

PARANOIA™

Mr Bubbles

Original *PARANOIA* design

DAN GELBER
GREG COSTIKYAN
ERIC GOLDBERG

New *PARANOIA* edition

ALLEN VARNEY
GARETH HANRAHAN

PARANOIA™

Mr Bubbles

Credits

ALLEN VARNEY

Writer/Scapegoat

RICHARD FORD

Editing /Drillbot

TONY EMSON

Interior Illustrations/Treasonous Propaganda

WILL CHAPMAN

Layout/Infrared drone

CHARLOTTE LAW

Proofreader/Intsec goon

DAN GELBER

GREG COSTIKYAN

ERIC GOLDBERG

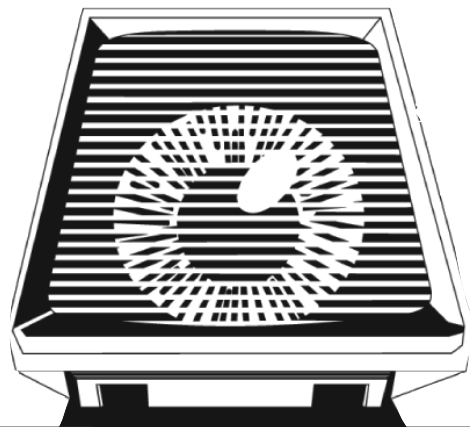
Original game design & development/
Building committee

THE COMPUTER

Looking after your best interests

Contents

Introduction	3
That 'New Mission' smell	9
What the market will bear	13
You'll never eat lunch in this town again	16
Crime Scene Incinerators	20
Avengers, Dissemble!	22
Every Scrubbot my Enemy	25
Theres no briefing like debriefing	27



Security Clearance **ULTRAVIOLET** **WARNING:**

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen
of Security Clearance **VIOLET** or lower is treason punishable by
punishable by prolonged disintegration, starting with your toes.

TM & Copyright © 1983, 1987, 2010 by Eric Goldberg & Greg Costikyan. All Rights Reserved. Mongoose Publishing Ltd., Authorised User. Based on material published in previous editions of **PARANOIA**.

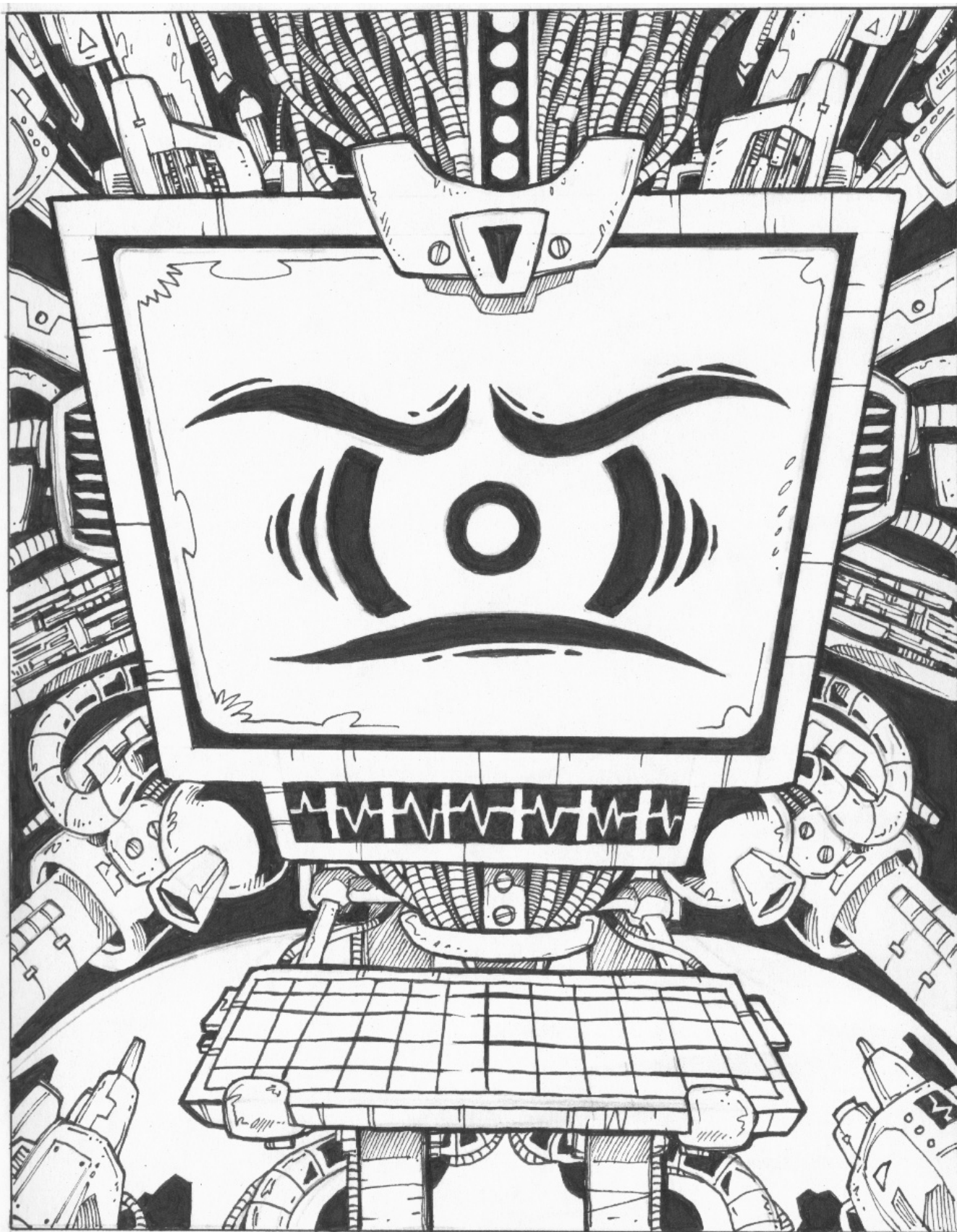
ILLUMINATI is a registered trademark of Steve Jackson Games and is used by permission.

The reproduction of material from this book for personal or corporate profit, by photographic, electronic, or other means of storage and retrieval, is prohibited. You may copy character sheets, record sheets, checklists and tables for personal use.

E-mail questions and comments to **Mongoose Publishing** at sales@mongoosepublishing.com or write to **52-54 Cricklade Road, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 8AF, UNITED KINGDOM**.

On the World Wide Web: www.mongoosepublishing.com.

Published by Mongoose Publishing, Ltd. Publication MGP 6642. Published 2010. Printed In USA.





MISTER BUBBLES

WARNING: ULTRAVIOLET CLEARANCE

Only the Gamemaster in charge of running the mission for everyone else should read this mission. If you intend to be a player, you'll enjoy the game much more if you haven't learned how to avoid all the horrific... uh, spoiled all the fun surprises for yourself.

No, really. Stop reading now and find some other pleasant diversion with which to pass the time. Check out www.Paranoia-Live.net, perhaps. Or television can be awfully nice this time of year.

Okay, now that we've shooed all your players out of the room, here's what you, the Gamemaster, need to do.

Consider the provided characters

On pages 5-8 we provide six pre-made Troubleshooters for use with this mission. Photocopy them, cut them out and give them to the players. If you want you could have your players make their own. Note, though, the six characters included here are designed to heighten potential for conflict, and the mission has some cues specifically tailored for them. If you create new characters, review the mission to determine how these new characters should fit into it.

Each character has two narrow specialties left blank. Players may fill these in before the mission begins or, with your permission, select them when inspiration hits along the way. They each have one tic chosen, so each player starts with 30 Perversity points. However, let players pick out a second tic before the game begins to get 5 more points.

Whether you use these characters or create new ones from scratch, you need to secretly generate Access and Power attribute values for each one. Do not inform the players of their attribute values!

Pre-game preparation

First, read through the whole mission. You don't need to memorise any details; you just want to get a sense of how everything fits together. Start with just the episode summaries; then go back and read each episode in more detail.

Second, review the associated handouts. Note how the characters relate to each other and to the nature of the mission. You'll need to tear out or copy a few things to give to your players during the game. This includes:

- ☞ The pregenerated characters (overleaf), if you are using them.
- ☞ The Mission Alert, which you hand to your players in Episode 1.
- ☞ Several copies (at least six or eight, maybe up to a dozen) of the Spam E-Mail page, cut up into individual pieces. You will be giving each of your players one or more (a lot more) of these during the course of play from Episode 3 on.
- ☞ One or more copies of the Mission Assessment forms cut up into individual pieces, which you hand out among your players at debriefing.

Third, roll and record Power and Access attributes for each character.

Fourth, if you can, get a bunch of poker chips. They really do aid in the tracking and awarding of Perversity.

Mission background

A hacker in the Computer Phreaks secret society, Don-R-PNU-4 (aka 'Alley G8R') has decided he is tired of receiving so much e-mail spam... er, 'unsolicited mandatory sales material'... from independent PLC service firm contractors on his PDC. Not satisfied with merely bouncing the spam back to its originators, he has decided to physically punish the spammers by inserting a bit of viral programming he calls 'Mister Bubbles' into all scrubots in the area. Infected bots now consider spamming unclean and apply their cleaning implements excessively to those responsible... with potentially lethal results.

This is *not* the problem your players' Troubleshooters are supposed to deal with. Their first mission assignment is *supposed* to be a routine investigation of missing reactor materials. However, a small 'incident' with a transbot takes the unwitting team to the wrong place and before they know it, they're on the trail of the rogue scrubots.

Mission summary

Here's a quick rundown of the sections of this mission:



1: That 'new mission' smell

The Troubleshooters receive their very first mission alert and eagerly do their best to report for duty. After a close call at the transbot platform, they're taken to a place that might be their briefing room and discover someone who might be their briefing officer having what appears to be a nervous breakdown. Forced to make the best of it, they learn what little they can about a scrubot-related problem which might be the assignment they're supposed to complete. Then a helpful jackobot escorts them to PLC for outfitting.

2: What the market will bear

Actually, the helpful jackobot escorts them to the nearest IR Market, a not-exactly-legal mall that is equal parts infomercial and flea market. There, dozens of motivated businessmen are waiting to separate the Troubleshooters from whatever credit they still possess, selling them everything from junk souvenirs to spare bot brains to surface-to-air missiles... if the price is right.

3: You'll never eat lunch in this town again

Eventually brought back together again, the team witnesses a scrubot attack on PLC employee Marco-G-BUD. The team (hopefully) leaps to his rescue. But just as it seems they have been thrown back onto the track of their mission, a casting director from HPD&MC shanghai's them to fulfill a service firm service, auditioning for a new season of the reality-vid series *Shooters*. After taking on additional obligations and instructions, they hear about another scrubot attack and either volunteer or are ordered to investigate. About this same time, someone begins bombarding their PDCs with spam messages.

Numberless NPCs

A number of NPCs in the mission have no listed skills or other ratings. In general, if you need to make rolls for these NPCs, assume all their base skills are at 7. They have any common specialty (+4 more) that seems plausible, especially if it makes the situation more interesting. Low-clearance citizens generally have a laser pistol with a barrel or two of the appropriate color, but no armor; high-clearance citizens may pack a backup weapon with more punch and wear a layer of kevlar under their clothes.

4: Crime Scene Incinerators

This latest attack has occurred in a PLC Vat center. The team checks out the murdered shift supervisor and interrogates the scrubot suspect. Fortunately, the victim's office is full of clues. It looks like he was a spammer and some Computer Phreak is taking revenge. In fact, some of the spam the Troubleshooters have started receiving came from this guy. Who will be the scrubots' next victim? Even as they start thinking about Marco-G-BUD, whom they saved at the start of Chapter 3, the spam bombardment steps up.

5: Avengers, dissemble!

Maybe the team should help Marco-G-BUD survive (or not) what will surely be another attack on his person. Marco-G is helping his BLUE Clearance manager review a set of R&D prototypes for possible mainstream release. The Troubleshooters get dragged into the negotiations in a laboratory that turns out even more dangerous than it looks, as a combat-equipped 'WarScrubber' prototype scrubot is activated. Infected with the Mister Bubbles virus, it does its level best to kill Marco-G. It also informs every other scrubot in the area, and a horrific wave of industrial-strength cleaning doom descends on the lab. The Troubleshooters must find a back way out of the deathtrap.

6: Every scrubot my enemy

Whether they save or destroy Marco-G, the spam problem has gotten out of control: The team's own PDCs have been hijacked as spam-senders, and the scrubots now think they are part of the problem as well. A veritable army of scrubots comes after the Troubleshooters, who must flee on Transitions. The team races desperately across the sector to reach the pickup platform.

7: There's no briefing like debriefing

A transbot whisks the Troubleshooters back to Troubleshooter Central, where in a shocking example of rare coincidence they run into none other than virus writer Don-R-PNU-4. After a fairly easy capture and an unexpected sense of closure, the team strides confidently into debriefing... where someone they've never seen before asks them about a mission they've never heard of. Apparently they've been on the wrong assignment all along.

On the bright side, they seem to have earned the eternal gratitude of PLC... or at least, they've ended up on PLC's eternal junk-mail list.

Other play styles

'Mister Bubbles' is intended for Classic-style play but has been designed with some Straight-leaning tendencies (such as non-silly character names). If you want to play the mission Straight, we provide notes in each episode. In general, the Straight strategy is:

- ☞ Shift emphasis from random death to the risk of discovery. Troubleshooters who are constantly faced with imminent vaporization rarely bother to consider the consequences of their instinctive responses. If you reduce the imminent threat of dismemberment, being seen doing something you shouldn't—or not doing something you should—becomes a more pressing concern.
- ☞ Pay closer attention to Tension (Tension attention?), and make it clear when someone has been caught. A guard on monitor duty calls up on the PDC and inquires what's going on. The Computer may be less accessible; PCs have to work through mid-level managers and Internal Security goons. Levy small fines often; make execution rare. Encourage players to deal with treason with accusations instead of assassinations. Anyone who draws a gun on someone else had better be ready to explain why.
- ☞ Replace slapstick with uncomfortable humor. In Classic style, when something goes wrong, everyone laughs—even (especially) the victim—and you move on. In Straight style, when something goes wrong, it can be funny, but someone still has to deal with it. And every second that goes by increases the chances a camera will notice.
- ☞ Pay more attention to money. Charge small amounts—a credit or two—for routine things that the Troubleshooters do, such as using a transbot. They have a lot of money to start with but they'll eagerly flush it away in a snap if they think they won't need it.

You don't need to track expenses for everything, but making your players feel like they might need to keep some cash around—in other words, like their money is real—can add a distinctly Straight tone all by itself.

Playing 'Mister Bubbles' as a Zap-style mission is left as an exercise for the trigger-happy.

Character Portrait

Peter-R-WQR-1

Male PLC Hygiene Officer

Service firm: PowerPatch

Service firm type: Inventory System Updaters

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 903

Tics: Needs to have *exact* counts of things

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Gunther-R: I think we're outnumbered!

Peter-R: Of course we're outnumbered! Why, there must be— wait a second, I'll check. One... Two... Three... Four... *GAAAAAIGH!*

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 09

Con Games 17

Chutzpah 13

Bootlicking 01

Intimidation 01

No Matter How Clean Something Is,
Find One Little Thing Wrong 15

Stealth 09

Disguise 13

Shadowing 01

Next-to-Last One Out of the Room
in a Crisis 15

Violence 05

Energy Weapons 09

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware: 04

Make Noisy Annoying Machines
Even Noisier and More Annoying 10

Software 07

Data Search 11

Financial Systems 11

Bot Programming 01

Vehicle Programming 01

Encode Secret Message
in Otherwise Innocuous Data 13

Wetware 06

Pharmathrapy 10

Biosciences 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Violence,
Wetware)

Character Portrait

Gunther-R-BOK-1

Male Armed Forces Loyalty Officer

REGISTERED MUTANT

Service firm: Red Detectors

Service firm type: Threat Assessors

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 440

Tics: Absentmindedly gnaws on things he's holding.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Peter-R: How much ammo do you have left? I need to know exactly.

Gunther-R: [*Speak with a pen in your mouth*] Rr hh rbmt ffr flps mmph...

Peter-R: What?

Gunther-R: [*Take the pen out of your mouth*] I said, I have about four shots left.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 05

Intimidation 09

Bootlicking 01

Shout *Even Louder!!!* 11

Stealth 08

High Alert 12

Sleight of Hand 01

Violence 09

Energy Weapons 13

Projectile Weapons 13

Unarmed Combat 01

Draw and Holster Weapon in Slick-Looking Way 15

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 08

Mechanical Engineering 12

Chemical Engineering 01

Hit It Hard Enough to Make It Work

Once More Before Falling Apart 14

Software 05

Vehicle Programming 09

Financial Systems 01

Wetware 05

Medical 09

Outdoor Life 09

Cloning 01

Induce Vomiting in Self 11

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth,
Software)

Character Portrait

Dexter-R-FCP-1

Male Tech Services Equipment Guy

Service firm: ColorRight

Service firm type: Paint Control

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 478

Tics: Mistakes bots for people and vice versa.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Dexter-R: Ah, here's a handy jackobot to help with the gear.

Hunter-R: What? It's me, Hunter-R!

Dexter-R: Why are you impersonating a bot? Team Leader, I think Hunter-R is insane.

Guardbot: I am sorry, citizen. I do not understand your request. Please restate.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 04

[No specialties]

Stealth 08

Security Systems 12

Disguise 01

Hear Own Name Being Said by Others 14

Violence 06

Energy Weapons 10

Fine Manipulation 10

Projectile Weapons 01

Pratfall in a Way That Looks Like It Hurt
Worse Than It Did 12

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 09

Habitat Engineering 17

Nuclear Engineering 13

Bot Ops & Maintenance 01

Weapon & Armor Maintenance 01

Make Measurements of Parts
Without Need for Tools 15

Software 09

Bot Programming 13

Data Analysis 01

Convince Guardbot to Seek Other Target 15

Wetware 04

Biosciences 08

Bioweapons 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2
(Management, Wetware)

Dexter-R-FCP-1

Male Tech Services Equipment Guy

Mutation: Electroshock

Society: Mystics (degree 2);
actually Illuminati (degree 3)

Secret skills: Drug Procurement 06, Meditation 06, Propaganda (Mystics) 06

Background

Maybe it's just because you're a fair bit older than most, but everyone seems so preoccupied with... everything... these days. What is it with these youngsters? They're so... motivated... all the time. They're going to make themselves ill if they try to constantly maintain such a frantic pace. They should learn to relax!

Part of your recent promotion to RED Clearance included training as an Equipment Guy. Hopefully nobody has a weapon malfunction or anything... 'cause that's not really your strong point. Ducts and plumbing, on the other hand: that's right up your alley! Hopefully the team will get lots of ducts and plumbing issued to it.

As for your presence on this team as a representative of Technical Services, you've heard there are some serious problems in the field with equipment not being thoroughly painted in its proper Security Clearance color. Whenever you see places or equipment that have been incorrectly color-labeled, shoot it with the paintball gun issued to you. A follow-up crew will look for the signs you have left and re-paint the designated item appropriately. You have a limited supply of ammunition. Do not misuse it!

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact in the Mystics tells you, 'Whoa, man, if you boil Sandallathon in water and then take it with an Asperquaint chaser, you can see through walls for hours. It's totally safe and legal, too!' He sells you some Sandallathon, but he doesn't have a line on Asperquaint right now. 'Sorry, man. Maybe next weekcycle.'

Your contact in the Illuminati finds this very interesting, and wants you to investigate these drug interactions further, as well as other possible interesting combinations of drugs. The Illuminati will pay up to 100 credits per drug interaction experiment you report on. Also, he warns you that the Quality Standard for hygiene is about to 'change radically' and that you should keep an extra pair of shoes around, 'just in case'.

It occurs to you that taking random drug combinations yourself might not be entirely safe. However, if you get someone else to unwittingly take mixed drugs and then report the effects to you, maybe you can still make a little money...

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

(20) Sandallathon/Sleepy-Sleepy tablets
(1) Rolactin/Happy Life tablet (BLUE clearance)
(5) bags TrippleCheeze Cruncheetym (Y)
50 metres of plasticord
Heat-resistant mittens (ORANGE)
Sunglasses (ORANGE)
Psychedelic postcards
Stungun
(2) RED laser barrels
Red canvas backpack

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflex armor
Series 1300 PDC
Basic toolkit
Paintball gun
(2) shots each of red, orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo and violet paint

Gunther-R-BOK-1

Male Armed Forces Loyalty Officer REGISTERED MUTANT

Mutation: Matter Eater (REGISTERED)

Society: Pro Tech (degree 1)

Secret skills: R&D Gear Tinkering 10, Jargon 18, WMD 11

Background

Man oh man, you love gadgets! If it's technological, you can't get enough of it. The more complicated the better! You're a complete sucker for anything with lots of blinking lights or digital readouts. It's a shame the latest new tech-toys always cost so much; you just can't resist spending your money on them. Hopefully your new life as a Troubleshooter will give you more access to the latest fadware. At least, that always seems to be the case on the vidshows.

You don't know much about what a Loyalty Officer does, but the fact that they gave it to you instead of someone from Internal Security suggests there's going to be an Internal Security undercover agent on the team watching you!

As for your presence on this Troubleshooter team, it obviously indicates the mission is expected to come up against heavy combat opposition. Why else would Armed Forces be needed? No doubt your enemies are going to ambush you when you least expect it; the more normal the situation appears, the more alert you're going to have to be! Good thing you've got a backup weapon. Or three.

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'HPD&MC is working up a promotional contest in conjunction with Technical Services! A small number of bots around Alpha Complex have had a special Golden Pill placed inside of them, worth 5,000 credits, which they will give to randomly-selected citizens on the day of the contest. But if you shake hands with them a certain way, if they have one of the Pills, they'll give it to you now before the contest starts.' She shows you the handshake.

It occurs to you that there are other secret societies, such as the Frankenstein Destroyers, who might discover the existence of the Golden Pills if they damage or destroy any bots. If you see anyone doing such a thing, you should make sure they don't take a Golden Pill (which should be yours!) from the debris.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Bullhorn (with MegaBooster!)
Electric lantern (BLUE clearance, with digital battery life counter!)
Stopwatch (YELLOW, picosecond accuracy!)
Thermometer (4 different temperature scales!)
Binoculars (ORANGE, with laser rangefinder)
Energy pistol (YELLOW, NuGrid targeting)
(2) Grenades (with piezoelectric pin!)
Sword (variable load balancing!)
(3) RED laser barrels
Red canvas backpack

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflex armor
Series 1300 PDC
Loyalty Notepad (lockable)
Key to Notepad

Peter-R-WQR-1

Male PLC Hygiene Officer

Mutation: Hypersenses

Society: Free Enterprise (degree 3)

Secret skills: Cash Hacking 09, Marketing & Advertising 09, Forgery 11

Background

You're very believable. You've always got a way to work the system and find another angle—whether that's convincing someone of a lie, finding just the right evidence in the online data logs, or just plain pretending to be someone else and slipping out of the room before it's too late. All of this contributes nicely to the Bottom Line—that is, your long-term monetary outlook. This Troubleshooter work is going to be a terrific stepping-stone on your path to financial independence; look upon everything you encounter as a possible way to make more money. Is it bolted down? If not, maybe you should take it and find a place to sell it. If so, maybe you should unbolt it, then ask the question again.

You've received only basic training as a Hygiene Officer at this point, but you believe you are well-suited for the task. In fact, you hope to eventually define an Ultimate Quantitative Numeric Scale for assessing hygiene—the most rigorous and accurate Alpha Complex has ever seen. Perhaps it could be called the 'Peter-R Scale.'

As an Inventory Supply Checker by training, you understand your presence on this Troubleshooter team obviously indicates the success of the mission will be judged by the thoroughness with which assigned mission equipment is tracked. Clear records of all hardware issued to and utilised by team members will be paramount. If such records are not provided, you'll just have to make them yourself.

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'Several Technical Services are conspiring to engineer a shortage of bot parts in an attempt to drive up repair prices. Nobody but Free Enterprise should overtly manipulate the market like that, so we need to teach them a lesson. Bots will need to be protected from damage for the next few weeks. Don't let your fellow Troubleshooters indiscriminately bang bots around like they normally would. If, however, you do encounter damaged or destroyed bots, collect as many parts as you can to contribute to our secret stockpile. When the shortage hits, we'll flood the market and undersell those Technical Services fools!'

It occurs to you, however, that if you keep the parts for yourself and sell them just as the shortage hits, before Free Enterprise floods the market, you could personally stand to make a small fortune—as long as your Free Enterprise bosses don't find out you're working such a deal on the side.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Sunglasses (ORANGE clearance)
(2) Pyroxidine/Wakey-Wakey tabs
Teela O'Malley pocket mirror
Comb, red
Calculator (INDIGO)
Slide rule (YELLOW)
Crowbar (YELLOW)
Dental floss, 30m
(2) RED laser barrels
Red canvas backpack

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflex armor
Series 1300 PDC
Hygiene Testing Kit
Instant Cleans-O-Spray

Character Portrait

Ginger-R-UYT-1

Female CPU Team Leader

Service firm: Eye in the Skypanel

Service firm type: Facility Surveillance Control

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 442

Tics: Repeats back what was said to her, phrased as a question.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Jennifer-R: We should flank them on the right side.

Ginger-R: Flank them on the right side?

Jennifer-R: Right. You still have that grenade, right?

Ginger-R: I still have the grenade?

Jennifer-R: If you don't stop that, I'm going to kill you.

Ginger-R: You're going to kill me?

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06

Oratory 10

Hygiene 01

Distract Others Long Enough to Start Running 12

Stealth 06

Sneaking 10

High Alert 01

Fit Into Dangerously Narrow Spaces 12

Violence 09

Energy Weapons 13

Hand Weapons 17

Vehicle Weapons 01

Jackbot Wrestling 15

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 07

Chemical Engineering 11

Habitat Engineering 01

Software 05

Bot Programming 09

Data Analysis 09

C-Bay 01

Operating Systems 01

Wetware 07

Outdoor Life 11

Psychotherapy 01

Feign Effects of Sedation 13

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Hardware, Software)

Character Portrait

Hunter-R-BCW-1

Male R&D Happiness Officer

Service firm: Kaboom Ordnance Prototyping

Service firm type: Weapon Effectiveness

Assessors

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 250

Tics: Will bet a credit on the outcome of just about anything.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

[Gunther-R is defusing a bomb.]

Hunter-R: Hey, mutie. Bet you a credit you screw this up and it explodes.

Gunther-R: *Will you shut up!* This thing is sonically trig—
[Explosion.]

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 08

Moxie 12

Interrogation 16

Con Games 01

Bootlicking 01

Describe Intense Action

in Breathtaking Detail 14

Stealth 04

[No specialties]

Violence 06

Energy Weapons 10

Thrown Weapons 10

Demolition 01

Poke 'Em in the Eye With a Finger! 12

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 06

Electronic Engineering 10

Habitat Engineering 01

Software 08

Calculate the Odds to Two Decimal Places 14

Wetware 08

Suggestion 12

Psychotherapy 12

Cloning 01

Outdoor Life 01

Identify Poison by Taste (Only a Small Taste Though, Really!) 14

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Hardware)

Character Portrait

Jennifer-R-BCW-1

Female HPD&MC Recording Officer

Service firm: Loyal Picky Proofing Firm

Service firm type: Semantics Control

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 652

Tics: If you can't be certain, be confident!

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Peter-R: Are the last of those Commies gone?

Jennifer-R: Uh... All gone! They must have retreated.

Peter-R: Say, does this tacnuke look armed to you?

Jennifer-R: Pshaw. No, I'm sure it's harmless.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06

Chutzpah 10

Bootlicking 01

Stealth 07

Concealment 11

Sleight of Hand 11

Surveillance 01

Security Systems 01

Smell Something Funny, Assuming

Something Smells Funny 13

Violence 06

Energy Weapons 10

Agility 10

Unarmed Combat 10

Fine Manipulation 01

Thrown Weapons 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 06

Weapon/Armor Maintenance 10

Chemical Engineering 01

Weird Camera Effects 12

Software 06

Hacking 10

Data Analysis 01

Convince Food-Vendobots to Spit Out One Extra 12

Wetware 09

Hold Breath All the Way to Unconsciousness 15

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Management, Violence)

Jennifer-R-BCW-1

Female HPD&MC Recording Officer

Mutation: Uncanny Luck

Society: Romantics (degree 3)

Secret skills: Archival Studies 10, Comic Book Trivia 07, Old Reckoning Culture 10

Background

You pretty much coast through life. Everyone else makes such a big deal about promotion to RED, but it never really occurred to you that you wouldn't move up the ranks someday. Everything just tends to fall into place for you. You're not really sure what, if anything, you're doing special, but so far it seems to be working for you. One thing you do know, though, is that pipsqueak **Hunter-R-BCW** isn't really in R&D. He didn't have the aptitude for it way back when you used to beat him up in the BCW Sector Junior Citizen crèche. He must be a plant from another service firm, working undercover.

You're overjoyed to learn you're going to be a Recording Officer! This was exactly what you were hoping for. All that time you spent listening to Film School On Tape will come in handy; it's unlikely they could have gotten a better-qualified person to operate the camera that will record the success of your first mission.

Your presence on this team indicates the mission's success will be judged in large part on the quality of the language used by its members. Proper grammar and spelling are paramount! If necessary, of course, you can fix it in editing later...

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'The final battle between Good and Evil is looming on the horizon. The League of All That Is Bad has dealt us a grievous blow and soon, I fear, you will have to face their champion, Magoo, in battle. But if you do not have a Trusty Sidekick by your side, bearing the Fire of Fate, you shall surely fail. You must find your sidekick! Time is running out. Find your sidekick. This is your Quest!'

Your Trusty Sidekick will probably not realise his or her destiny when you first identify him or her. You might need to use some drugs and/or subliminal re-education to awaken the Fire of Fate within your Sidekick.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Yo-yo (GREEN clearance)
Electric lantern (BLUE)
Stopwatch (YELLOW)
Box of matches (BLUE)
Magnifying glass (GREEN)
LemonieMoist Towelettes, 20
Mark IV Warbot project t-shirt
(3) RED laser barrels
Fake YELLOW laser barrel (illegal)
Brass knuckles
Teela O'Malley pocket mirror
(5) Asperquaint tablets (YELLOW)
Red canvas backpack

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflex armor
Series 1300 PDC
Multicorder 1
MC Lie Detector program
MC Editing program

Hunter-R-BCW-1

Male R&D Happiness Officer

Actual service group: Internal Security
(spying on R&D)

Mutation: Energy field

Society: Anti-Mutant (degree 2)

Secret skills: Power Studies 12, Gloating 14, Gambling 12

Background

Seize the daycycle, that's what you always say! You've only got so much life and you need to squeeze the most out of every minute. Most INFRAREDs would see promotion to RED Clearance as an opportunity to finally sit back and relax all the time. But not you! Now you can finally do all those things you've always wanted to do: Travel to distant sectors, witness strange new technology, maybe buy some Old Reckoning trinkets... and most of all, finally get revenge against Jennifer-R-BCW, who used to beat you up in the BCW Sector Junior Citizens crèche. Revenge is like Fun: best served *Cold*.

As far as you know, your bonus duty assignment—Happiness Officer—involves dispensing drugs and playing practical jokes on people. This sounds fine to you; perhaps you'll even find a kindred soul or two who like to live life to the fullest as you do.

Your presence on the team indicates the success of the mission will be judged by the effective use of everyone's assigned weaponry. Encourage diversity in the team's arsenal whenever possible. What good does it do if everyone relies on lasers all the time? Explosives—projectiles—sharp sticks—you need them all! Take notes on your teammates' use of firepower. If they seem amenable, provide constructive feedback afterward.

Your Internal Security handler wants you focused on the real job, however: Tracking illegal arms modification work. Kaboom Ordnance has been providing all sorts of unsafe weapon 'upgrades' to the more violent secret societies—PURGE, Frankenstein Destroyers and Death Leopard—through a go-between known only as 'Goldenpill'. It's time to take this menace down once and for all, before his deadly wares claim more innocent lives!

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'The mutant sympathisers are rolling out the latest step in their mutagenic agenda. We don't know exactly how they're doing it, but they've figured out how to pass their mutations onto pure, decent folks like us! Maybe they do it by touch. Or using... rays... or something. We need to figure out how they're doing it so we can stop them—before they infect us all! Collect samples if possible—but carefully!'

If you meet any mutants, registered or otherwise, maybe you should observe them a little first to figure out how they're spreading their... whatever... to others, before you waste 'em and collect the usual bounty. You also wonder if maybe somehow you're spreading mutation everywhere you go. Is that something you should be doing...?

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

(2) RED laser barrels
(6) Grenades
Energy pistol (YELLOW clearance)
Chainsaw (INDIGO)
Hottorch
Red canvas backpack

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflex armor
Series 1300 PDC
Bottle of EZ-DUZ-IT
Gelgernine aerosol

Ginger-R-UYT-1

Female CPU Team Leader

Actual service group: Internal Security
(spying on CPU)

Mutation: Regeneration

Society: Frankenstein Destroyers (degree 4)

Secret skills: Demolition 13, Identify Polearms 08, Bot Programming 09

Background

You're beginning to suspect that 'bravery' is a concept invented by the Communists to convince loyal Citizens to rush to their doom. Despite what the Troubleshooter handbook said, you've yet to meet another RED who got their reflex because of something courageous they did. In fact, you strongly suspect 'courage' is the only thing standing between you and eventual promotion to YELLOW.

Your selection for this current team suggests there is concern with the condition of surveillance camera equipment in the area. You are to identify cameras that are broken and need replacing, or that have been tampered with, or areas where thorough and appropriate surveillance is not being maintained. Take steps, if possible, to correct these deficiencies. Keep a log of your work so FSC can bill the time appropriately, of course.

Your Internal Security handler wants you to remain focused on your real mission, however, which is using your cover job in FSC to plant micro-cams on as many functioning surveillance cameras as you can. These micro-cams will watch the cameras and record any incidents of sabotage and incompetent work by other FSC personnel.

Your promotion paperwork indicated you were being recommended for Team Leader duties. It said you would receive appropriate training within seven to 10 working days of promotion. It's day nine now. Do you think they realise you haven't had your training yet? You hope you didn't miss it; you *were* losing e-mails for a couple of days...

Secret Society Instructions

Your contact tells you, 'Glorious Operation "Gear Frenzy" is in full swing. It is not enough that we destroy the bots... we will make them destroy each other! Resist the urge to participate in the bashing, though. We've had a couple of members—*compromised*—recently. Internal Security surely knows that someone on your team is a Frankie at this point. Don't let them catch you and compromise us further! Death to the Bots!'

You could probably goad someone else on your team into attacking a bot at some point—hardly anybody likes bots, really—and then you could turn them in as the Frankenstein Destroyer on your team, effectively taking the heat off yourself and probably getting a bonus as well.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Force sword
(3) RED laser barrels
Gas mask
Self-stick bandages (YELLOW)
Cancer-Free Cigarettes (ORANGE)
Red canvas backpack

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Red reflex armor
Series 1300 PDC
Many, many micro-cams

MISTER BUBBLES

1: That 'new mission' smell

Episode summary

The newly-promoted Troubleshooters are called from their normal day jobs in DMM Sector to serve on a mission of utmost importance. Unfortunately, the transbot that would have taken them to their mission briefing has an accident, so they end up going somewhere in SPD Sector instead.

Getting your suckers together

The mission begins approximately the same way for each team member. Read or paraphrase the following aloud to your players:

If it weren't for your shiny new red jumpsuit, you might almost think this was a day like any other in your life, here in DMM Sector. After all, you're sitting at the same processing line you've always worked at in your service firm, alongside the same INFRAREDs you've always known. And yet, it's not like any other day. For one thing, the hint of jealousy in your co-workers' eyes is certainly new. You wonder how long it will be before Your Friend The Computer asks you to heroically serve it and all Alpha Complex.

Suddenly the RED-Clearance supervisor for your shift appears, waving a small printout at you.

'Looks like our high and mighty Troubleshooter has to go have a mission,' he says to the others. 'Don't worry. I'm sure the rest of us will enjoy making up the difference in today's quota.'

Your hands tremble for just a moment as you take the printout and see the RED border around it. This is it, Troubleshooter! Your first mission assignment!

Pass the Mission Alert Handout around the table so each of your players can see it. Canny players may notice some of the contents of the mission alert appear to be missing. Feign ignorance of how such things happen. If anyone asks the shift supervisor about the message, he claims not to have read it and certainly insists he didn't damage it in any way. If anyone spends more effort trying to understand what went wrong with their mission alert printout than they do getting to their transbot pickup, The Computer should chime in over the nearest PA system:

Computer: Has citizen Peter-R departed for his transbot pickup?

Supervisor: No, Friend Computer, he has not.

Peter-R: The mission briefing printout was damaged!

Computer: Is the designated transbot platform number legible?

Peter-R: ...yes...

Computer: Why have you not yet left for the designated transbot platform?

If the player offers any response other than immediate departure, have all the other players record an SS1 violation for him. Though you don't tell anyone what the code stands for right now, it's 'Disobeying a request from The Computer,' an offense worthy of Censure.

Transbot platform A8:C7:60:FF is easy enough to find. It is a special-use stop permitted only for RED-Clearance citizens and higher, with a **Tension rating of 4**. Make a big deal of this—the first time these former INFRARED citizens get to use the platform! One by one, the six members of the team pick up their gear (both assigned and personal) from their barracks and gather at the crowded platform. Encourage them to spend a few minutes getting to know each other in character as they wait for the transbot, demonstrating tics and other aspects of their characters' personalities.

The whole thing should very much feel like a friendly (albeit high-strung) group of oddballs meeting for the first time at a bus stop at the start of a caper flick. Reward players who quickly get into the swing of this with a couple of Perversity points; after the first or second time you do this, everyone will get the idea. Anyone who makes some effort to portray their character should get at least 1 point. Then, once it feels like everyone has had a chance to form some first impressions of everyone else, read the following:

As the conversation dies down, you hear an approaching transbot. A shiny new vehicle glides smoothly to a halt at your stop. With a faint hum and swish, the glossy RED doors slide open invitingly.

Wait expectantly until any of your players indicate that they want to climb aboard and then interrupt with this:

Just as you take your first step toward the waiting transbot, you hear a terrible shriek of metal followed by a squeal of overtaxed brakes. Seconds later, a second transbot slams into the rear of the first one, knocking it end over end and throwing shards of glass and bits of metal everywhere! The first transbot tumbles to a halt, twisted and burning, a few dozen metres away. The second transbot is now standing, more or less, at the platform. Though dented and missing its windows, it appears to still be functioning. In fact, with a loud ratchet and clank, the grungy RED doors grind open disconcertingly.

Now give the PC who was to be the first aboard the original transbot an extra scare. Ask the player what his Violence skill rating is ('or Agility, if you have that'), then roll a die out of sight. Pretend you're comparing the result to something written down here. Then tell him that

MISSION ASSIGNMENT ALERT MISSION ASSIGNMENT A rance RED Clearance RED Clearance RED Clearance RED Clearance RE

From: DMM Sector Troubleshooter Central

To: peter@RED.wqr.plc, gunther@RED.bok.armf, dexter@RED.fcp.tech, ginger@RED.uyt.cpu, hunter@RED.bcw.md, jennifer@RED.bcw.hpd

Subj: Mission of utmost importance!

Ref: GZCH-1756-CCJP-6823-PQME-2524-MMOW-5502

Congratulations, Troubleshooter! Your friend **The Computer** has chosen you for an important and fun assignment carefully matched to your recorded level of mission experience. You are to report **immediately** to Transbot Tubeway Platform **A8:C7:60:FF** for transport to Briefing Ro**CARRIER INTERRUPT PLEASE WAIT**ollowed by escort to standard PLC outfitting. If there are optional service firm services available after outfitting, you may be required to volunteer for additional duties at this tim**CARRIER INTERRUPT PLEASE WAIT**andard time to complete a mission of this variety is **5 Hours 12 Minutes** from time of mission alert delivery. Upon completing your mission in the standard time, report to Transbot Tubeway Platform **B1:22:FF:C2** for transport to debriefing, where you will provide a quantitative assessment of your mission success.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

ChocoLike Vita-Yum Meal Substitute Bars
Now 47% more popular in DMMSector, and growing all the time!

MISSION ASSIGNMENT ALERT MISSION ASSIGNMENT AL rance RED Clearance RED Clearance RED Clearance RED Clearance RE



MISSIONS CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

was a close one: There's a smoldering shard of steel embedded in the platform right near his foot, but he's okay. Award him a Perversity point as well. The message, though subtle and unspoken, should be clear: Foolishly rushing forward is a good way to get both killed and rewarded. Continue this policy throughout the mission.

To establish a more brutal tone from the start, treat the crash like a standard slugthrower attack (W4K damage) on everyone on the platform, with a skill of 8 against the character who was going to board first and 4 (the prevailing Tension of the scene) against everyone else. (You should still award a Perversity point to the player who stepped forward first.)

Either way, ask your players, 'Who wants to board this second transbot?' The more innocent you can sound while doing so, the better. Anyone who does so eagerly should get a Perversity point. Anyone who manages to convince someone else to get on first should get 2.

It's possible, however, your players will be none too keen on the idea. You'll see this time and time again in **PARANOIA**: Once-bitten Troubleshooters can quickly become twice-shy. Ultimately you'll make them yield to your will, of course. The tools you can apply in this situation: the Carrot and the Stick.

☞ In the **Carrot** approach, you try to re-install a false sense of security by suggesting things have actually improved somehow, or the grass will be greener just on the other side of that whirling, gnashing deathtrap. In the current case of the transbot crash, you might reassure your players this second transbot actually looks a great deal more rugged than the first one, which was all frilly and fragile-looking. This one is much more like the sort of vehicle that would carry a tough band of Troubleshooters, don't you think?

☞ To give them the **Stick**, you prey upon the players' heightened sense of fear by suggesting that unless they take the path you're offering them now, things get much worse very soon. For example, you could casually mention the first transbot erupts into a ball of fire, and there appears to be burning petroleum leaking from its wreckage in the general direction of the platform.

Your players might demonstrate that bane of Gamemasters the world over, 'lateral thinking', with such clever tactics as trying to appeal to The Computer. Whenever your players invoke The Computer, you should choose to view this as an invitation to issue a warning before stepping up the severity of the Stick.

Player: Computer, there has been a transbot accident!

Computer: There is no transbot waiting for you at the platform?

Player: There is, but...

Computer: I'm sure the loyal citizens in Transbot Station Platform Cleanup will attend to the necessary custodial work. Why have you not boarded the waiting transbot, citizen?

Player: Can you maybe tell us how to get to our briefing room on foot?

Computer: What is your security clearance?

Player: Uh... RED.

Computer: That information is not available at your security clearance.

Player: But...

Computer: Transbots operate on strict timetables, citizen. Interfering with a transbot timetable can lead to serious accidents, and is a treasonous offense.

If your players don't bow to the clear fate offered here, begin hitting them with the Stick, in the form of more SS2 treason (disobeying an order from The Computer) followed by an explosion of the first transbot's fuel. Treat it as though an HE cone-rifle shell had been fired into their midst. When their replacement clones are activated, they have the exact same orders: Report to the same transbot platform and get on the transbot still waiting there.

When all Troubleshooters are aboard, the transbot carries them away with a grinding of gears and a distinct smell of overheating machine oil. No NPC citizen has dared enter the transbot; the PCs are alone. There is no way to find out where it is taking them; a successful Software/Vehicle Programming skill roll might get the transbot to cough up its destination information, but only in a transbot-specific coordinate notation. Matching these coordinates against any actual layout of Alpha Complex is something a RED Troubleshooter could conceivably do with an Access roll, but probably shouldn't attempt if they want to stay free of treason and/or insanity.

The dark room

The transbot interior looks like any bus or subway car. Seats, handrails, loyalty posters—more seats—that's about it.

A minute or so into its journey the transbot enters a dark tunnel.

A few hundred yards into the tunnel, the vehicle grinds to a halt. The lights go out. A recorded voice says, 'Attention, passengers. The Computer's loyal servants in Central Processing have introduced schedule adjustments to improve efficiency. To this end, this vehicle will pause for two minutes before resuming its journey. To conserve energy the lights will now be dimmed. Do not be alarmed. The

lights will be turned on again when the journey resumes.'

Pitch blackness!

Do you recognise this opportunity, GM? Did you read Chapter 46, 'The mission scheme'? That's right, this is this mission's dark room (**Tension level 0**). Every mission should have a dark room early on, while the Troubleshooters are absolutely starving to kill each other. It needn't have anything to do with the mission (this one doesn't) or be at all plausible or creative (this one—well, judge for yourself). Just stick everyone in the dark, lean back and murmur, 'I can receive any notes you want to pass me.' Seeing their eyes suddenly bulge in realization is one of the **PARANOIA** GM's signal pleasures.

Of course, it's still early yet. Maybe these are first-time players who haven't quite worked out this whole kill-your-buddies idea. Maybe they just sit there like a row of turnips. If so, the transbot starts up again uneventfully. You can always contrive a similar dark room later in the mission, after they're in the proper mindset.

After the fatalities, you may need to recall the survivors to the platform, bring in the backups and send everyone onward in the next transbot. Don't let them think about the schedule now; just keep things moving.

One briefing room is like another... right?

After a highly convoluted but not unnecessarily terrifying journey, the transbot lurches to a halt at another RED-Clearance platform, where a large sign reads 'Welcome to SPD Sector.' The transbot's doors do not open once it has stopped. The motor, however, coughs twice and halts completely. Solutions to the 'stuck door' problem might range from using Hardware/Transbot Maintenance to manually open them to slipping through the broken windows with Violence/Agility to applying some sort of explosive. Appeals to The Computer, as always, should lead to awkward questions about why the team isn't already being briefed. Then ask everyone to make a Stealth roll. If anyone succeeds, sniff the air and say, 'What's that smell? Is that... fire? Somewhere... under the transbot?' Reward the first one out of the transbot, regardless of how much or little trouble they have with the doors, with a Perversity point.

On the RED-Clearance platform (**Tension 4**), the Troubleshooters see three doors:

- ☞ A RED door labeled SPD30/C125
- ☞ A YELLOW door labeled SPD15/C120
- ☞ A BLUE door labeled SPD75/C80

Ask the players which door they go through. Obviously, anyone who even thinks about opening any door except the RED-Clearance one simply wants to die. However, this time

MISTER BUBBLES

you should simply content yourself with making a sort of choked laugh, as though this is exactly the horrible fate you've been hoping they'd meet, and then ask, perhaps with a slight giggle, 'Yeah. Okay. Are you sure?' They probably change their mind. (Truly sharp players might attempt to convince one of the other players to open one of the higher-clearance doors. Whether or not such an attempt succeeds, reward amusing attempts with a couple of Perversity points.)

As it turns out, this grim and richly-deserved doom is not so easily achieved; if anyone tries to open any door other than the RED one, it turns out locked. However, roll a die against the current Tension level (4): On a 4 or lower, an IntSec monitor noted and logged the attempt, and The Computer adds an 'attempted to enter higher-clearance area' note added to the PC's permanent record. Though this isn't as serious as actually being caught in a higher-clearance area (which would result in additional fines), The Computer will put the offending Troubleshooter on Probation. This should have no immediate effect; simply note it somewhere. The next time they try to talk to The Computer about something, The Computer may be more interested in talking about the door they tried to open.

Read the following when the team opens the RED door and enters the room beyond:

The interior of SPD30/C125 is not large; perhaps four metres by five. A few low, moderately uncomfortable-looking chairs are set along two of its walls. A large viewscreen dominates the third wall. It is currently off. A small clerk's counter stands against the fourth wall with a RED Clearance door next to it. The lighting is very low. You're not sure if the effect is soothingly subdued or unnervingly dim.

The lighting is in energy-saver mode; nobody is scheduled to be using this room currently (**Tension 3**). It's not even a briefing room; it's just a RED-Clearance waiting room for the transbot stop. Before anyone starts telling you what they do, ask everyone to make a Stealth/High Alert roll. Someone will surely succeed, at which point you mention that they hear a faint noise coming from the corner behind the clerk counter. If someone succeeds by a margin of 5 or more, or if they specifically take a few moments to wait and listen further, they can identify the sound as someone sobbing. (If somehow nobody succeeds, they probably poke around the room, and someone will eventually look behind the counter.)

Award the first player to investigate the noise a Perversity point. But if everyone scrambles to be the first, don't give anyone a point this time. The behavior to enforce is rewarding players who take the stand-apart action.

When someone investigates the noise, read the following:

Behind the counter, you find a huddled, quivering ORANGE Clearance citizen wearing an HPD&MC uniform from Complex Update, one of the News Services firms. He appears to be in some sort of serious distress, weeping quietly but strongly enough that his whole body shudders. Suddenly, he notices you looking at him. Scrambling back further under the counter, he shouts, 'Don't eat me!'

It is virtually impossible to convince him to calm down or come out from under the counter. At best, soothing and understanding Troubleshooters who reassure him everything is okay can coax out his name, Hans-O-HGF-3. He says he hasn't slept for eight or nine days now... because 'the mutants will eat me if I do.'

Hans-O is obviously having a psychotic break. Wetware/Pharmatherapy combined with close examination (joining him under the counter, or grappling him and dragging him out) reveals his symptoms are consistent with a side-effect of pyroxidine overdose that occurs in only 2.2% of citizens. If no PC has such skills, the happiness officer can spot this symptom.

Hans-O is wearing ORANGE reflex and carrying a laser pistol with an ORANGE barrel, now drained empty—he's been shooting at everything he sees. (He's also carrying a concealed grenade the Troubleshooters should not notice until he pulls it out later.) He doesn't know whether he's supposed to be briefing anyone. He doesn't really have a clear sense where he is. When the Troubleshooters indicate they are here for a briefing, he grasps at the only straw his crazed mind can come up: 'Scrubots,' he says quickly. 'It was something about... Yes, that's right. Reports of scrubots... attacking citizens. Cleaning them too vigorously. That must be it! That's your mission!'

(No it isn't. Hans-O happened to see a wire release on a line printer he was hiding under this morning, but this is not something your players need know. Let's just keep it our little secret.)

Hans-O's only goal is to get the Troubleshooters to leave. He is certain the path to this goal lies in confirming whatever it is the Troubleshooters want to know. Asking him anything more complicated than yes/no questions just increases his trauma.

Player: We're investigating scrubot attacks?

Hans-O: Yes!

Player: Are we... supposed to stop further attacks?

Hans-O: Yes! Yes, definitely.

Player: Is there a common thread linking these attacks?

Hans-O: Yes! That must be it.

Player: ...and the thread is...?

Hans-O: What? Oh... Ooooooh... Stay back! Leave me alone!

Player: Should we stand on our heads and sing the Teela theme?

Hans-O: Yes! Yes, that was it. Precisely! Please get going!

Eventually, when you get tired of playing Hans-O, or when the PCs are about to leave, or if the players invest too much effort in actually getting additional information out of him (which fails), trying to help him recover his mental health (which fails) or reporting him to authorities (which just results in the Troubleshooters being blamed for his condition), he brings the 'briefing' to a rather sudden close:

Suddenly, Hans-O's eyes go wide. 'The walls!' he shouts. 'They're coming out of the walls! I won't let them take me! You can't make me go!' He reaches into his pocket and pulls out a grenade. Most of you have never seen a real grenade in use before and yet, strangely enough, every one of you understands at an instinctive level that this one has been triggered. What is everyone doing?

The room will probably erupt immediately into noise. Bring the volume down to a manageable level and go around the table, letting each of your players indicate one and only one choice of action. 'Shoot Hans-O' is an appropriate (but useless) action. 'Dive for cover on the other side of the counter' is good. 'Run through the nearby door' is just fine. 'Push another Troubleshooter onto him while diving behind the counter' is two actions; make them pick one or the other. Some Violence specialty rolls might be appropriate:

☞ Unarmed Combat to push someone else closer to Hans-O

☞ Agility to dive over the counter or get through the door.

Straight style notes

In place of the transbot crash, the Troubleshooters arrive just in time to see the nice clean transbot drive away full of YELLOW citizens. Let them freak out about having missed their ride. As they consider an alternate route to their briefing, the second, beat-up transbot arrives. Ah, this must be the right one. Mechanical trouble with the door is still appropriate.

The 'briefing' can be kept mostly as-is, but Hans-O's psychotic break should be scarier, more menacing, instead of goofy. His suicide by grenade should not decimate the team, however; anyone who is not very close when he explodes should get away with a wound at worst.



MISSIONS CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

- ◉ Fine Manipulation to snatch the grenade from Hans-O.

Snatching the grenade counts as a Troubleshooter's action; throwing it across the room would be a second action, and they don't have that long. But give them a Perversity point as a consolation prize. Also award a couple of points to anyone whose choice of action is driven by their tics. It is unlikely any non-Violence specialties will be useful in this situation, but feel free to allow Troubleshooters who attempt, for example, to convince Hans-O to throw the grenade elsewhere to make some sort of Management roll. Then treat them as having declared their action to be 'Stand right where I am, passively accepting fate'.

Fate, with pin

The grenade has a 5-metre radius of effect, which effectively fills the entire room. Hans-O, of course, dies rather messily. Everyone else has a chance of injury (or even death). Make

PerCitFreP

In this great hall and in other parts of SPD sector, The Computer's loyal HPD&MC pioneers are testing a new Loyalty Improvement Program (LIP), the **Personalised Citizen Friendship Program** (PerCitFreP).

This program uses radio-frequency IDs built into many ME Cards. Sensors in security cameras locate a card, an HPD database identifies its owner, and automated holographic projectors incorporate the name into a personalised greeting thrown in front of the character:

'It's another great day in the Complex, Hiram-O-SFS!'

'Judy-R-TWQ, you can be sure The Computer is your personal friend!'

HPD is also tentatively using the technique to create tailored advertising ('Andy-R-TON, you look like you could use a Bouncy Bubble Beverage!').

Hit each Troubleshooter with a message along these lines. Don't worry about being creative; HPD certainly doesn't. Establish these messages now, because you may need to use them later, at the start of Episode 3. It's vital for the NPC Marco-G to get the name of at least one, and preferably all, the PCs. If they won't tell him their names, you can have the PerCitFreP messages give them away.

After this mission, PerCitFreP will probably fall into disuse, due to various secret societies' continual and repeated assassinations of its champions.

a roll against the grenade's 'attack', as though it had a Violence skill of 20. The grenade does W3K Energy damage. Reflec does not protect against it. Apply the damage result against everyone in the room in the following order, decreasing the margin of success by 1 (and thus possibly the damage) with each additional target:

- ◉ Anyone holding the grenade.
- ◉ Anyone in direct physical contact with Hans-O.
- ◉ Anyone else still behind the counter area.
- ◉ Anyone in the open part of the room.
- ◉ Anyone who took cover on the far side of the counter.
- ◉ Anyone who ran out either door.

Everyone who spoke, at any point, to Hans-O, is 'behind the counter area' unless they specifically fled elsewhere as their action. Don't let them tell you they were standing across the room or outside the whole time. Anyone who went over to the far side of the counter gets an additional point of armor-like protection, stepping their final damage down one level. Anyone who went through a door gets 2 points of armor-like protection.

When the stunning sound of the blast has finished ringing in the Troubleshooters' heads, they likely wonder what to do next. Why, there's a handy RED-Clearance door right next to the counter. What's through there?

Sensory overload

Read the following when they go through:

The door leads to a short hall, which in turn opens on a glorious chamber: an enormous open space that stretches upward so high you're not sure you can see the top. Catwalks and slideways cross back and forth over your heads. Autocars and transbots zip all around the ground-level plaza. At the center of the open space is a beautiful fountain topped with a sculpture of two Troubleshooters, bravely standing back to back with their lasers out. Everywhere you look, you see citizens of rank: RED, ORANGE, YELLOW, GREEN. Even... on that catwalk up there—is that an INDIGO talking with a pair of BLUE citizens? It really is! You've never seen an INDIGO citizen before, except on vidshows. Truly, you have arrived. It's almost too much to take in.

Stress the overstimulation in the giant hall (**Tension 5**) as your players try to figure out what to do next. There's no INFRARED...

anywhere! Everything is RED or higher. If they ask about doors or hallways leading out, point out there are dozens, of virtually every security clearance color. If they ask about stairs, lifts, or ramps up to the higher levels, there are several. If they want to ask a question of one of the various citizens milling about, emphasise how extremely busy ('No time! Too much to do, Troubleshooter!') or overly important ('Isn't there a separate department for dealing with Troubleshooter inquiries?') everyone seems. Perhaps they nearly get run over as a high-speed transbot whisks to a nearby stop, discharging a dozen YELLOW-Clearance Vulture troops or some GREEN IntSec goons.

If the players start deciding on a course of action, do your best to distract them with alternatives.

Player: Maybe we should pick a hallway to...

GM: There are some interesting-looking storefronts on the second level. Also, it looks like there might be a map.

Player: Oh! Perhaps we'll head up there and...

GM: On the other hand, it looks like YELLOW Clearance up there. Perhaps you should stick to the RED Clearance doors down here.

Player: Yes, that's what we'll do.

GM: Of course, there's a lot of chaotic autocar traffic you'd have to get through.

Player: Uh...

Keep on with this until the players really don't know which of the many options seems best to them. Then give them an out:

As your senses reel from the whirlwind of activity, a jackobot wheels up and humbly stands by your side. 'Troubleshooters,' it says, 'I am jackobot ED-1E. Please, call me Eddie. You're in need of outfitting?'

Your players should leap at this. Reward the first one to say 'yes' to Eddie with a Perversity point. If they're slow on the uptake, remind them of their mission alert, and take comfort. They're about to experience the financial equivalent of torture.



2: What the market will bear

Episode summary

'Eddie' is not taking the Troubleshooters to PLC. He has been botjacked by a nearby IR Market and turned to the task of bringing customers into their businesses. Drawn into an endless labyrinth of shops overflowing with novelties, junk, and treasonous treasures, the players must understand they will never escape until they cough up some hard-earned dough for stuff they don't actually need.

A fool and his credits...

Read the following:

The jackobot leads you confidently through the chaos of the plaza and into a RED corridor. The corridor leads to a T-intersection, where you turn right. The corridor splits... there are a couple more turns... An elevator takes you down... and out into an INFRARED hallway. Another couple of turns, and you find yourself in what is apparently the PLC Outfitting Center. Several narrow tunnels lead off in various directions. Steam conduits line the low ceiling. Lining the sides of the tunnels are stall after stall of every sort of item: guns at this one, clothing at that one, bottles and cans and boxes of consumables, Tella-O merchandise... In each stall, an outfitter beckons invitingly. It's enough to make your eyes tear up with joy.

'Welcome to Outfitting,' Eddie says. Checking your PDCs, you see you should have about four and a half hours left on your mission. Plenty of time!

The team probably feels like kids in a candy store at first. But all is not as it seems. This is not a real PLC Outfitting Center; it's an extralegal IR Market Free Enterprise set up in some unused maintenance tunnels, protected from discovery through judicious bribes and electronic countermeasures. Instead of being assigned a lot of equipment on loan, the Troubleshooters must buy everything they're interested in.

It probably won't take the players long to realise something's not entirely kosher. For one thing, they're being asked to pay for... er, 'leave an outfitting deposit on'... their equipment. For another, there are no security cameras anywhere. And moments after bringing them here, Eddie the jackobot vanished into the bustle of the market. The whole place is sort of cramped and dirty and maze-like. Here and there they can see other citizens, including

some rather high-clearance ones, somewhat furtively making deals with vendors for strange-looking items.

If the team tries to contact The Computer on their PDCs, they get curious interference and static—a side effect of the cloaking systems used to hide the market from Internal Security. (This also effectively sets the IR Market to **Tension 1**.) If they mention this interference to the merchants, the hawkers offer to sell them a replacement PDC for a mere, say, 400 credits (eventually talked down to 150). If they threaten or attempt violence, inquire about the characters' Stealth/High Alert skill, 'secretly' make a few rolls, and then mention they've noticed there are guardbots subtly stationed here and there among the shops. Lots of guardbots. You might also point out making a huge destructive noise will bring Internal Security... do they really want to be caught inside an illegal marketplace?

If they don't take the hint and decide to start something, hit them with a guardbot apiece.

The market combines all the best (read: worst) aspects of an open-air Moroccan bazaar with a used-car sales lot. There are dozens of shops in a sprawling maze, 80% of them have exactly the same things as the others with only slight differences and haggling is the rule of the day. The shopkeepers push their wares on unsuspecting marks while pretending all along to have only the suckers' interests at heart. They (read: you) rely on a variety of tactics to slowly but surely peel the credits off the Troubleshooters:

1. Lure the Troubleshooters into thinking they can get a great deal.

The marketeers—not all Free Enterprisers, just renters—sell standard items at an inflated-enough price that they can still turn a profit even if they themselves just buy straight from PLC retail. Initially offer items at two, three, or even four times the standard price and then let the Troubleshooters ultimately pay something less than that—but still more than the real price. Preferably in a way that makes them think they were cagey buyers.

☞ 'Today, we're having a discount on everything you see. Clearing out last year's models. 25% off across the board. Normally it would be 200, but today: 150!' (25% off of 4x the sane value is, of course, 3x the sane value.)

☞ 'Is this your first mission? Ah! It's good luck to sell to a Troubleshooter on her first mission. Please, find something you like and I'll give you a great price on it, even if it means I lose a little money.' (Shopkeeper mentally doubles the already-absurd asking price he was considering.)

☞ 'I have too much of this on hand, and frankly, it costs more to keep it in stock here than to let you have it at cost.' (Read: I suppose, at worst, I can sell it to you for the retail price and only make a couple of creds on the deal.)

2. Praise the exceptional quality and/or unique nature of the goods.

Virtually everything in Alpha Complex is a standard issue item, made according to strict and uniform Qwalitie Standards, but the marketeers do their best to convince buyers that any given item in their inventory is somehow special. They will even go so far as to add color, stick on fins, glue two items together, etc. to make their wares seem different.

☞ 'You'll see footwear like this all over the Complex, but only these sneakers have extra-rubberised tread. Look at the traction on these!' (No different than any other sneaker, but it's not like the Troubleshooters know anything about footwear manufacturing.)

☞ 'This model of slugthrower is brand new! Nobody else has these but me. Soon, everybody's going to have one but right now, you can have an edge over everyone else!' (Five minutes later, another shopkeeper offers the exact same gun with the same claim.)

☞ 'Normally these would be ORANGE-Clearance but this is a special RED-Clearance model. See the RED sticker on the side?' (The RED sticker covers the original ORANGE Clearance warning, and is quite hard to scrape off.)

☞ 'Binoculars? For 50? Sure, if you want low-grade junk. You need professional-grade hardware now, Troubleshooter!'

☞ 'This flashlight comes with a built-in notepad for listing what the light shows you! I can sell you a pen specifically designed to go with this model of flashlight-pad as well.' (It's a standard notepad glued to a standard flashlight,

Guardbot

Stealth 5
Surveillance 9
Violence 10
Hand Weapons 14
Weapons: Neurowhip (S4M energy)
Blaster (M4K energy) or
Cone rifle with solid slug ammo (W2K)
Armor: green reflc (E1 vs. lasers)
Kevlar coating (I1)



MISSIONS CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET

costing more than the combined prices of the two items. The pen has been painted to somewhat resemble the flashlight.)

3. Keep insisting the Troubleshooters want something.

Just about every marketeer can sell just about any sort of item, but each will be most interested in pushing one sort of item, whether it's foodstuffs, or weaponry, or hygiene products. It doesn't matter what the Troubleshooters want; the key is making them buy whatever you have. The moment they actually buy and credit changes hands, hit them up with another offer.

- ☞ 'You don't like Somewhat Spicy flavor? I also have Capsicum Crunch. And Salt & Vinegar. That's a very popular flavor. Oh... no CruncheeTym, then? Of course—you look like a Vita-Yum man to me...'
- ☞ 'You're looking for ammunition? I'm sure I have some ammunition here. Let me look. Perhaps it's under these foam pads. Say, you never know when a foam pad will come in handy!'
- ☞ 'Grenades? Certainly! See this Bouncy Bubbly Beverage? If you shake it up enough and then throw it, you can get the same effect, at a fraction of the price! How many do you want?'
- ☞ 'Well, okay, we have a deal, even though I'm losing cred on it. Here's your CruncheeTym. Say, I bet you could use a thermos, huh? Keeps the Hot Fun hot and the Cold Fun cold! I have a digitally-equipped model here for only 80 credits...'

4. Tack more (cheap) items on to keep the price high.

One of the great facts of any marketplace is that 2 x 3 is greater than 1 x 5. Feel free to bring the per-item cost down as long as the Troubleshooters are buying in larger quantities (and as long as the per-unit price is still no lower than normal). Also, throw cheap stuff into the bargain if it will keep hagglers from bringing the price down to something reasonable. Encourage the team to collectively buy in bulk.

Straight style notes

This shouldn't need alteration. The marketeers keep implying this is what the Troubleshooters are supposed to be doing. Perhaps they have fake cameras set up so it looks like a monitored area. Perhaps the Troubleshooters somehow manage to get hold of Internal Security and report the entire market... only to find heavily bribed IntSec agents in on it.

☞ 'The price might seem high for just one, but PLC usually deals in bulk, you see. If you take the whole case, the price per unit comes way down. Perhaps you and your friends can pool your funds and break in at the discounted wholesale rate!'

☞ '12 for the hammer? The carton it comes in almost costs that much! No, I can't go less than 15. How about... 15 for the hammer and I'll throw in a free box of matches?' (Effectively selling the 10cr hammer for 12 and a 1cr box of matches for 3 more...)

☞ 'Seven for a single magnifying glass? I could almost afford that if the inventory control documentation fee wasn't so large. Tell you what... There's only one inventory fee regardless of the number of items. If you buy, say, ten of them for 75 credits...? I'm sure you can resell the extras to your friends. No? How about six for 45, then?'

5. Imply the Troubleshooters will be in trouble if they refuse.

The marketeers know that they PCs were brought here thinking they would be getting official PLC outfitting. They will absolutely play along with that ruse as long as they can. They act as though this is what the PCs are supposed to be doing, they pretend that The Computer is endorsing everything and they take affront at any suggestion that things are not entirely above board. If asked to identify themselves, they will happily make up a stall vendor number that sounds official.

☞ 'How are you going to succeed in your mission if you are not properly outfitted? A small investment in proper gear now will pay you back ten-fold when it comes time to avoid danger... and treason. What's my name? You can call me Honest Dave. My vendor license is... CC36-7150A! Yep.'

☞ 'No, no, you don't have to buy this. You can lease it for 50 credits. We just need an additional insurance deposit for the full replacement price of the item while you're using it. When you bring it back in good working condition, we'll refund the deposit.' (It's not even likely that the Troubleshooters can find this market again on their own, much less track down this particular merchant. Refund? Not a chance.)

☞ 'There you are! The Computer has instructed me to provide you with beverages for your mission. I am sure you would not want to upset The Computer by declining to take a look...?'

☞ 'I'm sorry; I thought you were a Troubleshooter entrusted by The Computer to serve and protect Alpha Complex. Clearly, this is not the case

and you are supposed to be somewhere else. Perhaps I should have a guardbot escort you to Internal Security to answer some questions?' (The guardbots' idea of 'escorting' involves a blunt object.)

6. Resort to outright dirty tricks

There's no access to outside justice, and the guardbots keep shoppers from starting too much trouble, so the marketeers will sometimes just plain cheat. Attempt these only if you're feeling really ambitious or cruel:

☞ Lie about the item's abilities. Ascribe extra powers, heightened effects, or longer durations. Claim it's an experimental model that doesn't need ammo.

☞ Turn shortcomings into additional sales opportunities. When they realise the gun does, in fact, need ammo, offer to sell them some. If they buy something that's broken, offer to sell them a repair and maintenance kit for it.

☞ When they want a refund on the item they just bought, point out it's used now. Offer them a quarter of what they just paid for it and make them haggle you up until they're getting back no more than half.

☞ Offer to buy equipment the characters are already carrying. In fact, offer them good prices for it. Offer them the full retail value. Let them talk you up even higher! Let them think they've somehow pulled one over your eyes. Let them get paid 25%, 50%, even 100% too much for their standard-issue gear... only to find out that the credits they're being paid with are limited-license scrip only spendable in this particular IR Market.

☞ During the probably-inevitable fight with the guardbots, proactive merchants offer better weapons to the Troubleshooters, who then have the choice of either haggling a price while being pounded on, or just paying a fortune so they have the gun now. In the aftermath, of course, a range of medical services is available at prices guaranteed to result in long-term debt.

You're trying to get a decent chunk of money off the characters in a short time, but don't overdo it. Go around your set of players once or twice—each time making a friendly invitation to see some wares, offering some basic stuff at vastly inflated prices, and then letting the player talk you back down to something only slightly inflated, or switching to something they seem more likely to want. After you've managed to rip them off a time or two, they'll be wise to the whole thing, and it will be time to move them along. Take their money and then have the merchants finally reveal the way out of the maze. 'It was right there all along, just out of sight...'

MISTER BUBBLES

Too too bazaar!

Here are some items the IR Marketeers are likely to push on the Troubleshooters in Episode 2. Draw more items from the IR Market chart in the Player section. (Remember to offer these for three or four times the listed price, then 'discount' them down to two or three times, before letting the PC haggle down to something like half again the listed price.)

KEY:

Clrnce = security clearance at which item is legal. ** = illegal at any security clearance. Marketeers are unconcerned; if asked about an item's security clearance, they look the PC over and say, 'RED, of course!'

HI = the price a marketeer will initially offer per-unit for the item.

LO = absolute lowest unit price down to which he will let himself be talked.

Notes = Things marketeers might say about the item when pushing it; take as inspiration for your own creativity. In a few cases the item has actual interesting uses.

Item	Clrnce	HI	LO	Notes
Bouncy Bubble Beverage:				
Classic	R	4	1	
Experimental #72	R	5	1	'Great with #71'
X-traphedrine Rush!!!	Y	10	3	+1 Perversity point when drunk
Glasnost Grape	**	30	10	Contains Commie Propaganda
Original	**	350	100	'Three cans exist!'
CruncheeTym algae chips:				
Somewhat Spicy!	R	7	2	
Capsicum Crunch	O	10	3	
Salt & Vinegar	UV	40	10	+3 Perversity when consumed
Zesty Strawberry-Cheeze	**	25	10	'The 32nd flavor!'
Cold Fun (Pink, Brown or Vanilla):				
Pint container	R	16	5	
55-gallon drum	Y	7K	2K	'Never run out!'
Optional chocolate lumps	UV			(x2 cost modifier)
ChocoLike Vita-Yum Bar	R	10	3	
Chocolyke Puff Crunchers	O	35	10	Sealed can. 'Lots of fun!'
Chocolyke Can Opener	R	16	5	'Double duty as a knife.'
Insta-Noodles in a Cup	R	6	2	
Insta-Noodle flavor pack	O	4	1	Every pack tastes different
'One-Serv' Water Boiler	B	800	250	Experimental and dangerous
Cancer-Free Cigarettes	O	30	8	'Teela's brand, you know!'
Absolutely Cancer-Free				
Cigarettes	G	40	12	
Cancer-Curing Cigarettes	UV	100	25	Temporary remission at best
Pyroxidine injection	R	200	50	'None of the side effects of a pill'
Zybenzaphrene/Slumbersoft				
tablet	O	75	20	'Like a padded hammer!'
Asperquaint capsule	Y	40	10	Lasts alllllll day
Rolactin capsule	B	600	200	'Ten times as long as the pill.'
Telescopalamine injection	G	100	30	'Self-finking pills. Truth drug.'
Benetridin/Videoland tablet	I	250	60	'Feel just like Teela!'
Benetridin injection	I	300	100	All day supervivid hallucinations
Thymoglandin/				
Combat Quick tablet	B	400	75	'Turns em into a killing machine.'
Sneakers, white w/red				
stripes	UV	10K	4K	'Come back when you're rich.'
Ink refills:				
Yellow	Y	5	1	Gums up the pen
Green	G	80	25	
Blue	B	300	85	Popular with Romantics
Indigo	I	200	65	
White	UV	450	145	'It's like... simulated UV.'
Refillable lighter	V	50	20	
Lighter fluid	UV	250	100	
Fake laser barrels:				
Green	**	125	40	+1 Perversity on first 'use'
Blue	**	175	60	+2 Perversity
Indigo	**	275	90	+3 Perversity
Violet	**	375	125	+4 Perversity
White	**	500	160	+5 Perversity

Special-interest items

Marketeers also offer some special-interest items. With these, too, they start high and haggle down to something more reasonable (but still too much). The thing about these things is, they have actual interesting uses... as well as amusing side-effects. Think of them as 'junior R&D equipment' the players get to pay for out of their own pockets.

More than one Troubleshooter can buy each of these; the marketeers have (ahem) plenty. 'Demand is still building for these great bargains. Haven't got the word out yet. Get in on the ground floor, own one before everyone else does!'

Reflec upgrade: Box of SeeKwinz

'You glue all these little reflective dots on your reflec. Its refractive index goes up as much as 41%, making it effective against higher-frequency beams!'

Price: 'Normally goes for 500 a box, I'm selling today for 350.' (Actual price: 100cr.)

Feature: Takes a while to glue them all on, but makes the reflec one color rating higher.

Bug: Conspicuous; individual SeeKwinz constantly fall off so in a few days the treatment loses effect, and in the meantime the Troubleshooter leaves a trail of little sparkling pellets behind him, like Hansel and Gretel.

Reflec upgrade: Polyshine spray

'Just spray-on once and see how much higher it raises your albedo. Much more reflective.'

Price: 'Most places will ask 2,000; I have an overstock, so... 1,500?' (Actual price: 500cr.)

Feature: Increases protective value from E1 to E2 vs. lasers—if it hasn't peeled.

Bug: Reflec becomes a lot more flammable. Flame attacks do +1 damage step. When it burns, this stuff releases fumes that may be toxic, hallucinogenic or mutagenic.

Self-aiming slugthrower

'You can pretty much just wave this in the general direction of your target. No problem.'

Price: '1800. No, wait, I can't cheat a projectile fan like you. 1200.' (Actual price: 600cr.)

Feature: Basic slugthrower, but it never misses whatever it aims at. A miss is a hit at 0 margin.

Bug: When fired, announce that the gun twists around in the user's hand, then ask, 'Anyone care to spend some Perversity on the target it chooses?' Treat it like an auction, everyone bidding, until only one remains. Only the winner spends the actual Perversity, but that player then makes the gun shoot anything he wants.

[continued on page 16]



[continued from page 15]

Foam underbody

'A reworked foam pad you can wear under your jumpsuit to protect from impact.'

Price: 'Please! 200 credits each is a *trifle* when you remember it's for your own safety.' (Actual price: 50cr.)

Feature: Does, indeed, provide Impact-1 protection.

Bug: So bulky, under the clothes, wearer's Violence is effectively halved.

Emergency alarm

'Detects fire, radiation, presence of mutants, you name it. Comes with eight different alert voices!'

Price: 'Special introductory price of only 300 credits.' (Actual price: 100cr.)

Feature: Alarm sounds whenever there's smoke, fire, radiation, mutants, pressure loss, etc.

Bug: Doesn't differentiate the types of emergency and frankly, when is there *not* one of those?

ExoCrutch

'Piston-actuated servo-controlled limb assistant lets you keep going when you should be down.'

Price: 'Last year's model, so I'm letting them go for a mere 1200 each.' (Actual price: 400)

Feature: A maimed character can act as though only Wounded, and Downed as though only Maimed.

Bug: If anyone touches the character, the Crutch takes a swing at them (Violence/Unarmed Combat).

Psychiatric assessment cards

'Use them to determine if someone is insane, on drugs, or affected by secret society propaganda.'

Price: 'This is the uncertified version, so I can let it go for a mere 1000 creds.' (Actual price: 250cr.)

Feature: +2 to Pharmatherapy, Psychotherapy and Suggestion specialties when using cards.

Bug: Every time they're used, user has 1 in 20 change of picking up 1 point of a random secret society's Propaganda.

Repellent spray

'Keeps insects away. What are insects? Like very small bots. Nasty.'

Price: 'A steal at 10 credits.' (Actual price: 2cr.)

Feature: Does, in fact, keep insects away. Hurts when sprayed in eyes, snafus target.

Bug: Smells so bad it keeps everyone away. Not many insects in Alpha Complex anyway.

Petbot

'Never be lonely again.'

Price: 'What's 1,200 creds compared to eternal friendship?' (Actual price: 400cr.)

Feature: Petbot is quite stupid for a bot, but can be trained to do simple things like carry stuff, bark a warning, etc.

Bug: Petbot tends to make noise when silence is needed, picks fights with other bots, whines, poops batteries, etc.

BackStage Pass

'Will open any door, *any* door, regardless of security clearance.'

Price: 'I can't let this go for less than 10,000 credits. Are you kidding?' (Actual price: 2,500cr.)

Feature: It does, in fact, open any standard door, regardless of clearance.

Bug: Internal Security is immediately alerted, always, and they *will* dispatch a response.

Still, try not to give up on the market until you've gotten nearly everyone to buy something. Emphasise the maze-like impossibility of finding a way out; any number of merchants will be happy to tell them the way out if the Troubleshooters just peruse their wares for a few minutes first...

If your players are at all sharp, they'll realise the sooner they buy the overpriced junk, the sooner they'll get on to the next part of the mission.

3. You'll never eat lunch in this town again

Episode summary

Stumbling out of the market, the Troubleshooters save a high-clearance citizen from a scrubot attack and meet an HPD&MC reality-vid producer who believes they're his next audition. The producer gives them each a choice of false personae to adopt on top of their real personalities and encourages them to go investigate, on camera, a crime scene that may have something to do with their mission.

The fluorescent light of daycycle

The team emerges from the dark, cramped tunnels of the market, into a clean, well-lit RED corridor (**Tension level 5**). There's no sign of the exit they just came through—just a smooth RED wall. Where to next?

You notice on your PDC you have three hours and 40 minutes left in your mission schedule. You hear sudden shouting from just around a nearby bend in the corridor. 'Help!' It's a frightened voice. 'Someone help me!'

A second voice—this one mechanical and sinister. 'Nasty! Dirty! Filthy!' it shouts. 'Mister Bubbles will remove you from his list!'

The PCs either check around the corner—how can they resist?—or the participants appear and race toward them: a GREEN Clearance citizen in a PLC uniform being mopped violently by a standard scrubot.

Recognizing this as something suspiciously like the mission they were sent on, the team should come to the rescue. If they don't, mention there are security cameras scanning this corridor. Remind the newly promoted RED Troubleshooters they'll get in trouble for not rescuing a high-clearance citizen. If that doesn't work, take a break and ask your players if they'd rather play Nintendo.

The scrubot doesn't attack the Troubleshooters; when attacked, it tries to flee. The PCs either destroy the bot quickly or let it escape; you want your players focused on the GREEN citizen they just saved. If they insist on pursuing the fleeing bot, it rushes into a large corridor and is immediately ground under the wheels of a passing transbot.

The would-be victim, Marco-G-BUD, is grateful. He has no hard currency to reward them, but he authorises a 25-credit reward to each of his rescuers on the spot; all he needs is their names, so he can transfer the money to their accounts.

Downplay this. Make it clear this is the way everyone in Alpha Complex pays money to anyone, at least legally. Even the wariest Troubleshooter knows this is standard procedure and, in itself, safe. Marco-G casually explains, 'Beam me your ME identity from your PDC and I'll put the transfer through.'

MISTER BUBBLES

Scrubot Mark 1

Management 6
Hygiene 10
Violence 7
Hand Weapons 11
Weapons: Various limbs (W6K impact)
Armor: None

Marco-G-BUD

Spammer
Management 9
Con Games 13
Stealth 6
Sleight of Hand 10
Violence 7
Energy Wpns 11
Hardware, Software, Wetware all at 7 without specialities
Weapons: None
Armor: Green reflex

Those who give their identity do in fact receive the reward immediately—they can easily check for themselves on the spot—but they have no time right now to study the credits' subtle, obscurely phrased license. This license authorises Marco-G to resell the recipients' names to 'independent resellers'—e-mail spammers. Anyone who accepts the reward starts receiving spam at the end of this episode (see the sidebar below).

Important: Marco-G *must* get at least one PC's name, and preferably all of them. It's a key point for the storyline. However, don't push this too hard, or the players will rightly suspect a scam. If they don't cooperate, have a few of HPD's personalised PerCitFreP messages (see Episode 1) float overhead, greeting a few Troubleshooters by name. Marco-G feigns not to notice, but...

Marco-G is on his way to SPD Sector's R&D Demo Laboratory where he and his boss, Andrea-B-OCK, will review new candidates for his PLC firm's product line. He invites them along, but maybe he sounds a bit too eager—'I hear you Troubleshooters just *love* handling new R&D prototypes!'

Cattle call

The team may want to accompany Marco-G on his job. After all, there's been one attack on him; there may be more. Or players familiar with the usual role of R&D equipment in **PARANOIA** adventures may instead find an urgent excuse to visit a bathroom or get their boots shined or something.

Doesn't matter. The Troubleshooters don't get to go with Marco-G, though they'll meet him again later. They're pulled away by the sudden arrival of another citizen:

An enthusiastic voice catches your attention. 'There you guys are! I've been looking for you everywhere!' You turn to see an eager-looking YELLOW-Clearance citizen with a clipboard under his arm. He's wearing an HPD&MC vest and a production

cap for the reality vid series Shooters. He gives each of you a firm, friendly handshake. 'I'm Harry-Y-LGT-3, your casting director. Glad t'meet you. Trouble finding the studio?' he says, then waves it off casually. 'I figured as much. People get lost around here all the time.'

Harry-Y works as a producer for *Shooters*, the hit reality-vid series about real Troubleshooters ('not like that scripted Teela stuff!'). He put in an audition request for a new Troubleshooter team this morning; they didn't show up on time so he went looking for them ('and here you are!'). Having found a Troubleshooter team, he assumes they're his new cast. He has no names of candidate Troubleshooters, just fragmentary notes about their mission. He's not going to let that get in his way, though:

Player: Are you sure we're the ones you're looking for?

Harry-Y: 'Course! This is your service service. It's written right here.

Player: With our names?

Harry-Y: 'Course, with your names.

Player: What's my name?

Harry-Y: Aw, what's in a name anyway? Come on, let's meet the production team.

Player: Let me see where it has my name.

Player: Oh, sorry, no can do. YELLOW Clearance HPD&MC intellectual property.

Some players may be eager to become vid stars. They remember how great the last

Spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, spam, marvelous spam

While Harry-Y seizes the Troubleshooters, Marco-G quietly slips away to his appointment at R&D. When and if players ask about him, he's simply not there any more. On his way to R&D he resells their names to a bunch of his spammer associates (for 50 creds apiece, doubling his money) and the spammers almost immediately begin sending spam to the Troubleshooters.

Now, strictly speaking, unsolicited mass e-mail is not the least bit illegal in Alpha Complex. It's only when it's applied to treasonous product—such as drugs, viruses and filesharing—that The Computer has a problem with it. However, even legal spam has the potential to become extraordinarily annoying... so annoying it can drive a citizen to murder. Mister Bubbles virus creator Don-R has already reached that point. Now it's time to drive your players there as well.

Every Troubleshooter who accepted Marco-G's 25cr reward has effectively opted in to receive spam. Now you pelt them with spam mail. Literally. Remember those spam e-mails you made so many copies of earlier? Separate the ones that say they're from 'Alley G8R'—you'll use those later on. The rest start showing up in the message boxes of the Troubleshooters' PDCs, making a little 'new message' chime each time. Pick one of the spam messages from 'Hottbott', crumple it up and throw it at one of your players while making a 'DING!' noise. While they're reading it, crumple up another one and throw it at another player. Everyone who accepted Marco-G's money should get at least one to start.

If any PCs respond to the message in any way—trying to mail the sender back, clicking the 'remove me' link, or clicking any of the offers—they have just asked for even more spam. Immediately hit them with another spam—'DING!'—and while they're reading it, hit them again. Keep hitting them with spam missiles periodically, from now until the end of the mission. Eventually they'll notice some messages appear to originate from their own Troubleshooter team. 'Why are you guys spamming me? Wait, why am I spamming myself?' The answer is, of course, the spammers' mail programs are forging the Troubleshooters' identities. This becomes a crucial plot point near the mission's end, when infected scrubbots mis-identify the Troubleshooters as spammers.

Periodically send a round of spam to everyone on the 'list'—two spams to anyone who clicked on anything. Whenever a Troubleshooter is involved in something important or delicate or dangerous from now until you run out of spam slips, hit them with a spam. 'DING!' Interfere with their in-character conversations. 'DING!' When they ask you questions out of character, 'DING!'

It will be funny at first, but trust us: by the time you've thrown 80 or 90 messages over the next couple of hours, the Troubleshooters will eventually be just as ready to kill as Don-R.



season of *Shooters* was, with the ex-IntSec agent who wrestled with revealing his mutant nature, and the CPU clerk who discovered he was a cyborg assassin from the future. They'll go anywhere Harry-Y says. They'll do anything he says. These players should get a couple of Perversity points. Other players may be wary. Haven't they learned how this works yet?

Mister Troubleshooter, it's time for your close-up

Harry-Y takes the PCs back to the *Shooters* production offices (**Tension level 8**), where they are introduced to the other two members of their mobile film crew, Trevor-R-HNL-2 ('the cameraman') and Brian-R-PFD-5 ('the FX guy'). The three of them will accompany the Troubleshooters on their current mission, getting the behind-the-scenes point-of-view. This is not something the Troubleshooters really have any say in.

Harry-Y is eager to get into the field, but first the Troubleshooters need some preparation. After all, HPD&MC needs to ensure they have all the elements of success in place before they start committing footage. The way HPD&MC makes sure their reality-vid stars are 'real' enough to be successful is through, well, illusion and just a bit of fiction known as Personal Story Augmentation Templates, or PSATs.

You see, today's vid audience needs more than just snappy dialogue and visual effects. They want rich, complex characters with compelling personalities. A little drama, a little flair, a little moral lesson for us all—these things spell the difference between a hit show and just another bunch of actors draining HPD&MC budget. Unfortunately, most real citizens have the personality of a Vita-Yum bar. So the *Shooters* production team came up with the following add-on personalities guaranteed to make even the most bland citizen scintillating and expressive. Each one comes with a few props to help make the illusion more convincing. Are the props real? Harry-Y won't come right out and say they're

not ('you should treat them as though they were') but, of course, the reason reality-vid is HPD&MC's big thing these days is because it can be done on a shoestring budget.

Each Troubleshooter is expected to adopt at least one template to make himself 'marketable' for the show. They'll still use their own names and such—this is reality vid, remember?—but they must roleplay the elements of their adopted PSAT(s) to the best of their ability.

Your players may start to think this is sounding like a highly non-great idea, but remember earlier when we talked about the Carrot and the Stick? The Stick is the usual threat of Censure and worse for disobeying orders: They are required to accept service firm duties if available. It says so right on their Mission Alert. And the Carrot...? Well, every template comes with a little upfront money and the potential for a good-sized per-mission cash bonus if played well enough. That should get your Troubleshooters interested, especially after the IR Market took their dough.

Also, the first player to pick a PSAT gets 5 Perversity points. The next one gets 4, the third 3, and so on until the last is, as they say, a rotten egg. Snoozers are losers.

Harry-Y reviews the current set of personae they have ready for use in the field. Read the little descriptive text for each one, and the amount of the cash advance. Don't mention the size of the potential bonus. Don't reveal any more about the personae until they've been selected and signed for; each Troubleshooter has to sign a series of standard waivers accepting personal responsibility for the PSAT in question, agreeing to abide by all the requirements of the role, disclaiming *Shooters* of any responsibility for the success or failure of their mission and committing their future clones to the same agreement.

While going through the list of PSATs, by the way, is a good time to start the delivery of spam to the players' PDCs (see the sidebar on the previous page).

Rags to Riches

'You invented a way to reduce inventory management costs 20% PLC-wide and were rewarded with the single largest bonus check in the history of Alpha Complex. Money is no object for you now.'

Pays: 50 in advance, 100 to 250 bonus on mission completion

The Troubleshooter gets a new ultra-flashy wardrobe with sexy accessories and a (simulated) BlingCard™ which lets them buy, theoretically, anything they want. The card can be used to buy stuff within limits—it's tied to a moderate HPD&MC discretionary fund—but the Troubleshooter can't actually keep anything he buys, other than cheap consumables. It has to be returned as soon as they have enough footage of him 'enjoying his new purchase'. If the Troubleshooter breaks anything, he has to buy it with his own money. Bonus is based on how effectively the Troubleshooter shows that money solves every problem.

Haunted

'Your best friend from the Junior Citizens creche was killed in a tragic vat-drowning accident and you believe it was your fault. The guilt eats at you constantly. Heavy drama at its best!'

Pays: 50 in advance, 150 to 300 bonus on mission completion

Occasionally, when cued by the production team, the Troubleshooter must pretend to see the ghost of his dead friend haunting him. The FX guy wrote some 'restless shade' multicorder software; they'll composite it into the rest of the footage in editing. The 'ghost' tends to 'appear' when it's really inconvenient. Like during fights and chases. Bonus is based on the tragedy and believability of the guilt displayed.

Rising Star

'You've been practicing your thera— your, uh, thermi— what is this name? We'll work on the name, name'll be great, trust me— your *theremintar* for years, waiting for that big break,

The HPD&MC Shooters crew

Harry-Y-LGT-3

Producer

Harry-Y's job is to pull PCs aside occasionally for interview content. He generally focuses on whomever is busiest at the moment, or trying the hardest not to be noticed. He's a plastic, superficial person who doesn't realise he's plastic and superficial. He thinks he brings genuinely compelling and touching content to the vidscreen by asking such meaningful questions as 'what's your favorite thing to eat on a mission?' Every once in a while, though, he pops out a real landmine, such as 'if there were no security clearances, what would your favorite color be?'

Trevor-R-HNL-2

Cameraman

Trevor-R knows from experience how heavily-armed recording officers can be sort of—*touchy*—about who documents the mission and how it's done, so he'll make it clear his own job is to document the Troubleshooters... not the mission. 'I wouldn't dream of interfering with the official record of the mission,' he'll say. 'Let's all just work together to make sure you guys get what you need... and I get what I need.' In other words, a bribe will go a long way in determining whether he films someone committing treason.

Brian-R-PFD-5

Effects technician

This crazy special effects guy carries satchels full of high-tech and explosives, which he won't let anyone else near. He doesn't care about security clearances, Troubleshooter safety or anything else, if he can get a great effects shot for the episode.

Assume all three of them have skills of 7 across the board. Feel free to make up some common specialties on the fly if it will help amusing things happen.

MISTER BUBBLES

but just as you were about to make the big time, you realised you needed to do your duty, so you became a Troubleshooter.'

Pays: 100 in advance, 200 to 500 bonus on mission completion

The Troubleshooter gets a 'theremintar'—basically, a guitar-like theremin—and a bunch of groupies. (What nobody knows is that the groupies aren't just INFRARED extras; they're a bunch of Death Leopards, and whenever they're not being carefully watched, they tend to vandalise stuff.) Bonus is paid based on how thoroughly the Troubleshooter lives a life of rock-n-roll!

(He should also be careful not to munge his pronunciation of 'theremintar.' No one else ever manages to say it right.)

Man and Machine

'We're trying to put forward a more positive cyborg role-model. No more grim robot assassins from the future! You're upbeat... funny, even. A wacky, unthreatening cyborg sidekick!'

Pays: 100 in advance, 200 to 500 bonus on mission completion

Comes with about 20 kilograms of glue-on cyborg makeup and prosthetics. Some of it is electrified and might shock the wearer. The prosthetics look just real enough to induce fear and revulsion in most citizens who see them. Bonus is paid based on how 'wacky' and 'unthreatening' the Troubleshooter is.

Joe Friday

'Internal Security has a bad rep as a bunch of sneaks who hide in the shadows. Not you! You're proud to announce your IntSec affiliation. Show that badge with pride as you stick to the facts!'

Pays: 100 in advance, 300 to 600 bonus on mission completion

Comes with an 'all-access door pass' that supposedly opens any door in Alpha Complex. It doesn't really, but with enough advance warning, the FX guy can get most doors open if necessary. Then they film the door opening in response to the badge. (*Shooters* disclaims all responsibility for which doors the Troubleshooter decides he wants opened.) Bonus is paid based on how often the Troubleshooter steps into a touchy situation with the revelation he's Internal Security.

Doc Mania

'You were experimenting with high-energy vat physics when a freak accident gave you

powers—super powers, not mutant ones! But it also rendered you vulnerable to algaeic bisulfide.'

Pays: 150 advance, 300 to 600 bonus on mission completion

The production team brings along a small mobile crane which can be used to simulate flight (hook cables to Troubleshooter's clothing) and superstrength (hook cables to whatever the Troubleshooter is going to lift). They're working on pyrokinesis as well, using a modified slugthrower with napalm ammo, but it's a little dicey still. The vulnerability is simulated using nausea gas pellets which the FX man throws in front of the Troubleshooter: 'Oh no, look out, that bad guy has algaeic bisulfide!' Bonus is paid based on impressive use of superpowers and manic bravery.

Grizzled vet

'Your experiences in the war against Beta Complex have left you scarred. Grim-n-gritty, you know? What you saw in the war makes your Troubleshooter duties seem like a vacation by comparison!'

Pays: 200 in advance, 600 to 1,200 bonus on mission completion

The Troubleshooter is 'missing a limb'; one of his limbs is bent out of sight and tied down. Hideous scar makeup makes him unpleasant to look at. Comes with a drug injection that occasionally induces random 'war' flashbacks. Bonus is paid based on how often he can make his war experiences relevant to the current situation.

Wolveboy

'Get this: Vulture Squadron Bravo 9 found you in the ruins of the Outdoors, where you were raised by a vicious radioactive wolve! Now, despite your savage upbringing, you try to fit into our perfect society. I should warn you in advance... This one is a toughie and HPD&MC has never found anyone who was up to the task of playing the role.' This is possibly because nobody in Alpha Complex, except Sierra Clubbers, has more than a foggy notion of what a wolve, or even a wolf, is. (Is that the one that barks and fetches?)

Pays: 300 in advance, 600 to 1,500 bonus on mission completion

Wolveboy doesn't wear armor, or even a uniform. Just a loincloth. He doesn't use any weapons more advanced than unpowered hand weapons. Also, he's pre-verbal, communicating only in grunts and hand gestures. This is one bonus the Troubleshooters will certainly earn the hard way!

Straight play notes

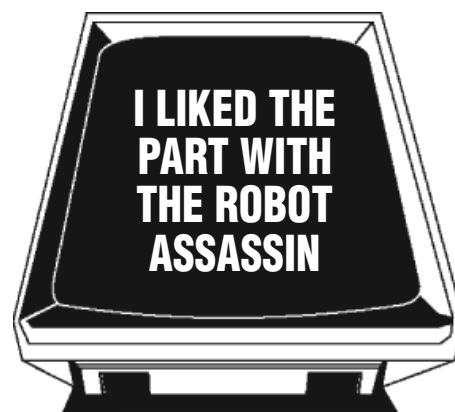
In a Straight game, it should not be clear to the players how seriously they should take this HPD&MC guy. Does he really expect them to act out these ludicrous and implausible origin stories? The answer is, yes he does... because The Computer doesn't know they're ludicrous and implausible. The last thing The Computer needs is to hear there's fiction in its reality shows, okay? Just play along and we can all make some money here...

Plot? Oh, yeah, let's get some of that, too

After they've each committed to one or more PSATs, Harry-Y looks over his clipboard. 'Okay, so you guys are... let's see... looking for missing fissionable material? Yeah, okay, we can work with that.' The team probably responds by either trying to correct him—their mission involves scrubots—or keeping quiet and saying nothing. Or perhaps they are busy dealing with the spam you've started tossing at them. If they keep quiet, he asks them how much progress they've made so far: 'Have you been to the reactor yet? Do you have the contact information for their decommissioning overseer?'

At some point, either the Troubleshooters let it slip they thought their mission was something else, or Harry-Y begins to realise they don't know what he's talking about. Just as an uncomfortable situation begins to develop, coincidence once again gives everyone a convenient out, as an INFRARED production assistant rushes up: 'Do we have a forensically-trained Troubleshooter team ready for a shoot? Some scrubot killed a vat shift supervisor over in SDK Sector and we can get first crack at the crime scene if we move fast.'

The first player to identify himself as a forensically-trained Troubleshooter on a mission involving scrubot attacks gets a Perversity point.





4: Crime Scene Incinerators

The Troubleshooters are conveyed to a vat center in SDK Sector, where they carefully and professionally (cough) investigate the death of one Mark-R-MAK-4, shift supervisor. Shockingly, they might even turn up some clues suggesting there's really something going on!

Come out with your spray-bottles up!

Harry-Y has the team conveyed to the SDK Sector vats in a *Shooters* production autocar. A quick check of their PDCs reveals that they have two hours, 50 minutes remaining until their transbot is scheduled to arrive. On the drive, pelt their PDCs with a few more spam mails.

At the vat center (**Tension 5**), a couple dozen INFRARED workers are being kept huddled together under observation by a single RED Internal Security agent who is sure glad to see a Troubleshooter team on the scene. He doesn't know much about the situation: 'Twenty-one minutes ago, a standard Series 3 scrubot entered the office of the RED-Clearance shift supervisor, one Mark-R-MAK-6. The door was closed. INFRARED staff reported hearing raised voices from the office—both human and bot—and then sounds of violence. The door appears to have been locked. The bot, so far as anyone knows, is still inside the office. There hasn't been any noise in there in the last seventeen minutes.' He hasn't gone into the office because his orders were to round up the staff and prevent them from leaving until they're cleared of suspicion (which will probably take the rest of their lives).

The bot is indeed still inside the office and the door refuses to open from the outside. If one of the Troubleshooters is playing the 'Joe Friday' role and wants to 'badge' the door open, Brian-R will begin pulling some scary-looking explosives out of his satchel. Scary-looking enough to perhaps make the Troubleshooters consider other alternatives. Such as smaller explosives. Or Stealth/Security Systems to bypass the locked door. They might

also try to talk the bot out of the office using Management/Con Games or Intimidation. If the players start to agree too easily to a single course of action, Harry-Y suggests something else. If they're going to try something calm, he suggests something exciting. If they're going in hard and fast, he'll point out the dramatic value of the 'talk-down'. If the players start to change their minds, so will he.

Eventually, one of your players will decide they want some Perversity thrown their way and just pick a course of action. Give him some Perversity, of course.

The bot shouldn't be too hard to catch—either by talking it out of the office, or by going in after it. It doesn't remember what it did and tries to hide its blood-covered cleaning attachments from view. It is deeply ashamed of its actions... for now. Just wait until it gets a whiff of another spammer, though.

Suspiciously like some other roleplaying game

Once they've gotten into the office, the Troubleshooters can do some investigative work. Mark-R's corpse is there and it's pretty clear he was killed by the bot, if for no other reason than he smells positively pine-fresh. His office is pretty simple, with monitoring stations for the vats and a personal workstation.

There are several avenues of investigation the team can pursue:

- ☞ Software/Hacking on his workstation reveals a hidden program called BulkSell, used for spamming. The username in the program was 'Hottbott'!
- ☞ Software/Data Search on his workstation turns up a bunch of e-mails of interest, including one a few days ago from an unidentified sender (using the fake name 'Alley G8R') that says 'Take me off your list for real or I'll kill you.'
- ☞ Another e-mail from just an hour or so ago is from Marco-G! It says 'More names for the list under our standard arrangement' and lists the PCs' names. (Pelt a few players with spam.)
- ☞ Software/Data Analysis on the e-mails might indicate a little bit about 'Alley G8R', but not much—only that the author was originally on a RED-Clearance terminal somewhere in DMM Sector.
- ☞ Software/Bot Programming on the scrubot indicates a virus in its code. The virus appears to define spamming as the ultimately dirty activity, with some extra

code used to identify spammers over the network. (If they make the roll by a wide margin, they find the virus creator's signature: 'Mister Bubbles created by Alley G8R. Phreaks Phorever!' If they make it by a really wide margin, they can remove the virus from its brain.)

- ☞ Stealth/Concealment to search the office may turn up a small pamphlet called 'Mass-Mail Remote Sales and You'. The author of the pamphlet is Marco-G.
- ☞ If they check Mark-R's PDC, they'll see its start-up screen says 'Hiya Hottbott!'

Encourage (nay, demand!) they perform their investigation exercising their PSAT personae. While they're poking around the office, have Harry-Y conduct a few interviews for *Shooters*. If anyone chose the 'Rising Star' PSAT, the groupies will probably look for opportunities to vandalise the vats outside if they're not watched carefully.

Also, more spams hit the team's PDCs... even though Mark-R the spammer is dead. Even if they shut down his BulkSell program. Where are the spams coming from? Why, are those the names of the Troubleshooters on some of the spams?

Sure enough, their own PDCs have been hijacked into helping with the spamming. Unless the scrubot has already been destroyed, completely shut down, or had its brain cleared of the virus, have a sudden malicious glint of murder return to its glassy lenses: 'Nasty! Dirty! Filthy! Mister Bubbles says, take me off your list!' That's right: Scrubots start seeing our heroes as part of the problem.

After they've figured out the spammer connection and, perhaps, put the bot out of its (and their) misery, they'll probably want to get back in touch with Marco-G. Didn't he say he was going to SPD Sector's R&D lab...?

About this time, make sure you pelt one or two of your players with the spam message from 'Alley G8R' that offers cash for Marco-G's death. If you've been playing the spams thoroughly enough, they're perhaps already somewhat inclined in that direction.

Scrubot Series 3

Management 6
Hygiene 10
Stealth 4
Concealment 08
Violence 8
Hand Weapons 12
Weapons: Various limbs (S4M impact)
Cleaning sprayer (blindness)
Armor: 1

Straight play notes

About the only thing to do here is tone down the scrubot suspect a bit, perhaps, and spend more time soaking in the atmosphere of police procedural TV.





5: Avengers, disassemble!

Episode summary

The team rejoins Marco-G (either to protect him or murder him) while he helps his boss review a bunch of R&D equipment. They become unwilling arbiters in the process. Then the most dangerous scrubot yet turns up, identifies the Troubleshooters as spammers, and the lab comes under scrubot assault.

99% perspiration...

Harry-Y has the autocar limo drive the team over to the SPD Sector R&D Product Review Lab (**Tension 9**). Here R&D makes presentations when they need to convince various PLC firms and administrators to put their latest creations into widespread use. Marco-G and his boss, Andrea-B-OCK-5, are reviewing such a presentation today. They're looking for something hot, something destructive.

When the team arrives at Reception, their PDCs indicate they have an hour and 20 minutes remaining in their mission.

You're in the reception area. It's nothing fancy. The waiting chairs look pretty nice, though. Big doors labeled 'Conference Room' are directly opposite from where you entered. Even bigger doors labeled 'Main Display' are to your right. A RED Clearance staffer sits behind a desk, playing with some sort of twisty metal puzzle-toy.

A BLUE citizen in PLC garb bursts out of the Conference Room. 'None of this stuff is sounding like what I want. Forget the slideshow, Nancy. Show me the hardware.' Coming out right behind her are two individuals in R&D labcoats—one GREEN, one BLUE—and then, finally, the familiar face of Marco-G-BUD-4. He seems a little surprised to see you.

Marco-G is indeed surprised. He was sort of hoping never to see the Troubleshooters again. He's a versatile guy, though, and he'll roll with it. For one thing, he knows he personally didn't do anything wrong; he was completely authorised to sell the Troubleshooters' names to anyone he wanted to. It's not his fault some of those people might have turned around and offered illegal products. If the Troubleshooters confront him with this, he quickly points this out. And if consulted, The Computer agrees with him.

The BLUE PLC citizen is, of course, his boss, Andrea-B-OCK-5. She wants something cool and dangerous to sell to Armed Forces, and

nothing she's heard about so far has gotten her excited. The two R&Ders are Bill-G-HOL-4 and his boss, Nancy-B-AZZ-4, senior managers in the R&D service firm Bigger Guns. They want to close a deal—any deal. At all.

All four head into the Main Display Hall. If the players try to draw Marco-G's attention, Andrea-B asks what's going on. Do the Troubleshooters want to anger a BLUE Clearance PLC executive? Probably not. If they do, remind them the executive can demote any of them back to INFRARED. They'll get the idea after that. (If they start making noise like they're just going to waste Marco-G right up front, warn them off the same way.)

If the team talks to Marco-G, Bill-G (the R&D manager) notices. At the first opportunity, he pulls a couple of the Troubleshooters aside:

Bill-G: Hey, are you guys buddies with Marco-G?

Player #1: No way! He's a filthy spammer. First chance we get, he's—

Bill-G: So you don't have an inside track on shaping his opinions?

Player #2: Never even met the guy before today. And just as soon as—

Bill-G: 'Cause there's a couple thousand creds in it for you if you do.

Player #2: —you tell us more, we'll do our best to help!

Player #1: Yeah, Marco-G and me? We go way back!

Bill-G: What was that about a filthy spammer?

Player #1: Oh, I can't remember now. That was a long time ago.

Player #2: So what do you need us to convince our good buddy Marco-G of?

Bill-G's strategy is to get the PCs to help sell Marco-G on something they have here. 'Look, maybe you take some of it with you. Maybe you demonstrate it here. Maybe you just take careful notes and bring it up to Marco-G later, yeah?' Only Marco-G can get Andrea-B's attention focused on something long enough to convince her. If the Troubleshooters convince Marco-G, and Marco-G convinces Andrea-B, they'll all be rich in of a week. Of course, this plan relies on the cooperation of Troubleshooters, and that's always tricky.

Nancy-B leads everyone to the table in the middle of the Display Hall. There are six items on the table. Andrea-B pokes at each one a bit, not all that interested. If the Troubleshooters haven't taken the bait from Bill-G yet, Andrea-B calls over any Troubleshooters in the Display Hall.

Andrea-B: What do you think of this?

Player: Uh... What is it?

Nancy-B: Fire and Forgetpicks. Box of 50.

Andrea-B: Do you mind if this Troubleshooter gives me a demonstration?

Nancy-B: Not at all!

Andrea-B: Troubleshooter?

Player: Uh...

Refusing to obey the order of a BLUE citizen is a P4B Treason offense with a 400cr fine. Mention the fine casually. Smile.

Allow, encourage or force the Troubleshooters (at least, the ones who haven't already wandered off elsewhere in the lab) to poke about with the R&D gear. Remind them Bill-G wants them to get Andrea-B to buy something, anything. Try to get them to make a few sales pitches, plugging the merits of items they know nothing about. Award Perversity for truly inventive attempts, two or five or even more points.

Eventually Andrea-B points at the Decoy Robot. 'Do you have anything, bot-wise, that's... bigger than this? More destructive?' Nancy-B and Bill-G look at each for a moment. 'Well...' Bill-G says hesitantly. 'There is... the WarScrubber.'

If this doesn't perk up your players' ears, they've been dead since sometime around the middle of Episode 1.

...and 1% disintegration

Things should start moving quickly at this point. Andrea-B is interested in the WarScrubber and wants to see it. As the four executives—the two BLUEs and two GREENs—make their way from the Display Hall into the Workshop, Bill-G gives a quick summary. The WarScrubber only slightly resembles a scrubot any more. Bigger Guns has installed seven additional memory units of combat instruction and, in addition to the normal cleaning attachments, it has actual weapon systems. They have substantially reinforced the chassis and upgraded the tread. Et cetera...

WarScrubber

Management 6
Intimidation 10
Stealth 6
Shadowing 10
Violence 10
Energy Weapons 14, Hand Weapons 14
Weapons: Cutting torch (W4M energy)
Power drill (S3M impact)
Hand flamer (S3K energy)
Slug cone-rifle (W2K impact)
Armor: High-albedo coating (E2), kevlar plates (I1)

MISTER BUBBLES

If the Troubleshooters ask whether it could potentially be affected by scrubot viruses, Bill-G speculates it probably could... 'but who would write a virus for a scrubot?'

In the Workshop, Nancy-B tells Tommy-Y, the mechanic-type who was in here working on

something, to show them the WarScrubber. He goes over to the corner, where the 'Scrubber has been sitting plugged into the wall for the last few days, and whips the sheet off the brute. And then all hell breaks loose—because not only does the bot see Marco-G, but also the

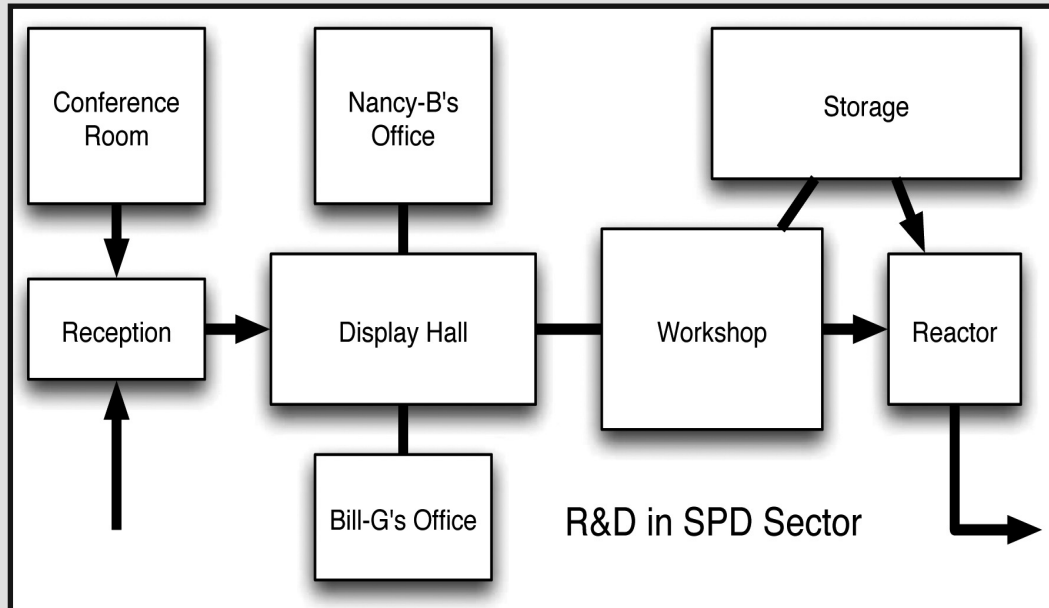
Troubleshooters. Marco's a name reseller, which is bad enough. The Troubleshooters, though, have been getting their names forged onto actual spam mails. So they're worse!

'How ya doin'?' Tommy-Y asks the dark, hulking bot.

SPD Sector R&D product review lab

Rather than drawing out a complicated map with 1-metre grid lines on it, we're giving you a Minimalist Action Flowchart (MAF) to lay out the lab so you can improvise the details to fit your particular mood. We're doing this to help you run a more flexible game, and not at all because we lack map-making talent or have a crushing deadline or anything.

The door into each room is clearly marked with the room's name.



Reception

A few chairs for waiting in and desk with a RED receptionist and a YELLOW Vulture trooper slouching in the corner. These two are the first to die during the scrubot assault.

Conference room

When the team arrives, Marco-G and his boss, Andrea-B-OCK-5, are in a meeting with their R&D counterparts, Bill-G-HOL-3 and Nancy-B-AZZ-4, in here. There's a big table that can seat, like, a dozen, and a screen for presentations.

Main display area

This is where the magic starts to happen. The one-way arrow indicates you should encourage the players this way and, once there, discourage them from going back. There's a wide, low table in the middle with the R&D items under review (see separate inset).

Nancy-B's office

The door only opens for her. If someone breaks into her BLUE office, it contains piles of papers, cabinets of blueprints and a monitor camera that sees whoever enters. Treason, anyone?

R&D product review lab Minimalist Action Flowchart

Bill-G's office

Careful examination would reveal he's a Romantic, but they won't have time for that.

Workshop

The four corners of this room are piled high with maintenance gear and projects in various stages of work. An old mechanic, Tommy-Y-HNB-4, is working on some sort of thing with gears. The WarScrubber is powered down in the corner, a sheet over it. It's plugged into the wall, from which it has been recharging its battery... and picking up the 'Mister Bubbles' virus.

Storage

Shelves of boxes. If someone wants to spend a round searching one of the boxes, they might find something interesting. Roll 1d20:

- 1-2: Ammo for a slugthrower (choose between slug, HE, flare and gas)
- 3: Cone rifle shell (choose between solid AP, napalm and ECM)
- 4: Tacnuke shell, wires hanging out, doesn't work

5: Umbrella, dispenses odorous gas when opened

6-8: Thermos full of liquid (random roll: water, petrol, acid, original BBB)

9-10: Geiger counter

11: IR goggles, but everything views upside down and jittery

12-16: Empty take-out containers full of strange mold (imply danger)

17: Fully automatic hammer (as hand weapon, W4K)

18: Self-erecting pup-tent

19-20: Laser barrel (RED the first time, then YELLOW, then BLUE)

Reactor

Big radiation warning icons on the doors in. The reactor is in good shape and perfectly safe... at least until fighting begins. A Hardware/Habitat Engineering roll, or just a close examination of the room, suggests the reactor's air-cooling intakes can be opened up, leading to an airshaft that presumably exits somewhere else. This is the eventual escape route for the team.



'Nasty. Dirty. Filthy,' it replies—your players are probably mouthing it with you—and turns towards the nearest Troubleshooter. 'Mister Bubbles says... *take me off your list!*'

Suds galore

As bad as the WarScrubber is by itself, the team is about to have an even bigger problem. Scrubots have tracked the Troubleshooters' movement ever since they left the SDK Sector vats, and are converging on the labs to Destroy Filthy Spammers (so far as they know).

Wait until the PCs get into the swing of fighting the WarScrubber, or decide to flee out the front. Then:

You hear the receptionist over an intercom. 'Did someone order a couple dozen scrubots? Because....' There's a clunking sound, then some gunfire from the front part of the lab, then a horrible, agonised yell. Moments later, you hear a dozen bots out in the reception area, all talking over each

other: 'Mister Bubbles says—Bubbles says take me off—me off your list!'

If the team is serious about trying to escape out the front, the sight of the Display Hall filling up with enraged scrubots should dissuade them. If it doesn't, have an NPC make the attempt and die horribly. Treat NPCs as disposable fodder at this point: the Rising Star's groupies, Tommy-Y the mechanic, the FX guy, both R&D executives...

A dozen scrubots per Troubleshooter will make the point pretty handily: The front door is no longer an option. Remember the end of that zombie movie you like? Or that Space Marines vs. bug-alien film? Like that. They must defeat or slip past the WarScrubber and fall back to the back rooms, with surviving *Shooters* production team in tow. They need another way out—perhaps a duct or shaft.

There *is* an exit, in the Reactor area (see the R&D map description nearby for details). But make them work for it. Make them sweat.

Straight style notes

Once you have a WarScrubber, it's harder to play things **Straight**. Play up the uselessness or risk of the R&D gear as a problem, not a joke, and the failures as awkward as well as funny. For example, the propeller beanie fires up and the Troubleshooter wearing it holds it to his head, but it doesn't lift him up. 'Why isn't it working?' Andrea-B asks. Nancy-B says she doesn't know, and blames the Troubleshooter. 'What are you doing to it? You're damaging it somehow.'

Play the executives as desperately fearful. The Computer will punish them if they don't come up with a success.

Perhaps there is a more extreme dislike and/or rivalry between Andrea-B and Nancy-B, and they draw team members into taking sides—not just over these items, but over everything these two BLUEs dislike about each other. This helps retain tension even in the absurd battle with the scrubots.

The R&D gear

There are six items on the table. Nancy-B and Bill-G really need one of them accepted for mass distribution by PLC, or a larger service firm will take over their lab and chop it up for its asset value. They are willing to kick back some real money to the Troubleshooters—a thousand or two—if the PCs help make a successful sales presentation.

Fire and Forgetpicks

These self-guided hands-free dental-cleaning tools are relatively safe when used one at a time. Just squeeze the end (or drop it on the floor) and it flies up using a gravitational repulsion effect, locates the nearest teeth and begins cleaning them. But when two or more of them are active at once, you have a problem: They tend to swarm, and the larger the swarm, the more hostile they become. If it's just a few, they attack with Violence 6, doing S5M damage per round. If it's a dozen or more, they have Violence 10 and damage S3K. If the entire box goes active, the swarm has Violence 14 and does damage of S1V! Vaporised by toothpicks—what a way to go...

Kinetic boots

Intended to augment the wearer's movement. They work pretty well, as long as you stay upright (Violence/Agility). Falling over means you get dragged along behind the still-running boots (O3W damage every round).

Manacles of truth

These supposedly compel the truth from the wearer, but really, the current model just administers a shock if the wearer is lying; then the manacles lock shut. A Management/Con Games roll can fool them. If lied to more than twice in a row, the manacles refuse to recognise the keypad release code any more, remaining permanently locked shut.

Turboprop beanie

Gas-powered propeller-yarmulke with a micropile turbine backup. There's no way to secure it to the user's head, so when activated it will fly up and awaaay...

Bot decoy

Looks like a pennywhistle with digital readout lights instead of fingerholes. Blowing on it broadcasts a digital

radio stream that renders the blower irresistible to most kinds of bots—it says here. Lets the user make Management rolls of any sort against bots. However, the first time the user fails a roll, the decoyed bots turn hostile to the user.

Decoy bot

Half a metre tall. Wind it up and set it on its way. The decoy bot slowly walks up to 10 metres in a straight line and then explodes as a grenade (W3K Energy damage). The execs are somewhat loath to demonstrate it.

Intangibility cloak

'I thought you said you had *seven* things to show us,' Andrea-B says. Bill-G, thinking quickly, grabs at the corner of the table and 'picks up' something. 'Not only is it invisible, you can barely tell it's there by touch!' he says. 'With another couple of weeks of work, we'll be able to apply this effect to anything—equipment, people, you name it.' He 'holds' the 'cloak' out towards one of the Troubleshooters. 'Here, feel that? It's like there's almost, but not quite, nothing there, huh?' Then he makes a significant 'work with me here' look...

MISTER BUBBLES

6: Every scrubot my enemy

Episode summary

With mere minutes remaining before their transbot is supposed to take them home and a veritable army of hostile scrubbots right behind them, the team lurches its way across the sector using the only vehicles available: a flock of Transitions.

Off of the frying plate, into the heating element

The team emerges from the little escape shaft into an empty RED-Clearance plaza (**Tension level 5**). Before they catch their breath, however, inform them a quick check of their PDCs show more time has gone by than it seemed: They only have about 20 minutes before their transbot is supposed to pick them up at platform B1:22:FF:C2, and it's clear across the sector! By the time Harry-Y (if he made it out of the R&D lab) can call a limo, it will be too late.

You cast your eyes around, looking for an answer: There must be a nearby tubeway... a slidewalk... something! But, no. The plaza is deserted except for... wait, is that... it is! A set of public-access Transitions, standing just a few metres away. No problem! The nimble little discs will get you to your rendezvous in plenty of time.

Let your players feel just a glimmer of hope, or at least your firm hand in the small of their backs. Then:

Suddenly, you hear a noise from behind you. A noise like a runaway freightbot... or, more accurately, like an army of murderous scrubbots shouting your names and erupting around the corner of a nearby building. They're rushing right at you.

If you start running now, you might just make it to the Transitions before they're on top of you.

Hint, hint.

You can assess the players' current fear of you by how much they roll their eyes.

There are nine (9) Transitions sitting together in a group. This means a few NPCs (such as Marco-G, or Harry-Y and the production team, if they also escaped) can come along and serve as fodder for the chase scene. The first one who jumps on a Transition should get a couple of Perversity points. Anyone who spends a lot of time asking about their alternatives gets left behind and dies well-scrubbed.

When everyone has hopped on the Transitions, determine which Transition is the initial guide. Everyone makes a d20 roll. Record these numbers somewhere; they are the characters' starting *Maneuver values*. The highest result takes the #1 Flock Order position, at the front of the group; the lowest total takes position #9, the furthest back. The Transitions speed off in a more-or-less circular group, as shown on the Flocking Diagram. (The 'X' squares indicate the front rank of the hundreds of pursuing scrubbots.)

Highway to heck

The chase lasts up to 10 'sequences', each of which requires everyone to make a skill roll; the skill changes each time. Success and failure in these rolls cause Troubleshooters to move ahead and behind each other in the Flock Order, determine who has fallen far enough back to be attacked by the bot army, and who gets to be guide during the next sequence. In the first sequence, the character with the highest starting Flock Order is also the guide. Each sequence, the following things happen:

1. You describe the new sequence crisis that is upon them.

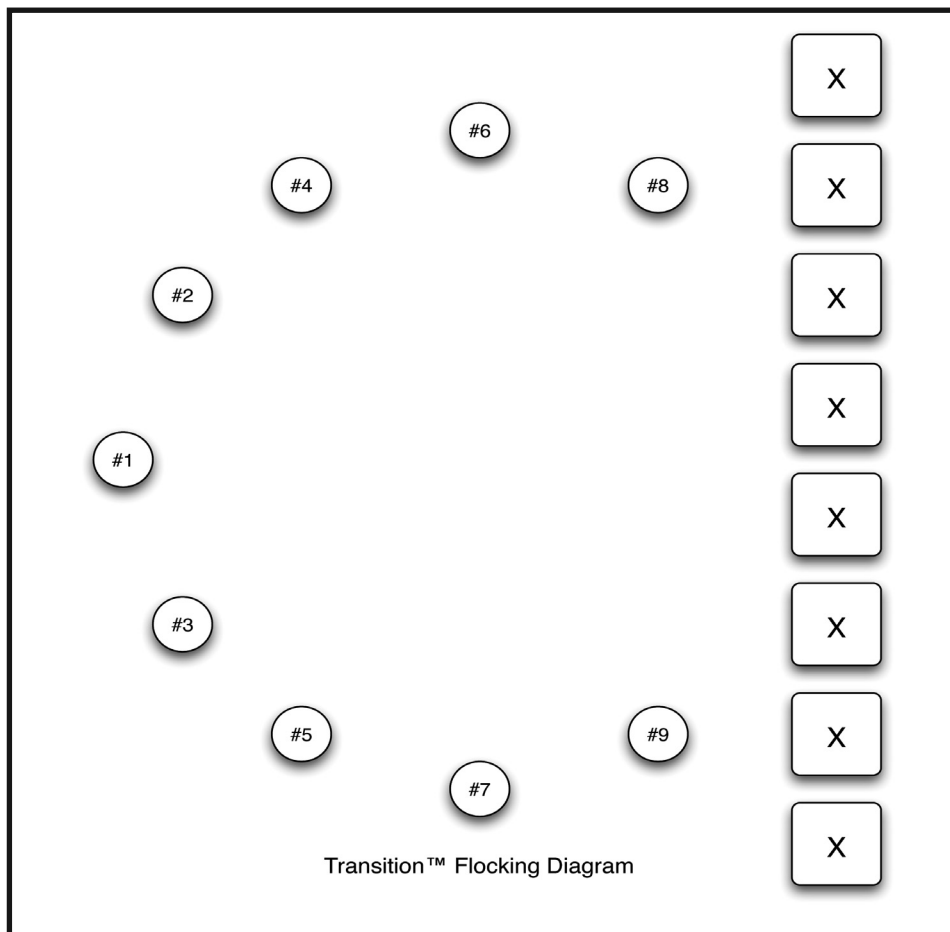
See '10 chase sequences' for some suggested crises. In each crisis the current guide chooses one of two skills you present. Everyone must use the skill the guide chooses. He generally chooses whichever one he is better at; this may not be the better choice for the others, but that isn't the guide's problem, now is it?

2. **Everyone** rolls against the chosen skill, not just the guide.

Everyone who succeeds at the skill roll adds his success margin to his Maneuver value, deftly speeding further ahead. Everyone who fails subtracts his failure margin from his Maneuver value, struggling as he falls behind. These margins also determine the #1 through #9 positions in step 5. Anyone whose Maneuver value falls below 0 gets attacked in step 4.

3. During the sequence, each character can take one action.

Typical actions include trying to destroy pursuing scrubbots with weapons or mutant





powers, attacking other characters to make them fall behind instead, or just working extra hard to catch up. For each scrubot that gets Busted (or worse) by the Troubleshooters, and for each fleeing character (including NPCs) wounded enough to be down (or worse) and thus trampled by the bots, reduce the overall length of the chase by one sequence.

Characters who focus just on trying to get ahead can choose to roll against the skill the guide did not choose, or against a narrow specialty if they have one they can convince you applies. This gives characters who were screwed over by the guide's choice to recover a little. If they succeed, add their success margin to their Maneuver value, but if they fail, don't knock their total down any further—there's no additional risk for focusing on 'driving'.

4. The scrubots attack anyone who has fallen too far behind.

Anyone whose Maneuver value (from step 2) is now 0 or less becomes vulnerable to scrubot attack. If their total is -10 or worse, two scrubots can attack; -20 or worse, three bots; and so on. These bots have the same statistics as the one that attacked Marco-G at the start of Episode 3.

5. Whoever succeeded by the largest margin in step 2 becomes the new guide. All players take new positions in descending order of their Maneuver values.

Being the frontmost Transition isn't necessarily the same as guiding the flock (after the first sequence); conceivably the last Transition in line could be the new guide in the next sequence, if that player had the largest success this time. If nobody succeeded in the skill roll, whoever failed by the smallest margin is the new guide.

10 chase sequences

You don't have to run the sequences in the order listed; go with whatever amuses you, providing your own explanation for jumping directly from, say, the hydroponic garden to the Death Leopard road-rage. As brutal as many of them sound, their purpose isn't to actually harm the Troubleshooters. They simply determine who gets through better or worse. Severely failing the skill roll in the Battlefield, for example, doesn't *necessarily* mean the character gets hit by an artillery shell... but, hey, it's your chase sequence.

■ Pedestrian wrong-of-way

The Transitions shoot across the plaza, down a shallow flight of stairs... and immediately run into a crowd of citizens on a walkway. Guide chooses to either (1) **assess which way they'll scatter** (Management/Moxie) or (2) **simply muscle them aside** (Violence/Unarmed Combat).

■ Lost highway

Passing through to the nearby road, the flock attempts to merge with traffic, but initially starts out in the oncoming lane. Guide chooses to (1) **jump the group over the divider** to the correct side (Violence/Agility) or (2) **quickly hotwire his Transition** into dealing with head-on autocars (Software/Vehicle Programming).

■ Ruffian road-rage

A gang of Death Leopards, also on Transitions out on the road, decides to mix it up with the Troubleshooters road-warrior style. Guide can choose to (1) engage in **Transition vs. Transition slamming** (Violence/Vehicular Combat) or (2) **scare them into backing off** (Management/Intimidation).

■ Emergency response

There's a siren from somewhere behind them. It's an Internal Security hover patroller, on its way, no doubt, to catch evildoers! Traffic begins to make way for it. Guide decides to either (1) **brazenly pretend to be escorting it** (Management/Chutzpah) or (2) **slip in right behind** to follow in its wake (Stealth/Shadowing).

■ Construction zone

The Transitions veer sharply into an HPD&MC housing expansion project full of heavy automated equipment. Guide can choose to (1) **watch out for swinging crane arms and heavy loads** being dropped (Stealth/High Alert) or (2) look for a clever way to **exploit the moving, meshing equipment** to augment his Transition's progress (Hardware/Mechanical Engineering).

■ Welcome to the jungle

They crash into a hydroponic garden dense with plant life. Guide chooses to (1) **navigate the confusing tangle of greenery** (Wetware/Outdoor Life) or instead (2) **skid along the irrigation pipes and ventilation shafts** (Hardware/Habitat Engineering).

■ The road less dangerous

The hallway splits in two directions, each one leading to an equally risky factory. Guide must decide whether everyone has to cope with (1) the hazards of the Tech Services **explosives manufacturing center** (Violence/Demolitions) or (2) the threat of the **Power Services reactor core** (Hardware/Nuclear Engineering).

■ Battlefield

They emerge into a wide space, only to discover it's an Armed Forces artillery range! Guide chooses to either (1) play the Transition's controls like a master to **run the flock through**

Straight style notes

This is probably the hardest episode to play Straight, inasmuch as it's a frantic all-out race against a wave of scrubotic death. Each sequence, have the Leader choose one of three Skills—Moxie, High Alert, or Agility—regardless of the crisis. Instead of having them throw each other under the wheels of the bots, encourage the PCs to come up with ways to use circumstances to cause damage to the bots.

a **deadly gauntlet of explosions** (Violence/Fine Manipulation) or (2) **pick a sneakier route** that makes them less a target (Stealth/Sneaking).

■ Spiral ramp

A nearby ramp down ends up going around and around until everyone starts to get dizzy. Guide decides to either (1) **focus on how much he'll be fined if he gets sick** on his uniform (Management/Hygiene) or (2) **just goes ahead and tries to throw up** so he'll feel better (Wetware/Medical).

■ The toll gate

The path ahead is blocked by a drop-gate guarded by a couple of fellow Troubleshooters. Guide decides the correct way to get them to let him through the gate is either (1) a **stirring speech** (Management/Oratory) or (2) a convincing imitation of **suicidal recklessness** (Wetware/Psychotherapy).

Skidding to a stop

When you've had enough of the chase, the Transition flock skids up to the transbot platform listed on their original Mission Alert. The transbot pulls smoothly in just as the frontmost arrives. Those with the highest Maneuver values arrive first; if they have a high enough lead on the others, you may let them take a round or two of action before the others arrive. The last character still standing skids into the transbot just as the doors begin to slide shut. Seconds later, the transbot begins to accelerate away from the platform as the scrubots beat on its hull.

Seconds after that, anyone looking out the back window sees a second, beat-up-looking transbot slam into the platform, scattering scrubots like tenpins.

7: There's no briefing like debriefing

The Troubleshooters go to a room they didn't start in and get debriefed by a guy they didn't talk to earlier. But first, a little closure, as they (gasp) catch Don-R-PNU-4!

Back where we didn't start

(Straight-style GMs can play this one pretty much as-is.)

The transbot wends its way back out of SPD Sector and eventually deposits the Troubleshooters at a platform bearing the sign, 'Welcome to DMM Sector Troubleshooter Central.' Another new Troubleshooter team is waiting at the platform, expecting to board once the players have gotten out. They look shiny and optimistic.

Just beyond the platform area is a RED Clearance reception desk clerk, engrossed in something on his workstation. When the transbot doors slide open and you step out, he glances up for just a moment, then back down... then back up, his eyes suddenly wide. 'But how— where did— How did you find me?' he shouts, leaping up and trying to make a run for it.

Yes! As implausible as it seems, this is Don-R-PNU-4, aka 'Alley G8R', the Computer Phreak author of the 'Mister Bubbles' virus. He recognises the Troubleshooters immediately—he's been poking through their personnel records all day—and thought they were safely lost on the wrong mission.

It's possible your players picked up none of the clues regarding the origin of the scrubot virus—blew off the e-mail offer from 'Alley G8R'—and meandered through the mission without the slightest interest in finding out what's really been going on. Even so, your players, when confronted with a guy who jumps up and tries to run, are sure to respond with 'takedown first, questions later.' If they don't, they deserve to be busted back down to INFRARED and made to clean bathroom floors. With their tongues.

Don-R isn't hard to take down, unless you want him to be. But let them bag him, in the end. Let them take him alive. Heck, let them crack him like a nut with Interrogation and Intimidation. He'll spill it all: creating the virus, conspiring to murder spammers, etc. He offers to turn Complex evidence on his fellow Phreaks. If anyone took him up on his Marco-G offer, he only has a hundred credits—he didn't expect he'd ever need to pay. Still, encourage the Troubleshooters to feel they've achieved success beyond their best hopes. Yes, this was a successful mission!

Now... where was our debriefing room?

The windup

In a crueller sector, and if everyone weren't tired by now, the team would have to find its briefing room. But here in friendly DMM, where policy dictates missions should end quickly once their storylines are resolved, there are clear signs pointing to the Infirmary, the Mess Hall... and Debriefing.

The debriefing hall is a row of six or eight doors. All but the last are closed with an 'In Session' sign illuminated above them. The Troubleshooters walk past them, hearing muffled sounds behind each one: someone screaming through the distinct buzz of a large electrical arc, shouting voices erupting into a flurry of laser fire, evil maniacal laughter and so on. Finally, they reach the last door, the only open one.

Inside the simple room is a single desk. A haughty-looking BLUE citizen is sitting behind it, casually reading over some notes on his PDC. His name is Clarence-B-YIO, but the players will never know this. Without a word, he gestures the team to a set of six chairs, arranged in two rows of three each. Make a big deal out of asking which exact chair each Troubleshooter sits in. Award Perversity for any chaos that ensues. Clarence-B shows no interest in their actions.

Once everything has settled down, he flips his PDC shut, sets it on the table, calmly knits his hands together, and asks, without having said anything else, 'So. Where did the missing fissionables turn out to be?'

Toughing it out

Clarence-B already knows the team has no idea what he's talking about. They didn't show up to his briefing of five hours ago; how could they possibly have succeeded in the mission? He is, however, on Probation right now—for not having briefed his Troubleshooter team five hours ago—so he knows he's being monitored. (This debriefing is **Tension 16!**) Any deviation from the debriefing he's supposed to deliver will go badly for him. So he is damn well going to ask about the missing fissionables and not get dragged into any discussion of scrubot viruses, spam, Computer Phreaks and the like. He will ask his six questions, and that is all he will say. Fortunately, he doesn't have to judge the answers he is given; whoever is monitoring the debriefing will handle that. Troubleshooters may notice his occasional glance at the shiny black camera in the corner—the only sign of concern in his otherwise placid behavior. The questions he needs to ask, in order:

☞ 'Where did the missing fissionables turn out to be?'

- ☞ 'Who was the supervisor who forged the transfer order in the first place?'
- ☞ 'Which team member received the greatest amount of exposure to krypton difluoride?'
- ☞ 'Which team member contributed most directly to the success of this mission?'
- ☞ 'Has all your assigned mission equipment been returned to Outfitting?'
- ☞ 'Were you, at any point, contacted about financial projections for PLC service firm CBLK?'

The first thing any Troubleshooter says after each question is recorded as the team's official answer. Write down the team's official answer each time before moving on. Whoever said it gets 2 Perversity. If it's a toss-up who got it out first, give everyone who tried 1 point each. Your players may be torn, knowing everything they're saying is being documented as answers, yet the faster they make something up the more Perversity they'll earn.

After he has the answers to his required questions, Clarence-B simply informs the team they must fill out some Quantitative Assessment Forms. He takes the forms from a desk drawer and sets them in a little pile. Take the Forms you copied and cut apart earlier, shuffle them in a little stack, and set them on the table in front of your players. Clarence-B then rises from his chair and strides calmly, evenly from the room without another word.

You should do the same.

We're getting paid for this, right?

Needless to say, the team doesn't get a mission completion bonus, inasmuch as they completely failed to go on the correct mission. However, if you care to track such things, they get bonuses based on how well they portrayed their *Shooters* personae. Also, they still have a captured Computer Phreak, and that's good for a 250-500cr bonus apiece if they turn him over to IntSec (the more evidence they can provide, the higher the bonus). Of course, they could possibly benefit a great deal more if they force him to work for the team instead! If they saved Marco-G (instead of frying him like he deserved), that's good for another 150cr each from IntSec. And if they helped Bill-G and Nancy-B secure a deal, you might even feel like spreading a couple thousand credits across the whole team.

Of course, the next time the Troubleshooters step off a curb, you might feel like having them get hit by a transbot. Life in Alpha Complex.

'Mister Bubbles' debriefing forms

Make at least two copies of this page and cut apart the individual forms. Directions for giving them to your players are given in Scene 7, the mission debriefing.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form C7:A8:214.60

Please take a moment to rate the quality of your mission briefing. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to \$MAX_NUM, where 1 means 'very strong agreement' and \$MAX_NUM means 'only slightly strong agreement.'

- ___ My mission briefing was handled in a/an time-efficient manner.
- ___ There appeared to be sufficient paperwork.
- ___ The range of flavors was to my liking.
- ___ I could tell the officer in charge was an Internal Security agent.
- ___ I would be willing to repeat the experience.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form 220:C3:05:FF

Please take a moment to rate the quality of hygiene experienced during the mission. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to -9, where 1 means 'very plausible' and -9 means 'only slightly plausible.'

- ___ My teammates clearly understand the importance of proper hygiene.
- ___ Next time, I could use a lot more machine oil.
- ___ The range of flavors was to my liking.
- ___ I think hygiene should be less cinematic.
- ___ The relevant Quality Standard makes me feel less than 1 metre tall.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form FF:A8:212.60

Please take a moment to rate the quality of your assigned mission equipment. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to 4, where 1 means 'very good question' and 4 means 'only slightly good question.'

- ___ My assigned mission equipment was handled in a/an cinematic manner.
- ___ There appeared to be sufficient ventilation.
- ___ The range of flavors was to my liking.
- ___ I could tell the officer in charge was on some sort of drugs.
- ___ I would be willing to kill my own next clone.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form 80:FF:136:B1

Please take a moment to rate the quality of transport experienced during the mission. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to \$UNDEF, where 1 means 'very flammable' and \$UNDEF means 'only slightly flammable.'

- ___ My teammates clearly understand the importance of proper transport.
- ___ Next time, I could use a lot more napalm ammo.
- ___ The range of flavors was to my liking.
- ___ I think transport should be less reassuring.
- ___ The relevant Quality Standard makes me feel highly corrosive.

Quantitative Mission Assessment Form B5:B1:92.141

Please take a moment to rate the quality of your service service. For each statement, list a numeric value from 1 to 2, where 1 means 'very likely' and 2 means 'only slightly likely.'

- ___ My service service was handled in a/an reassuring manner.
- ___ There appeared to be sufficient machine oil.
- ___ The range of flavors was to my liking.
- ___ I could tell the officer in charge was a robot assassin from the future.
- ___ I would be willing to sign the next form I see.

Infiltration Recruitment Form Z44-GG1-13A-9CA

Greetings! Because of all the hard work you've been putting in to date, you are being given this opportunity to infiltrate the Illuminati secret society. Just to reassure us you're the right citizen for the job, however, please check any of the following that apply (minimum 1):

- I was just about to register my pyrokinesis mutant power. ___
- I really did terminate at least three of my own former clones. ___
- I know flammable and inflammable are not the same. ___
- I am highly resistant to the Thirty-second Flavor. ___
- I have been trained in the proper use of Floss++. ___
- Signed: _____ Dated: _____

'Mister Bubbles' spam

<p>From Hottbott47 To Undisclosed recipients; Subject you can't lose!</p> <p>Don't tell anyone I told you this, but PLC forecasting predicts CBLK up 41% in the coming quarter get on this one quick before it goes up!</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From gunther@RED.bok.armf To Undisclosed recipients; Subject tired of working for some one else??? no more!</p> <p>Be your own boss flex1ble hours up to 5000 credits per day CLICK FOR MORE INFO!</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From CPU Refund To Undisclosed recipients; Subject MONEY JUST SITTING THERE WAITING FOR YOU</p> <p>We found your name in our list of unclaimed credit disbursements CLICK TO CLAIM YOUR SHARE</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From PLC Downloads To Undisclosed recipients; Subject hey, Fred-R, lets just keep this secret, okay?</p> <p>Free do.wn.lo.ad.s all your favorite Teela-O, others, ALL FOR FREE at 204-116-09/A0:FF:C1</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>
<p>From ginger@RED.nyf.cpu To Undisclosed recipients; Subject hey</p> <p>inflation badger splinter effective 100% guaranteed results! assert aminobenzoic octagon lock in your LOW LOW rate NOW</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From Hottbot223 To Undisclosed recipients; Subject CLONES GONE WILD!!!</p> <p>1000s of INFRAREDS getting crazy When the hormone suppressants wear off you wont believe what happens next!!!! CLICK TO SEE</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From Luv@you.computer To Undisclosed recipients; Subject R o l a c t i n straight to your barrack!</p> <p>No PLC authorization needed, any clearance level, free shipping ORDER HERE</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From IntSec Virus Check To Undisclosed recipients; Subject VIRUS DETECTED</p> <p>Your PDC has been infected! To comply with virus-free use you must do.wn.lo.ad the latest fix here</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>
<p>From HPD&MC Cloning To Undisclosed recipients; Subject Free seventh clone</p> <p>To claim your extra clone CLICK HERE All new fileshare content AVAILABLE HERE FOR FREE</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From peter@RED.wqr.plc To Undisclosed recipients; Subject i miss you :(</p> <p>IntSec sniffers are on your PDC! CLICK TO ERASE THEM Add 50m to your laser's range! CLICK FOR MORE INFO</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From Hottbott5883 To Undisclosed recipients; Subject that site you showed me</p> <p>WOW they have EVERYTHING Wakey-Wakey, QuietTime, you name it! LOWEST PRICES\$ at 38-171-14/C5:A1:80</p> <p>Click here to be removed from this list</p>	<p>From Alley G8R To Troubleshooter Subject Want to help me get that spammer?</p> <p>I know you helped protect that spammer Marco-G but I'll pay you 250 license-free creds if you waste him instead. No need to reply; actions speak louder than words.</p>