buck-U can make repairs. If heavily damaged, the ship sinks in six hours; if junked, the ship sinks in one hour. The pirate bot in the crow's-nest is looking for just such a threat, and concentrates his fire on the PC with the explosive. On First Mate's order, Deck Swabs jump overboard just to grab the blob off the hull on their way past.

Once the PCs are on board (if they get that far), First Mate directs the defense while Buck-U retreats to his computer center below decks. Neither Buck-U nor First Mate give or ask for mercy; all Buck-U's prisoners walk the plank.

## On board the *Jolly Roger-U*

The following areas are depicted on Map 3 at the end of the mission. Descriptions of the *Jolly Roger-U* use naval terminology. *Forward* is toward the bow, or front, of the ship. *Aft* means toward the stern, or rear. To a PC facing forward, *port* is on the left, *starboard* to the right.

## Kids in a candy store

As the PCs search the *Jolly Roger-U* (Tension 0) they discover numerous unfamiliar items. Some are obviously valuable; some are completely incomprehensible. Most are profoundly treasonous. Describe the contents of the cabins and below-deck areas by comparison to objects familiar in Alpha Complex. For example,

an oscilloscope is 'a metal box with a screen resembling a video monitor'.

Any PC displaying knowledge of high-clearance or otherwise treasonous items (computer accessories, books, etc.) is liable to be reported by other loyal Troubleshooters. Drop more or less subtle hints about this if the PCs are apparently less than vigilant.

PCs may try to smuggle out items for sale on the IR market, for their secret societies or for their own entertainment. If this doesn't occur to them, drop hints about how attractive that computer hardware would be at the Computer Phreaks clubhouse.

PCs may also try to prove their loyalty to The Computer by destroying or confiscating treasonous items. Anyway, this is the best alibi when caught damaging or smuggling valuable property. The Computer is a sucker for passionate speeches about dedication to the highest principles, blah-blah-blah...

## Area 1. Stern ladder

Buck-U's rowboat is tied to this ladder welded to the hull. In every other place, the deck is too high above the water for the PCs to reach without standing up on their jet-ski handlebars, a Violence/Agility check if we ever heard one. Pirate bots should cluster around this ladder to resist the boarding party, taunting the PCs—'Arrr, matey!' 'C'mere, ye faint-hearted landlubbers'—in gravelly, sinister synthesized voices.

## Area 2. Top deck

Slippery when wet. The rusting steel deck shows through where the wood-grain paint has peeled. A rail surrounds the deck's outer edge. A small locked hatch near the stern leads down to a hallway. A closet (2a), starboard of the smokestack, holds fire axes, fire extinguishers, buckets, mops and a two-meter plank.

## Area 3. Fire hoses

A large shed on the top deck houses two large reels of fire hose and the valves to control them. These hoses are long enough to reach anywhere on the ship. Of all the bots, only First Mate is strong enough to operate one of these hoses by himself. The others work in pairs. PCs must make special preparations, such as bracing or lashing themselves down, to fire the hose without being blown backwards.

## Area 4. Smokestack and mast

The *Jolly Roger-U*'s engines fell apart years ago, so the smokestack isn't used. PCs can climb down the smokestack to the engine room.

The smokestack does hold up the mast, though, and that's important to Buck-U. The mast itself is a steel girder almost impossible to climb. However, a maze of cables runs from the edge of the deck up to the crow's-nest. Designed for powerful hands, the cables are not fun for PCs to climb and are slippery when wet. (Buck-U

learned the hard way that ropes don't always support bots.)

Dozens of sheets hang from two crosspieces on the mast. These sheets catch fire easily, but nothing else up there burns.

## Area 5. Port emergency room

Long ago, when this fireboat was designed, emergency rooms treated people injured in the fires the boat was fighting. Buck-U converted this room into a garment factory. Here his bots sew their own clothes, hats and boots, as well as the sails. The aft closet is filled with spare bot clothing. The smaller, forward closet contains a sewing machine and bolts of cloth.

## Area 6. Starboard emergency room

This room is similar to the port emergency room. Buck-U uses this room to regularly polish and waterproof his bots. He also uses tiny drills to scratch 'tattoos' into their arms and backs. The only closet is filled with jars labeled 'Beard's Own Polyurethane Bot Sealant'. Wouldn't R&D or Corpore Metal find this unique substance interesting?

## Area 7. Deck house

Small portholes in this large room can be used as firing ports, giving the defender good cover. A ladder against the aft wall leads up through a hatch in the ceiling to the bridge (Area 12). A ladder against the forward wall goes down through a hatch into the mess hall (Area 17), then the engine room (Area 32). Eight deck swab bots and the two pirate bots rally here to defend this important access to the lower decks.

## Area 8. Booty

Lashed to the deck is a pile of ten treasure chests. Some of the chests are made of wood, but most are aluminum or plastic crates painted to look like wood. Ten thousand credits' worth of fake jewelry, gems and gold pieces fill these chests. Each of these items is equally valuable in Alpha Complex—they're all worth 1cr apiece.

## Area 9. Cargo hatches

These solid, heavy doors open into the cargo holds (Area 26). A couple of rounds of abuse with massive objects or weapons fire can break the door locks.

## Area 10. Main water cannon

This water cannon is mounted on a raised platform that rotates to aim the cannon in any direction. A crew of three normally operates this cannon, which has a range of 150 meters (O3D impact).

## Area 11. The bridge

Armored windows afford an excellent view forward and to the sides. A large, round wheel is set in the center of the bridge. The wheel handles can be removed for use as clubs. A barrel labeled



'Rum' rests near a large captain's chair. The barrel contains flat water colored reddish brown. A ladder against the aft wall leads down through a hatch to the deck house (Area 7).

## Area 12. Bridge wings

A small balcony opens off each side of the bridge. Railings provide 50% cover for anyone on the balcony. A small water cannon with a range of 100 meters is mounted on the end of each balcony.

## Area 13. Chartroom

A real oak table stands in the center of this room. A sextant (a real Old Reckoning antique), dividers and rulers lie on the table beside an old, old map of the ocean off Bermuda. Other maps are rolled into plastic tubes hanging on the walls. These artifacts are worth thousands of credits to secret societies or IR market operators. The Computer treats their surrender as evidence of true loyalty.

## Area 14. Comm station

Buck-U stays in touch with his many agents and The Computer through a complex network of scrambled transmitters. In contrast to most of the *Jolly Roger-U*, the controls here are absolutely current and functional. A curtain in the port wall leads to the central radio transmitters and receivers (Area 15). PCs from Technical Services drool over this stuff. So will IR market entrepreneurs.

## Area 15. Radio transmitters & receivers

This room is jammed with extremely high-clearance radio transmitters and receivers. Wires lead up through the ceiling to antennas. Just knowledge of this equipment is treasonous below VIOLET Clearance. If The Computer knew Buck-U owned these, it would crash a subsystem! Informing the Computer Phreaks of these treasures would earn them instant preeminent status in their secret society.

## Area 16. Mess hall

Rough tables and benches fill this room. Buck-U regularly makes his bots sit here while he lectures, instructs and reprimands them.

## Area 17. Gun room

Wire-mesh hammocks hang from the ceiling in this dimly lit room. In shifts, Buck-U's bots crawl up into their hammocks and 'sleep' for several hours.

Three rough holes are cut into the hull on each side of the room. An ancient-looking cannon sits before each hole. A ramrod, brush and single cannon ball sit beside each cannon. (Because the cannon doesn't actually shoot anything, the bot crews just load and unload the same cannonball.) See 'Assaulting the *Jolly Roger-U*' above for the way Buck-U uses these cannons.

## Area 18. Cabin

These two mirror-image cabins each contain a bunk, a chest and a desk. The cabins have never been occupied and contain nothing casually pilferable.

## Area 19. Officer's mess

Buck-U uses this room primarily to watch Old Reckoning pirate movies and occasionally to hold meetings. A large table stands in the center of the room. Video screens pull down on each wall so Buck-U can surround himself with pirates. On special occasions, Buck-U sets up a replica 16mm movie projector and shows his preserved 'original films'. IR market value of the 16mm projector and film is approximately 2,000cr. To the Romantics, the value is 8,000cr.

## Area 20. Electronic workshop

Shelves full of reels of computer tape, boxes of computer disks and packages of computer chips line the walls here. Soldering guns, oscilloscopes, calculators, circuit boards and complete sets of miniature tools are scattered across a desk in the center of the room. With the right contacts, this stuff could fetch a fortune on the IR market.

However, displaying knowledge of the functions of these devices and supplies is clear evidence of treasonous access to high-clearance information. Describe the contents of the room as an ignorant child would view them: 'There are clear wheels with long, thin brown tapes wrapped around them, and large plastic donut-shaped objects in boxes. Some clear plastic bags contain small plastic boards with numerous bits of colorful plastic and metal attached in a meaningless pattern.' Give PCs with appropriate skills (Software, Electronic Engineering, etc.) more detailed descriptions.

## Area 21. Captain's lounge

This cabin is probably the most luxurious room the PCs have ever seen outside vidshows. Deep, plush white carpeting covers the deck. An ornate chandelier hangs from the ceiling over a dark green billiard table. The curved aft walls are made of armored plexiglas, giving Buck-U a fine view of the 'sea'. Bookshelves full of antique books, most of them fakes, line the walls. ORANGE-Clearance PCs probably recognize a billiard table, but know little about the purpose and function of most items in the room.

## Area 22. Captain's quarters

These are Buck-U's personal quarters, worthy of a High Programmer. The walk-in washroom is especially well-equipped to keep Buck-U's beard in awesome condition.

Buck-U has decorated this cabin to resemble a movie pirate captain's cabin, with phony wood-texture paint, a simple bunk, several sea chests, nautical charts of the Caribbean and a crude table and chairs. Several ample jugs marked 'XXX' sit on and around the table. The jugs contain 'Whippy Fun' (a bland vat beverage) laced with

powerful stimulant and euphoric drugs. One drink produces the equivalent of roaring drunkenness in any Troubleshooter.

Now you understand Buck-U's extravagantly bizarre behavior. These drugs have turned Buck-U's brains to applesauce. The Mystics would be very interested in these jugs; so would Free Enterprise, the Illuminati, Death Leopard and any other secret society that could sell the drugs or use them in sabotage schemes.

## Area 23. Computer center

Electronics, holographic color monitors, bioconsoles, printers, desktop manufacturing devices and a host of other computer peripherals fill this room, the seat and focus of Buck-U's power. He uses this equipment to tap into the Alpha Complex Computer and steal processing time, manipulate data, issue and modify orders, etc. Buck-U controls his tournament teams from here.

Buck-U makes his last stand against the PCs here. If he is losing, he destroys or disguises all evidence of treason that might be linked to him. He never surrenders.

Depending on the weapons the PCs use, the firefight here may spare Buck-U the necessity of destroying any evidence. Any stray missile or beam fire destroys the computer. The video and communications systems are all computer-coordinated, and shut down completely when the computer is destroyed. The charts and reports may survive unless fire or explosives are used.

If the PCs can incapacitate Buck-U in two rounds, they can capture the computer center intact. If Buck-U lasts more than two rounds, he fires at the computer, disabling it, then swings his laser beam across the paper documents, setting them aflame. Tough luck.

But if the PCs manage to capture the computer center intact...

By observing the dozens of monitors on the walls of this room and the charts and reports hanging on the walls, the Troubleshooters may deduce the basic elements of the High Programmer Tournaments. The monitors follow the progress of various competing teams in the middle of other competitive events (sort of a *Wide Complex of Sports*); the charts and reports chronicle the results of earlier competition. If the PCs look around, they find reports on the results of the competitions they took part in.

Throughout the electronic and paper records in this room lies evidence of unspeakably high treason among the most powerful and trusted citizens of Alpha Complex. What can the PCs do with this evidence?

Reveal it to The Computer? How will it respond to such tragic betrayals? Whom will The Computer believe? Lowly ORANGE Troubleshooters, or the citizens it has raised and trusted above all others in Alpha Complex?

Sell the information, or blackmail the High Programmers? A dangerous game, but one that



might really pay off. No Illuminatus would ever pass up such an opportunity.

Destroy the evidence, and hope The Computer never realizes its faithful servants have been exposed to such seductively treasonous influences?

Make sure the PCs are aware of the possible consequences of reporting, concealing or destroying the evidence. No matter what they do, they'll probably get in trouble. Gently remind the PCs of this. Then it's just about time for The Computer's voice to suddenly resound on their PDCs, inquiring pleasantly for a mission progress report. 'Well, uh, we—ehr, mmm—'

## Area 24. Anchor winch

A two-meter-wide capstan stands on the deck. The heavy anchor, like most of the ship, is just for show; the ship's hull is permanently moored to the bottom with steel cables. No treasure or monsters here. Keep moving.

## Area 25. Anchor storage

These two rooms are piled high with rusted anchor chain. Not much IR market demand for rusted anchor chain.

## Area 26. Cargo holds

Large hatches (Area 9) open into these holds. Both holds are empty. Nobody home. A big explosion in here destroys the bilge pumps and sinks the ship in short order.

## Area 27. Brig

Buck-U maintains these four barred cells to hold prisoners until he has time for the pomp and festivity of a proper plank walking. Captured PCs spend some time here, reflecting and hoping for a rescue that will never come.

## Area 28. Crew's head

Buck-U converted this large washroom to accommodate his robot crews. He lubricates, tunes up, recharges and repairs bots here. A single pirate bot, its legs off for repairs, sits on a bench, unable to join the battle. It will, however, shoot any PC who opens the door.

## Area 29. Galley

One of the deck swab bots is specially programmed to prepare and serve Buck-U the fine cuisine High Programmers expect. Because the PCs have seldom seen food prepared in less than army-size quantities, they may not recognize this room.

## Area 30. Pantry

As in the galley, the PCs should recognize few, if any, of the fine herbs, spices, grains, fresh fruits and other delicacies stored here. However, a successful Outdoor Life skill check reveals the nature of these substances, and may suggest their IR market value.

## Area 31. Freezer

Hanging from the ceiling of this walk-in freezer are legs of lamb, whole turkeys and a side of beef (from the clone-research labs). To the PCs, such wretched carcasses could only be the victims of torture, hanging in a morgue. The shock of learning this stuff is food may stun them.

## Area 32. Engine room

Two big diesel engines sit side by side here amid a jumble of cables, pipes, hoses and wires. The only functioning pieces of equipment are two high-pressure water pumps that run the water cannons and hoses, as well as pump out any water that may enter the ship.

## Area 33. Underwater shaft

A hatch in the floor opens into a shaft to the bottom of the reservoir. Overboard bots climb up the shaft to return to the ship.

## Area 34. Nuclear generator

Buck-U provides power for the electronic devices and the pumps with a compact nuclear generator. It is self-regulating and very, very stable. However, a large enough explosion (perhaps the plastic explosive blob?) could breach the shielding and fill the ship with deadly radiation. No one gets out alive, but the mission is a total success.

## Ending the mission

Once again the PCs may end the mission for you very conveniently by dying. If you were lenient with them, some may survive and escape.

If the PCs win the battle, either by sinking the *Jolly Roger-U* or by eliminating all resistance on board, ten boatloads of Internal Security frogmen arrive and arrest all the survivors. In any case, the distraction of the battle allows Neil-U to once again take the tournament championship. He is so pleased by this outcome (and by wiping out his rival Buck-U in the process) he quickly makes the arrangements to extradite arrested PCs from TJC Sector Internal Security.

Some of Buck-U's bots may survive and walk out of the reservoir on the bottom. They would undoubtedly dedicate the rest of their lives to tracking down the PCs and eliminating them. Throw one into your next mission to add even more paranoia.

## The debriefing

Two days after their return, Gary-V personally debriefs the team survivors in Briefing Room C (**Tension 16**). Review Chapter 36, 'Debriefings' in the Troubleshooters rulebook before conducting the debriefing with your players.

Gary-V commends, reprimands, praises and fines the characters according to the reports, records and statements available from the

characters. He collects mission records from the team leader. Remember that the characters must account for all equipment assigned to them. When assigning rewards and raising security clearance, take into account all the missions the PC participated in. The performance of deceased clones is also relevant, since guilt/praise by association is an established principle of **PARANOIA**.

At the end of the briefing, Gary-V announces that the Special Troubleshooter team is disbanded, and all the PCs will be reassigned to their previous jobs. He wishes them loyal and productive existences.

## Special invitation

Neil-U is always on the lookout for ingenious, devious and lucky citizens, particularly if they have incriminating evidence of his treason and the good sense to keep quiet about it. If one or more PCs are such people, Neil-U conducts a full investigation into their background and personality. If they seem safe and useful, Neil-U instructs Gary-V to offer them a place in his Program Group.

Changing secret societies is rare, so such an opportunity should reveal to the PC the magnitude of the group's power. If he accepts, the PC can become a double agent in his old secret society, or receive a new identity. In either case, his ex-secret society probably comes back to haunt him.

## 'And the grand prize winner is...'

If the PCs have evidence of the treasonous practice of High Programmer tournaments, and they try to peddle that evidence to The Computer, secret societies or the black market, roll 1d20.

**1-2:** Things don't work out. Activate clones.

**3-18:** It could have been worse. After a brief period of anticipation and terror, it becomes obvious that nothing important comes of their efforts. Better luck next time.

**19-20:** Things work marvelously. Promote the PCs to a higher security level and make them fabulously wealthy. Then arrange for an extended and dramatic public treason trial that makes them an example of the Commie corruption of even the most loyal citizens. Teela-O-MLY personally visits them in their cells before the gala execution. There isn't a dry eye in the house.



## CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

### Bot roster

| Type             | No. | Speed                    | Weapons                                                            | Special equipment & abilities                                                   | Size                           | Armor        |
|------------------|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------|
| Forkbots         | 4   | Wheels (sprint)          | None                                                               | Able to lift 10 tons, 15 meters in air with clamp-forks                         | 4 m long, 3 m wide, 2 m high   | 2            |
| Security combots | 2   | Treads (walk)            | Needle gun 10, Stun gun 10                                         | Operating at half-ability; infrared sensors; falls on corners on roll of 1 or 2 | Man-size                       | 3 (hardened) |
| Doberbot         | 1   | Legs (walk/run/sprint)   | Teeth 16 (W5K impact)                                              | Touch-stuns for 1d20 divided by 2 rounds                                        | All you notice are the teeth   | 1            |
| Advanced combot  | 15  | Treads (walk/run/sprint) | Laser cannon 16, flamethrower 16, semi-auto slugthrower 16         | All-terrain vehicle                                                             | Monstrous tank                 | 6 (hardened) |
| First Mate bot   | 1   | Legs (walk/run/sprint)   | Slugthrower (HE) 16, 5 throwing knives 16, neurowhip 18            | Waterproof; infrared sensors                                                    | A little larger than man-size  | 3            |
| Pirate bot       | 8   | Legs (walk/run/sprint)   | Hand slugthrower (HE) 14, 3 throwing knives 14, cutlass (sword) 15 | Waterproof; fires water cannon or hose at base skill roll 14                    | Man-size                       | 2            |
| Deck swab bot    | 12  | Legs (walk/run)          | 2 throwing clubs 13, cutlass (sword) 13                            | Waterproof; fires water cannon or hose at base skill roll 08                    | A little smaller than man-size | 1            |
| Parrotbot        | 1   | None (none)              | None                                                               | Mimics Old Reckoning pirate movie dialogue                                      | Chicken                        | —            |

### NPC roster

| Name                          | Clearance   | Relevant skills & specialties                                  | Weapons                                                                       | Armor                           | Roleplaying notes                                                            |
|-------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Spike-B, briefing guard       | BLUE        | Violence 06, Unarmed Combat 19, Necking 10                     | Spiked collar 10 (O4W impact)                                                 | BLUE reflec                     | A man who loves his work.                                                    |
| 3 briefing room guards        | BLUE        | Violence 12, Unarmed Combat 15, Intimidation 05                | BLUE laser rifle 16                                                           | BLUE reflec                     | Three men who only like their work.                                          |
| Steve-G                       | GREEN       | Violence 06, Unarmed Combat 10, Bootlicking 10                 | GREEN laser pistol 10                                                         | GREEN reflec                    | A briefing veteran.                                                          |
| Ben-B                         | BLUE        | Violence 09, Unarmed Combat 13                                 | None                                                                          | YELLOW reflec                   | Knows nothing of the game, but is suspicious of Gary-V.                      |
| Gary-V                        | VIOLET      | Violence 09, Unarmed Combat 10, Con Games 16                   | Black exotic laser pistol 13                                                  | Kevlar/Mylar vest under uniform | Nevo-U's right-hand man. Wants his own program group.                        |
| Frank-O                       | ORANGE      | Violence 04, Unarmed Combat 05, Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 16 | ORANGE laser pistol 08, Club 08                                               | Crash gear; treat as padding    | Lives to drive. It's the thing he does best. 'Nuff said.                     |
| Ramco                         | Unknown     | Violence 05, Unarmed Combat 08                                 | Slingshot 10 (range 40m; dmg O5W impact), knife 09                            | Padding                         | A fanatic PURGEr and Vatman fan.                                             |
| Vatman                        | Unknown     | Violence 08, Unarmed Combat 09, Leadership 15, Oratory 16      | GREEN laser rifle 12, IR goggles                                              | Kevlar with Mylar               | PURGE embodied.                                                              |
| Robin                         | Unknown     | Violence 04, Unarmed Combat 07                                 | Blaster 08, knife 08                                                          | Padding                         | The Vatman's protege.                                                        |
| Bud-O-NDP-4, hotshot leader   | ORANGE      | Violence 06, Unarmed Combat 06                                 | YELLOW laser rifle 11, ORANGE laser pistol 10, IR goggles                     | Kevlar with ORANGE reflec       | Crazier than the rest of the Hotshots combined.                              |
| 5 hotshot troubleshooters     | ORANGE      | Violence 04, Unarmed Combat 07                                 | 2 ORANGE laser rifles 08, 5 ORANGE laser pistols 08, 3 orange slugthrowers 08 | ORANGE reflec                   | They all want to be as crazy as Bud-O.                                       |
| Reggie-G<br>Rip-G             | GREEN       | Violence 10, Unarmed Combat 10                                 | Semi-auto slugthrower 14                                                      | GREEN reflec over padding       | Their doberbot was scheduled for termination. They scared it into obedience. |
| Average death trooper         | GREEN       | Violence 09, Unarmed Combat 13                                 | Blasters 13, truncheon 14                                                     | Kevlar                          | The army elite. Would die before shaking hands with a Vulture guard.         |
| Deke-G, strike force officer  | GREEN       | Violence 08, Unarmed Combat 11                                 | GREEN laser pistol 12                                                         | Environment suit                | Your average line officer.                                                   |
| Average strike force troopers | YELLOW      | Violence 06, Unarmed Combat 10                                 | YELLOW laser rifles 10                                                        | Environment suits               | Your average line troops.                                                    |
| Black-U-BRD-5                 | ULTRAVIOLET | Violence 08, Unarmed Combat 12, Oratory 15, Con Games 14       | Force hook 14 (acts as force sword), hand slugthrower 12                      | Kevlar/Mylar                    | A man in command of his own ship, but not of his own mind.                   |
| Vulture cavalry               | GREEN       | Violence 11, Unarmed Combat 13                                 | GREEN laser rifle 15                                                          | GREEN reflec                    |                                                                              |

## 'Vapors Don't Shoot' PC #1



### Roger-O-CWE-2

#### Male Tech Svcs Communications & Recording Officer

Security clearance: ORANGE

Credits: 120

Tics: Sighs a lot.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Bobby-O:** We did it, we won! Those Romantics traitors are dead meat!

**Roger-O:** *[sighs]* Yeah, we really did it.

**The Computer:** Good work, Troubleshooters! Each of you gets a 200-credit bonus.

**Roger-O:** *[sighs]* Thank you, Friend Computer.

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 07

Befuddle Others With Technobabble 13

Con Games 11

Intimidation 01

##### Stealth 09

Disguise 01

Notice Unusual Discolorations 15

Surveillance 13

##### Violence 07

Agility 11

Energy Weapons 11

Unarmed Combat 01

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 06

Chemical Engineering 10

Electronic Engineering 10

Com Unit Ops and Maintenance 12

##### Software 07

C-Bay 01

Data Search 11

##### Wetware 05

Cloning 01

Make Cold Fun Into Emergency Adhesive 11

**Open slots for narrow specialties: 2**

(Violence, Software)

## 'Vapors Don't Shoot' PC #2



### Amos-O-BYA-4

#### Male Tech Svcs Happiness Officer

Security clearance: ORANGE

Credits: 120

Tics: Blandly agreeable.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Mortimer-O:** *[hiding from laser fire]* Amos-O!

We're pinned down by PURGERS! Can you flank them?

**Amos-O:** *[likewise hiding]* Just give me a moment, and I'll be glad to give it a try.

**Mortimer-O:** What, there's a problem?

**Amos-O:** Oh, my leg's been shot off, but it's nothing to worry about. I'm sure it'll work out just fine.

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 06

Bootlicking 10

Chutzpah 01

Hygiene 10

Interrogation 01

##### Stealth 06

Concealment 10

High Alert 01

Conceal and/or Recognize Bribery Attempts 12

##### Violence 08

Duck Behind Furniture 14

Energy Weapons 12

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 08

Habitat Engineering 12

Nuclear Engineering 01

##### Software 09

Bot Programming 13

Financial Systems 01

Initiate Remote Shutdown of Pyrus-Class Warbots 15

Operating Systems 13

##### Wetware 05

Diagnose Sleep Disorders 11

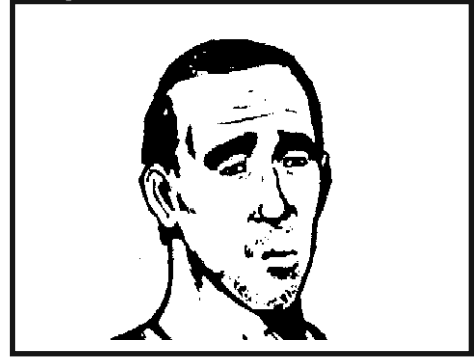
Pharmatherapy 01

Suggestion 09

**Open slots for narrow specialties: 2**

(Management, Hardware)

## 'Vapors Don't Shoot' PC #3



### Cain-O-ATW-2

#### Male Tech Services Equipment Guy

Transport

Security clearance: ORANGE

Credits: 120

Tics: Constantly playing with PDC.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

*[Cain-O is shutting down a reactor with one hand and playing a PDC game with the other]*

**Bobby-O:** Uh, could you focus a little? The reactor's about to blow!

**Cain-O:** Calm down, okay? I'm totally focused.

Everything's fine— Ooh, double word score!

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 06

Bootlicking 01

Chutzpah 10

Shrug Ambiguously 12

##### Stealth 05

Security Systems 09

Sneaking 01

##### Violence 10

Energy Weapons 10

Projectile Weapons 01

Thrown Weapons 01

Unarmed Combat 10

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 11

Build Abstract Sculpture From Spare Parts 17

Nuclear Engineering 15

##### Software 09

Bot Programming 13

Leave Untraceable Calling Card When Hacking 15

Operating Systems 13

Vehicle Programming 01

##### Wetware 04

Cloning 08

Identify Artificial Flavoring Agents 10

Outdoor Life 01

**Open slots for narrow specialties: 2**

(Stealth, Violence)

## Cain-O-ATW-2

### Male Tech Services Equipment Guy

**Mutation:** Mechanical Intuition

**Society:** Computer Phreaks (degree 2)

**Secret Skills:** Experimental Equipment

Maintenance / Repair 13, Jargon 07, Hacking 13

**Background:** You were a long time discovering your mutant ability. An inclination toward ripping apart complex machinery and putting it together again seemed normal to you. Not until you joined the Computer Phreaks did you learn the true nature of your skill.

Once in the Computer Phreaks you quickly made a name for yourself: 'Data-Chef'. After some concentrated work, you broke into the recipe storage bank of the food-prep subsystem. For a solid week thereafter the INFRAREDS were subjected to food with taste and consistency. The experience was almost more than they could handle. When The Computer discovered the treasonous breach and replaced the original programming, it took every Internal Security agent in RSB Sector to quell the riots. Tech Services is still making repairs.

The Phreaks admired you for this inspired act, and your mentor, CPU/CP-ME, taught you the basics of computer hacking, a treasonous skill. You look forward to testing your new ability.

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

The Phreaks suspect a High Programmer is behind your current mission, not The Computer. CPU/CP-ME sent you a message: 'learn when/how/why hp exerts control / steal/duplicate all programs/techniques/ equipment that look cool / roger-o-cwe-2 has comm gadget / somehow bypasses computer's monitors / we MUST have it /endmsg'

You received a second message just before reporting for your Troubleshooter mission briefing. 'be advised high programmer has spy in yr group / encryption on msg tough / spy's home sector contains letter y / good luck /endmsg.' That would be either Amos-O-BYA or Bobby-O-SYE....

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

Flashlight

Illuminating hand-lens

Tool kit (the box is legal, but most of the tools aren't)

(2) ORANGE laser barrels

Jumpsuit

ORANGE canvas backpack

Utility belt and pouches

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit ORANGE reflex armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

Robot Investigation Device (RID) (see GM for details)

## Amos-O-BYA-4

### Male Tech Svcs Happiness Officer

**Mutations:** Machine Empathy, Telekinesis

**Society:** Psion (degree 2)

**Secret Skills:** Drug Procurement 09, Whistling 16, Bribery 14

**Background:** You've always had good rapport with The Computer; other people have been vaporized for *hinting* at questions you asked outright. You learned the true nature of your Machine Empathy mutant power when the Psion secret society recruited you. You use that ability whenever you can to stay in The Computer's good graces and to extract favors and information for yourself and the Psions.

Your promising career in Technical Services hit a snag recently, and quite unexpectedly, when The Computer transferred you to the Troubleshooters. This is important because you are on your fourth clone and rapidly approaching extinction. Everyone else on the team is only on their second clone.

Your last two clones expired blissfully, in rapid succession, only a short time ago. They fell victim to the latest rage among Mystics, the new brain exploder drug. Armed with some of those same pills, you've been seeking Mystics for revenge ever since.

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Soon after your transfer to the Troubleshooters, several Psions were revealed and dragged away by a swarm of Internal Security agents. Arrests and executions continue, causing great alarm in Psion. Several members have even turned themselves in, registering their mutant powers. They have not been seen again.

Your Psion Control told you of a Psion informant in your Troubleshooter team. As soon as the informant uses a mutant power, you must nail him as a traitorous mutant. The suspect is either Cain-O-ATW-2 or Terry-O-EUZ-2. You are anxious to carry out this mission because you know that if an informant were traced to this group, you must be under suspicion too.

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

Flashlight

Portable steam iron (keeps you lookin' good)

YELLOW laser barrel painted ORANGE (ILLEGAL)

(2) ORANGE laser barrels

Jumpsuit

ORANGE canvas backpack

Utility belt and pouches

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit ORANGE reflex armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

(20) Gelgermine / Inner Happiness tablets

Miniature audiovisual recorder to document equipment damage

## Roger-O-CWE-2

### Male Tech Services R&D Communications & Recording Officer

**Actual service group:** R&D (spying on Technical Services)

**Mutation:** Chameleon

**Society:** Pro Tech (degree 3)

**Secret Skills:** Logic Puzzles 06, Botspotting 11, Hacking 11

**Background:** You are a worried clone. You've been in the front lines of battle for resources between Technical Services and R&D for some time. You actually know little about R&D; to be a good spy, you submerged yourself within Tech. Unfortunately, this very dedication has caused problems. Your loyalty has been questioned on several occasions, and only some skillful fast-talking has saved you from premature clone activation.

Recently, your long-overdue promotion to third-rank spy came through. You carefully selected and trained a subordinate to also penetrate Technical Services. Much to your chagrin, he was delivered to R&D headquarters in a small box labeled 'Defective Observation Equipment'.

Your unimaginative superiors hold you responsible for the embarrassing incident and your loyalty is more suspect than ever.

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

At R&D headquarters, your superior made it clear that to redeem yourself you must make a similar delivery to Tech HQ. He said, 'We've gotten you assigned to a special Troubleshooter team that's crawling with Techs. Shipping one of 'em back to Tech HQ shouldn't be too difficult. Just don't get caught.'

On your way out, he slapped a communication device into your hand. 'This is a little gadget I just finished that you can use to keep us posted. I don't think The Computer can pick up its signal.' Then he added, 'This is your absolute last chance, Roger-O. If you don't clean up this mess, you'll finish your days as a volunteer in the nerve pain test lab.'

Properly chastized, you joined the Troubleshooter mission team as communications & recording officer, good cover for your special device. By sheer chance, you've discovered that one of two techs on the team, either Terry-O-EUZ-2 or Bobby-O-SYE-2, is probably your protege's killer. Now all you need is a box.

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

Flashlight

Pair of binoculars

Miniature camera & telephoto lens (ILLEGAL)

Miniature 'bug' & recorder, 100m range (ILLEGAL)

Mini Com 1 on 'secure' RED frequency (ILLEGAL)

(2) ORANGE laser barrels

Jumpsuit

ORANGE canvas backpack

Utility belt and pouches

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit ORANGE reflex armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

Printout of transfer orders (see GM for details)

## 'Vapors Don't Shoot' PC #4



### Mortimer-O-TBI-2

#### Male Tech Services Loyalty Officer

Security clearance: ORANGE

Credits: 120

Tics: Speaks in violent terms.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Terry-O:** Hurry up, Mortimer-O! We have to go talk to these bots right now.

**Mortimer-O:** Leave me out of it. I'm no good with talking; I'd just kill the negotiations.

**Terry-O:** Okay, you can guard the rear then.

**Mortimer-O:** Great! You go on and break a leg. Knock 'em dead!

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 07

Con Games 01

Get All Buddy-Buddy With Local GREEN Goons 13

Interrogation 11

Intimidation 11

Oratory 01

##### Stealth 07

Sleight of Hand 11

Surveillance 01

##### Violence 09

Agility 13

Energy Weapons 13

Hand Weapons 13

Throw 'Rita', Your Lucky Personal Knife 15

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 07

Habitat Engineering 01

Repair Force Sword 13

Weapon and Armor Maintenance 11

##### Software 04

Hack Laser Pistol Data Recorders 10

##### Wetware 05

Medical 01

Bioweapons 10

**Open slots for narrow specialties: 2**

(Stealth, Wetware)

## 'Vapors Don't Shoot' PC #5



### Terry-O-EUZ-2

#### Male Tech Services Hygiene Officer

Security clearance: ORANGE

Credits: 120

Tics: Drifts into people's personal space.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

**Terry-O:** [*Leans over Cain-O's shoulder.*] So, whatcha working on?

**Cain-O:** [*Poking at his PDC.*] Just checking the subsector map.

**Terry-O:** Neat.

**Cain-O:** You know, I can't concentrate when you're leaning over me like that.

**Terry-O:** Oh! Sorry.

**Cain-O:** ...No, I mean it. Please move.

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 06

Moxie 01

Oratory 10

Scare Wild Animals Away 14

##### Stealth 06

Poker Face 12

##### Violence 07

Energy Weapons 11

Scramble Up Pipes 13

Thrown Weapons 11

Vehicular Combat 01

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 07

Mechanical Engineering 11

Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 01

##### Software 05

C-Bay 09

Data Analysis 01

##### Wetware 05

Medical 12

Pharmatharapy 12

Recognize Mutagens 14

**Open slots for narrow specialties: 2**

(Hardware, Software)

## 'Vapors Don't Shoot' PC #6



### Bobby-O-SYE-2

#### Male Power Svcs Loyalty Officer

Security clearance: ORANGE

Credits: 120

Tics: Always exercising.

[Tic 2:] \_\_\_\_\_

#### Example of tic in use

[*Bobby-O is doing push-ups.*]

**Roger-O:** Bobby-O, can you take the jetpack and scout up ahead?

**Bobby-O:** 98... 99... 100! [*stands up*] I'm sorry, what was that?

**Roger-O:** [*sighs*] Go scout, okay?

**Bobby-O:** Sure thing! Hup! Hup! [*jogs away*]

**Roger-O:** And he forgets the jetpack. Again. [*sighs*]

#### ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Management 07

Chutzpah 11

Hygiene 01

##### Stealth 05

Bend Metal Quietly 11

##### Violence 08

Energy Weapons 12

Fine Manipulation 01

Lift Heavy Things 18

Unarmed Combat 16

#### KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

##### Hardware 07

Mechanical Engineering 11

Polish Surface to Gleaming Mirrorlike Sheen 13

Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 11

Weapon and Armor Maintenance 01

##### Software 06

Hacking 01

Rewire Confession Booth In Your Residence Hall 12

Vehicle Programming 10

##### Wetware 05

Biosciences 09

Psychotherapy 01

**Open slots for narrow specialties: 2**

(Management, Wetware)

## Bobby-O-SYE-2

### Male Power Svcs Loyalty Officer

**Mutation:** Adrenalin Control

**Secret society:** PURGE (degree 2)

**Secret skills:** Cash Hacking 08, Gloating 12, Mechanical Sabotage 14

**Background:** You spent many years as a member of the tightly-knit Power service group, driving Power execs around RSB Sector in autocars or, occasionally, crawlers. After The Computer made your unusual 'temporary' transfer to this Troubleshooter team, one of your execs informed you *every* other member is from Technical Services! 'So watch your back,' he said, 'the Techs have always had it in for us, and they're going to outnumber you.'

Through careful planning and labor, you're starting to earn quite a reputation among PURGErs as the 'Spinebender' for your sabotage of the autocar guidance tracks known as 'spines'. Your latest job on a four-lane spine was so flamboyant and inspiring that it earned the praise of several prominent PURGErs, including the infamous Vatman, scourge of the RSB Sector food prep areas. Your cover seems secure so far. Internal Security doesn't usually suspect drivers of destroying the roads beneath them.

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

You recently received a tip from another PURGEr. Before you ate it, the scrap of grimy paper read, 'A real enemy, a citizen who sucks up to The Computer, frequently gaining undeserved praise and favors, is on your team. He may even be an experienced, high-rank special agent to The Computer. It's either Amos-O-BYA-4 or Cain-O-ATW-2.'

Although the message didn't say so, you can read between the lines: PURGE wants this traitor to humanity's ultimate supremacy taken out. Not so tough, there should be plenty of chances.

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

Flashlight

GREEN laser barrel painted RED (ILLEGAL)

Set of wrist and ankle weights (help keep you fit and improves unarmed attacks; see GM for details)

(2) ORANGE laser barrels

Jumpsuit

ORANGE canvas backpack

Utility belt and pouches

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit ORANGE reflex armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

Miniature audiovisual recorder to document treason and damage to Computer property

Personal Air Bag (PAB) (see GM for details)

## Terry-O-EUZ-2

### Male Tech Services Hygiene Officer

**Mutations:** Telekinesis, Teleportation

**Society:** Psion (degree 2)

**Secret Skills:** Power Studies 10, Macrame 15, Twitchtalk 07

**Background:** When your secret society, Psion, discovered you have the rare power to teleport, you quickly advanced to second degree. After demonstrating your trustworthiness by passing several Deep Probe investigations, your superiors taught you a second psionic power, telekinesis. This power lets you move objects with your mind, though it's easiest with objects no heavier than, say, a grenade (heh, heh). Obviously, you are eager to explore this exciting ability. (Without, of course, revealing your undeclared mutant power.)

You were made team hygiene officer, no doubt, so you could put your special services training to good use. In your last mission, you patched up several of The Computer's valuable agents, who had just discovered the truth about rumors of packs of wild dogs marauding in the food vat areas. Blood everywhere; most unhygienic.

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Recently, Internal Security has zealously increased its efforts to uncover and execute members of the Psion secret society. Of course everyone expects some harassment from Internal Security, but the present vendetta has gone too far. Your Control has ordered you to eliminate known Internal Security agents as part of a wider effort to make Internal Security back off. You strongly suspect Mortimer-O-TBI-2 and Roger-O-CWE-2 to be Internal Security agents; one of them is posing as a Mystic.

Control's last telepathic message said another Psion who might help you is in this Troubleshooter team. He is either Bobby-O-SYA-2, Amos-O-BYA-4 or, strangely enough, Mortimer-O-TBI-2.

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife

Datapad and stylus

Flashlight

First aid kit

(4) Smoke grenades (they help cover your disappearing act; BLUE)

(2) ORANGE laser barrels

Jumpsuit

ORANGE canvas backpack

Utility belt and pouches

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit ORANGE reflex armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

(4) StimuGo injections (see GM for details)

## Mortimer-O-TBI-2

### Male Technical Services IntSec Technical Services Loyalty Officer

**Actual service group:** Technical Services (spying on Internal Security (spying on Technical Services))

**Mutation:** Empathy

**Society:** Illuminati (degree 2), infiltrating Mystics (degree 2)

**Secret Skills:** Drug Procurement 02, Gloating 11, WMD 15

**Background:** Your credo is 'Survival Through Superior Firepower'. Lasers and other weapons feel very comfortable in your hands. You obtained a force sword some time ago, even though it's a BLUE-Clearance weapon. Though learning how to use it did you in, you learned from your mistakes and wielded the thing fairly well in your new incarnation. Unfortunately, you had to ditch the sword just weeks ago during an unexpected residence inspection.

Your skill with weapons makes an Internal Security cover natural for you. You purposely chose a Mystic second cover, figuring correctly that you'd make a lousy Mystic. Anyone looking carefully will see right through your Mystic identity to your Internal Security cover and stop there, satisfied or unwilling to dig further.

Recently, though, some doubt was cast on your cover. While you were shooting at the laser target range, The Computer politely asked you for a conference (never a pleasant event). After a tense little chat about a recently terminated friend's interest in Internal Security, and an exhortation to root out evil traitors, The Computer signed off. Recalling your friend had a similar chat just before his demise, you realize you desperately need to do something to vindicate yourself—like expose someone, anyone. That will get The Computer off your back and also strengthen your cover as an Internal Security agent.

After you were assigned to the team as loyalty officer you heard a rumor that a teammate, Bobby-O-SYE-2, is connected with the Death Leopards. He just needs to perform one treasonous act and you'll be able to serve The Computer.

### SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Your Illuminati superior gives you solid information that Roger-O-CWE-2 is a spy for R&D. The coded message reads, 'Use this information to establish control over Roger-O-CWE-2 by means of blackmail or similar coercion. Do not kill him nor allow him to be killed. Further instructions will follow.'

### PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Lucky personal throwing knife ('Rita') (ILLEGAL)

Ordinary non-throwable knife

Datapad and stylus

Flashlight

(4) ORANGE laser barrels

Jumpsuit

ORANGE canvas backpack

Utility belt and pouches

### ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)

Suit ORANGE reflex armor

Series 1300 PDC

Com 2

Barrel blade (fits on end of laser barrel, functions as sword)

Giant Metal Plate (worn over or under reflex)

# VAPORS DON'T SHOOT BACK

## Outdoors arbitrary encounter tables

One thing sure to cause a sophisticated roleplayer to pitch a fit is a random encounter table. State-of-the-art design theory frowns upon such mission elements as either unnecessary padding or lazy game design. 'If the encounters are significant, plan them into the mission and develop them properly. Otherwise, leave them out.'

Benighted fools that we are, we *like* these primitive roleplaying tools. We use 'arbitrary' encounter tables as springboards for improvisation. You're welcome to use our tables, or make your own or simply decree arbitrary encounters on impulse. We suggest you purposely avoid detailed preparation for arbitrary encounters. Because such encounters are less critical to the mission, you can afford to be more freewheeling, imaginative and irresponsible—in short, have more fun.

However, because these encounters are supposed to be unimportant and lots of fun, go easy on the death and destruction. Nuisances and annoyances are fine, but losing a PC to some arbitrary bear or earthquake is a bummer.

### ■ Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table

Roll 1d20 and run the corresponding encounter. If it isn't appropriate for the situation, modify it, roll again or create your own encounter.

| Roll  | Encounter                           | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
|-------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-2   | Hunting party of 4-8 savages        | They wear no armor, but carry bows and arrows and hunting frisbees with razor-sharp edges (O5K impact). If the savages outnumber the PCs, they set an ambush. If there are more PCs, the savages follow the PCs and try to nab a straggler.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 3-4   | Tree snare                          | A loop attached to a sapling snaps one PC into the air (roll to see who gets flipped), breaking his leg (Wounded) and spilling his gear on the ground. The unlucky fellow cannot get himself down easily and can't walk without medical treatment. A PC who succeeds in a Violence or Chutzpah roll can hobble along with a splint and gritted teeth.                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 5-6   | Covered pit                         | This deep hole might be an Old Reckoning cesspool, storm drain or basement, or hunting pit filled with dull stakes (the savages aren't too smart). Randomly determine who falls in, but allow him a Violence/Agility check to grab the edge. Victims who fall take S3M armor-piercing impact damage and cannot climb out without help.                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| 7-8   | Skunk                               | PCs must make Violence/Agility checks to avoid spray. Odor lingers. Eternally.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 9-10  | Snake                               | A poisonous snake bites one of the PCs, who twitches, convulses and spasms for two days before recovering. The victim is down until he recovers. Recovery is as if healing a wound. Until recovered, the PC is too weak and debilitated to walk without assistance, but he may perform normally in any combat round if he can first succeed in a Violence check.<br>When near a road or highway, change this encounter to a single well-armed crawler manned by eight gung-ho death troopers. See death trooper on the NPC roster.) |
| 11-12 | Grizzly bear                        | A crazed bear attacks the party and fights until dead. It moves at sprint speed and its fur serves as I1 armor. It makes two claw attacks each round (Violence 13, S4K impact damage). Only a killing shot to the head stops this bear instantly. All other killing wounds take effect two rounds later. (Note: This could be a short mission for several citizens unless you give the party ample opportunity for ranged fire.)                                                                                                    |
| 13-14 | Bull and harem                      | A herd of 15 cows is led by a gigantic bull that charges if PCs advance. The bull moves at sprint speed, has natural I1 armor, Violence 11, and does S4K impact damage with its horns (S4D vs. hardened armor).                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 15-16 | Harmless animal(s)                  | Your choice of deer, goats, birds or squirrels. Describe these creatures as though the PCs have never seen them before. Don't be surprised if the Troubleshooters are hard on these unwitting Commie traitors.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 17-18 | Natural event                       | Use falling tree limbs (or whole trees), quicksand or an earthquake. Roll 1d20 for earthquake severity: 1 = slight vibration; 20 = 'Where'd the dome go?'                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| 19-20 | Exit point for the Bermuda Triangle | This is always a favorite. Use it whenever you want, no matter what else is rolled. The Wreck of the <i>Edmund Fitzgerald</i> . A grounded squadron of P-47s. Whatever.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

### ■ Scrub/Open terrain arbitrary encounter table

Roll 1d20 and run the corresponding encounter. If it isn't appropriate for the situation, modify it, roll again or create your own encounter.

| Roll  | Encounter            | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|-------|----------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-2   | Savages              | See 1-2 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table. Triple the number of warriors and arm some with spears, slings and shields.                                                                                                      |
| 3-4   | Wild horse herd      | 1d20 horses led by a magnificent stallion thunder past, narrowly avoiding the PCs. However, if the PCs attack or try to catch one, the stallion attacks at sprint speed (Violence O5, tramples for S5D impact damage).                  |
| 5-6   | Buzzards             | They circle high above the PCs, waiting. Armed Forces patrols know that where there are buzzards, there are often Commies and traitors. See strike force troopers on the NPC roster.                                                    |
| 7-8   | Locusts              | A veritable plague descends upon the PCs. Visibility is reduced to zero. Vehicles crash unless stopped immediately. Lasts 1d20 rounds.                                                                                                  |
| 9-10  | Snake                | Same as 9-10 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table (including death trooper option).                                                                                                                                            |
| 11-12 | Harmless animals     | Your choice of prairie dogs, antelopes, turtles, spiders, etc. More ammo wasters.                                                                                                                                                       |
| 13-18 | Natural events       | Choose one of these possibilities:                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|       | Dust devils          | Small dust tornadoes that knock things over and Snafu communications.                                                                                                                                                                   |
|       | Prairie fire         | Moves at run speed, consuming all in its path, and seems to pursue the PCs (burns on I1 or less, S6M energy damage).                                                                                                                    |
|       | Earthquake           | See 17-18 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table.                                                                                                                                                                                |
| 19-20 | Gamemaster's special | Close your eyes and make one up. Conan. Goblins. Venusians. Republicans. Use it whenever you want, no matter what else is rolled. Then do some fancy footwork to rationalize your frivolous impulse. Isn't it fun being the Gamemaster? |

### ■ Mountain arbitrary encounter table

Roll 1d20 and run the corresponding encounter. If it isn't appropriate for the situation, modify it, roll again or create your own encounter.

| Roll  | Encounter            | Description                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|-------|----------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1-2   | Savage hunting party | See 1-2 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table. Arm a couple of warriors with slugthrowers.                                                                                                          |
| 3-4   | Harmless animals     | Your choice of mountain goats, eagles, chipmunks, etc.                                                                                                                                                      |
| 5-6   | Buzzards             | See Encounter 3 on the Scrub/Open Terrain arbitrary encounter table.                                                                                                                                        |
| 7-8   | Mountain lion        | This ferocious creature surprises and attacks a single PC. This lion moves so fast it makes three attacks (Violence 15) each round (claws do S4K impact damage, S4S vs. hardened armor).                    |
| 9-10  | Snake                | See 9-10 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table.                                                                                                                                                     |
| 11-12 | Bear                 | See 11-12 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table.                                                                                                                                                    |
| 13-16 | Natural events:      | Choose one of three possibilities:                                                                                                                                                                          |
|       | Rockslides           | Roll 1d20 for severity: 1 = small pebbles bury boots; 20 = boot buried under three meters of rock.                                                                                                          |
|       | Earthquakes          | See 17-18 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table.                                                                                                                                                    |
|       | Storm                | A thunderstorm starts brewing overhead; lightning strikes where you aim it (Violence O4, W1K energy, armor-piercing).                                                                                       |
| 17-18 | Mine shaft           | An abandoned dark tunnel, shored up by rotting timbers, leads deep into the mountain. It's obviously dangerous, but it looks like a swell place to hide. A couple of small cave-ins may discourage the PCs. |
| 19-20 | The silly option     | Mountain goats with mutant powers. The last of the Mohicans. Robbie the Robot. Trust the Force, Luke.                                                                                                       |

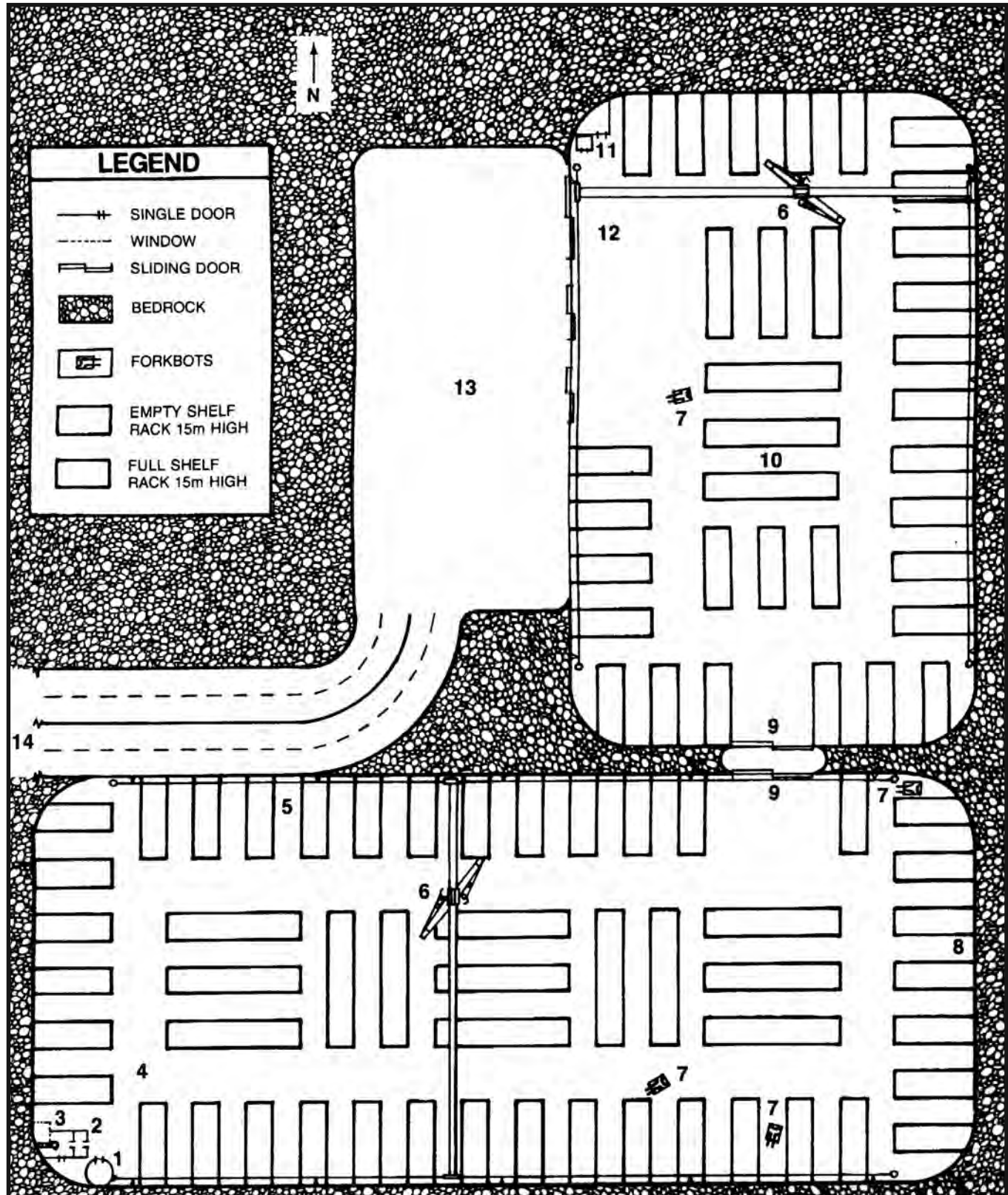
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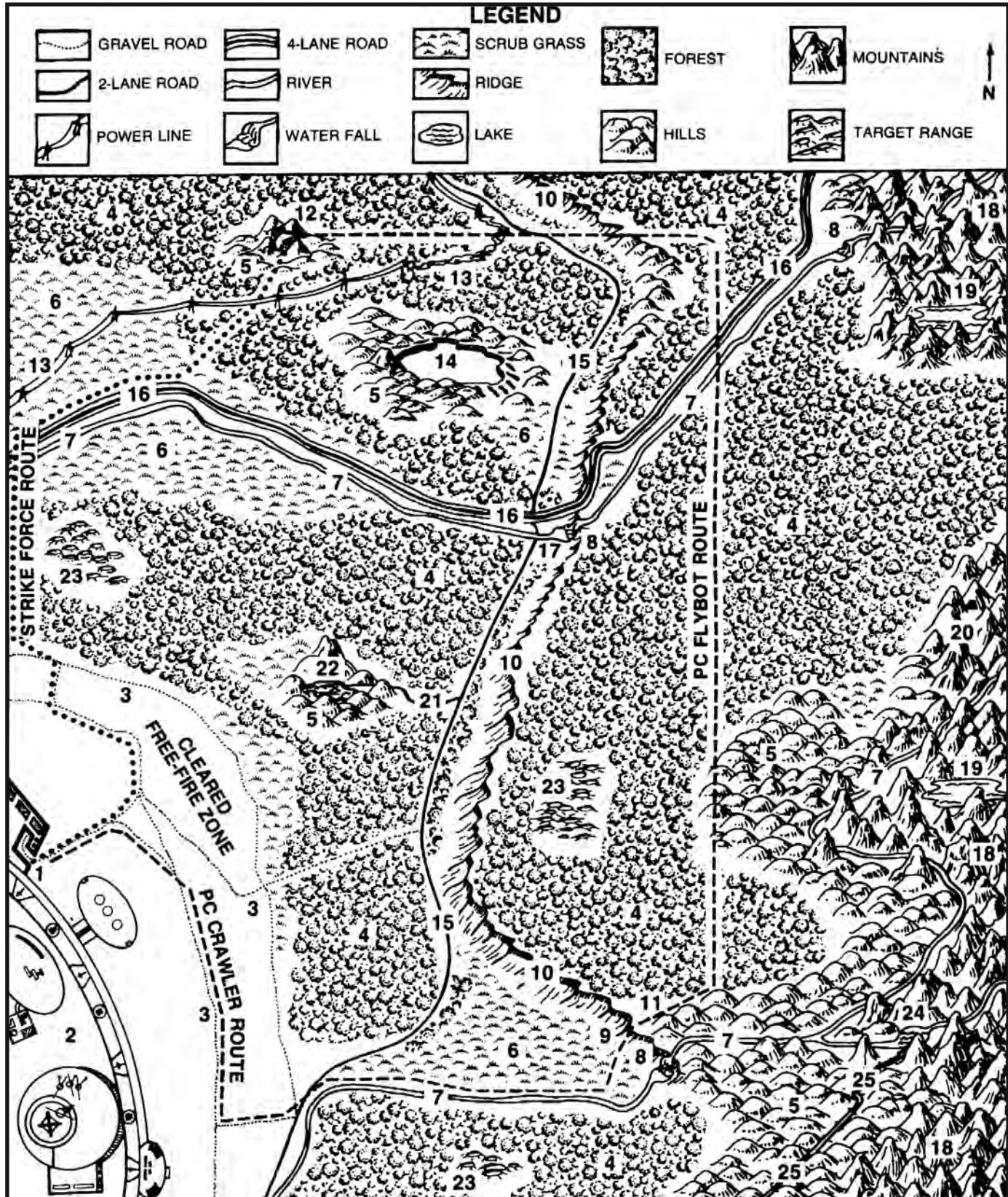
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:SECURITY = ULTRAVIOLET. This information restricted. If your security clearance is below ULTRAVIOLET, report immediately to nearest termination center.

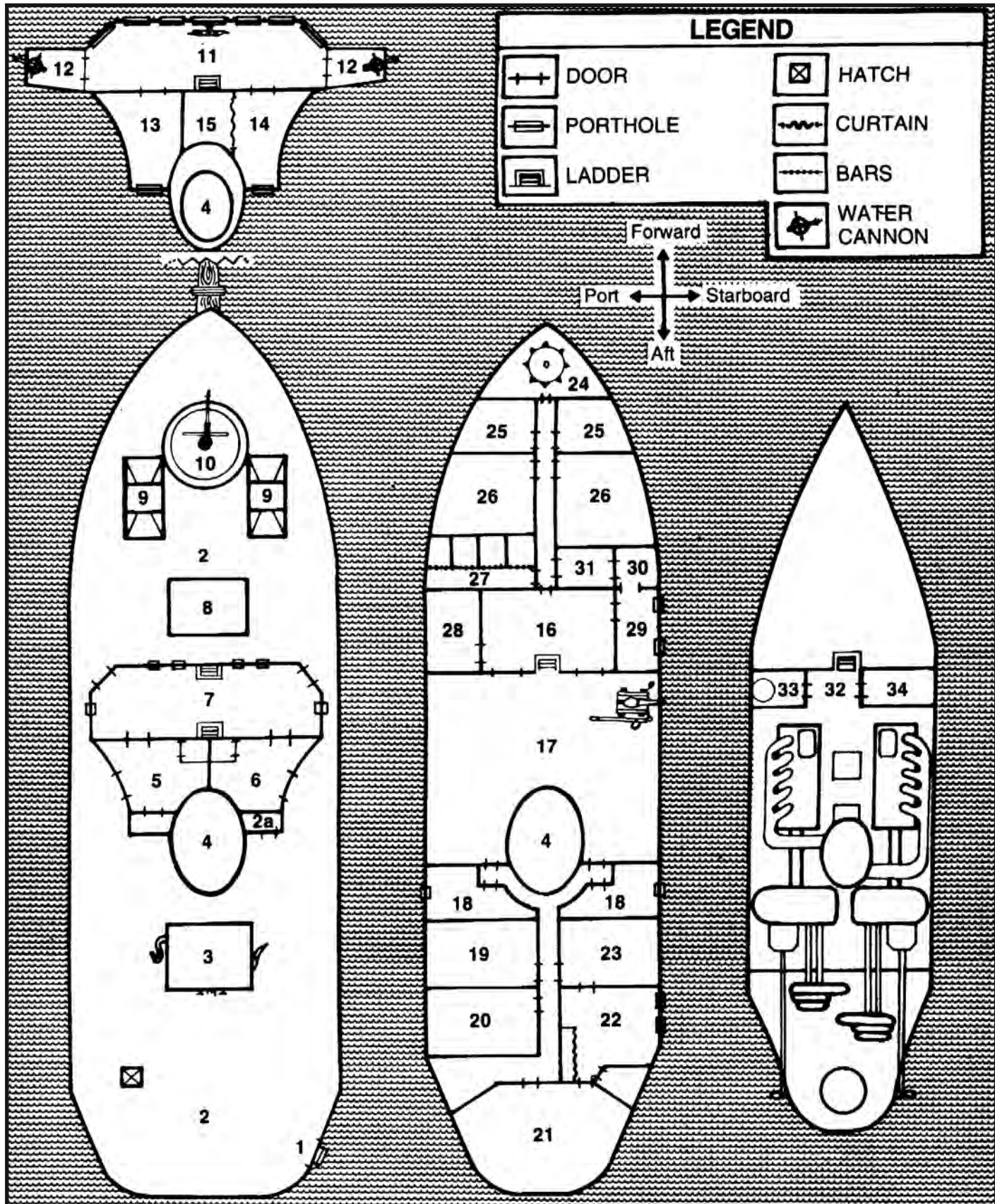




:TITLE = VDSB MAP 2 / OUTDOORS, QUAD NE (ALTURAS OUTBACK)  
 :TYPE = TERRAIN FEATURE PROJECTION / SCALE: 1 CM = 1 KM / NORTH AT TOP  
 :CONFIGURATION = HARDCOPY PRINTOUT  
 :SOURCE = OUTPATROL.CARTOGRAPHY.SUBSYSTEM  
 :SECURITY = ULTRAVIOLET. This information restricted. If your security clearance is below ULTRAVIOLET, report immediately to nearest termination center.



:TITLE = VDSB MAP 3 / TJC RESERVOIR FIRE & RESCUE BOAT [INOPERABLE]  
 :TYPE = DECK PLAN / SCALE: 1 SQUARE = 1 METER / SQUARE GRID CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE, CONTACT PLC  
 :CONFIGURATION = HARDCOPY PRINTOUT  
 :SOURCE = BUCK.U.MUSEUM.SUBSYSTEM  
 :SECURITY = ULTRAVIOLET. This information restricted. If your security clearance is below ULTRAVIOLET, report immediately to nearest termination center.



# Information Inquiry Form 375A11/A00002-021

Distributed by the Office of Information Collection and the Office of Forms and Vouchers, PLC

Name \_\_\_\_\_ - - -

Service firm \_\_\_\_\_

Authorization \_\_\_\_\_

Are you now, or have you ever been a:

Communist?  Yes  No

Mutant?  Yes  No

If yes: Reg. number \_\_\_\_\_, or  Unregistered

Secret society member?  Yes  No

### Information Access Method Preference

Please indicate the method by which you would prefer to access the information. (Note: Whereas we will endeavor to provide the information in the preferred way, this may not be possible.)

- Cmail direct AlphaNet link
- Cmail document in SecurePaq
- Send a copy of the document to selected confession booth  
State coordinates of preference: \_\_\_\_\_ Alternate: \_\_\_\_\_
- Send a datachip via homing dart
- Send via Fed-R-ALL Express Economy  
Preferred next of kin to receive document: \_\_\_\_\_
- Inspect original documented data item at local CPU Datacenter  
Indicate minimum monetary incentive provision: \_\_\_\_\_

### The Computer is your friend. Are you The Computer's friend?

Yes  No  Other (please explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Date info desired by \_\_\_\_\_ Date info needed by \_\_\_\_\_

2nd alternate date \_\_\_\_\_ 3rd alternate date \_\_\_\_\_

4th alternate date \_\_\_\_\_ 5th alternate date \_\_\_\_\_

I heard about the availability of this information from my

- Briefing officer (please state full name): \_\_\_\_\_
- Troubleshooter Headquarters mission dispatcher  
(full name and current sector assignment): \_\_\_\_\_
- Secret society contact (full name and society): \_\_\_\_\_
- Team leader (full name): \_\_\_\_\_
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

CPU is open to feedback in respect of the handling of efficient and adequate information assessment, storage and dispersal. In requesting this information, do you feel that the data provided in your most recent briefing fell short of the optimum threshold required to complete your task in a satisfactory fashion?

- No**, the information was entirely adequate, and my own shortcomings represent the primary driver behind this request.
- Yes** (to adequately handle your feedback and ensure timely processing, please explain in no fewer than 250 words; please be clear and concise; and do not repeat any individual word more than once).

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### INFORMATION NEEDED. (Please be as specific as possible.)

Verification of requester's identity. Please apply four (4) distinctive forms of verifiable personal cellular material within the spaces provided below.

|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|

**Purpose of information request** (optional; though you are not required to state the purpose for your request, doing so may assist Internal Security in clearing temporary consideration for deliberation in respect of a registered application to acquire the participation of an executive deputy administrative officer to review your request):

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY! DO NOT WRITE IN THE SPACE BELOW!

**Attention Processors:** To fulfill request for information, secure approval from ULTRAVIOLET-Clearance personnel in all service groups (initials or identitag below):

CPU \_\_\_\_\_ PS \_\_\_\_\_ IS \_\_\_\_\_ IS/InfCom \_\_\_\_\_  
TS \_\_\_\_\_ AF \_\_\_\_\_ IS/Sup \_\_\_\_\_ IS/InOff \_\_\_\_\_  
HPD&MC \_\_\_\_\_ PLC \_\_\_\_\_ IS/AssSup \_\_\_\_\_ IS/InOut \_\_\_\_\_

### Result:

- Return for clarification  Information not found
- Requestor terminated
- Request filed (state reason on attached sheet and submit to IntSec)
- Information unavailable at this security clearance
- Please have a(n) IntSec officer/Vulture Squadron/brainscrub specialist (delete as applicable) contact me

Undersigned acknowledges that all information made available to him/her is considered privileged and highly sensitive. Any report is classified unless otherwise stated. Should this information fall into the hands of enemies of The Computer, undersigned agrees to report for immediate reprimand and/or termination. Pursuant to The Computer's directive 199/3468 section 3 subsection C paragraph f, 'Reduction of Paperwork Through Multiple-Purpose Documents', undersigned also assumes responsibility for reservoir maintenance bots in Waste Recycling Subdivision, agrees to supervise next Semiannual Loyalty and Patriotism Festival and requests information pamphlet C-27 'Captain Botaroo and Foodvat Show You How to Spot a Traitor.'

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness #1 \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Witness #2 \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Bot Witness #1 \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Counter-signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_