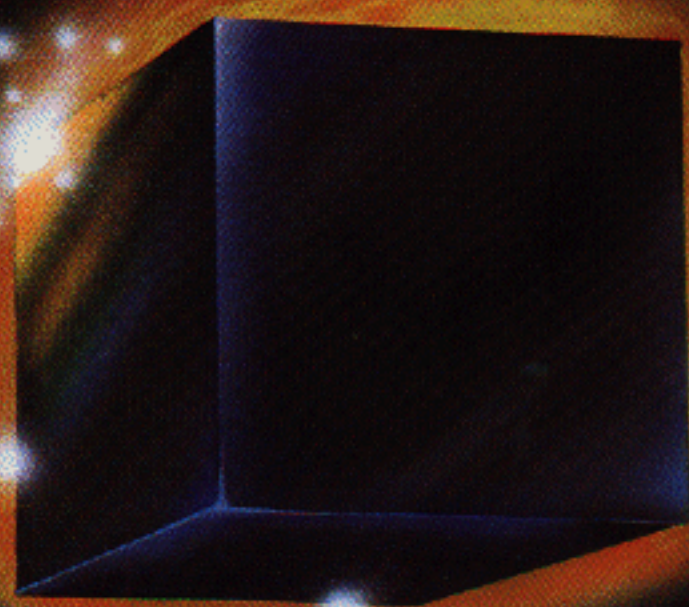


BARANGIA

THE YELLOW CLEARANCE BLACK BOX BLUES

An Excessively Devious
Adventure by
JOHN M. FORD
winner of the 1984
World Fantasy Award!

Gala 48-page
Adventure
Extravaganza



**WEST
END
GAMES**
#80103

0. INTRODUCTION

WARNING: This adventure is designed for use with the **PARANOIA** role-playing game. It would be a swell idea if you were to read the rules to the game before you try to gamemaster this adventure. But it's a free country, and if you think you can run the scenario using the rules for poker, it's fine with us.

It would also be swell if your players were familiar with the **PARANOIA Player Handbook**. However, a real hot-shot gamemaster can handle players who've never seen the **Player Handbook**. Go ahead, we dare ya.

You probably ought to read the adventure before trying to run it. (Boy, is that an understatement!) Those of you who thought you could absorb the information in this booklet by pressing it to your forehead or by eating it are in for a rude awakening.

0.1 Adventure Background

Alpha Complex is, well, complex. Its megameters of corridors, tens of thousands of rooms, countless corners and crannies defy the understanding of any human being. They come close to exceeding the capacity of The Computer itself. But only close. If you thought otherwise, you are guilty of treason. The Computer does in fact contain a "memory map" of the entire Complex, down to the last rivet and junction box, but the map is not all in one piece or one place. . . and while The Computer never forgets, there are places and things it has not thought about for a very long time.

A group of confused and desperate traitors, while fleeing a like-minded group of Troubleshooters, found one of those areas: a long-disused passage that led to the world Outside. And so they escaped, without The Computer ever knowing where they had gone.

One of them made it back alive, and was glad to be home. In exchange for the equipment and favors he needed to slip back into daily Complex life, he sold his discovery to a cell of the Sierra Club.

In the time since then, Sierra Clubbers have used the secret exit as often as possible without an excessive risk of discovery by Internal Security. Since Club members are Complex-grown clones like everybody else, most of those who go out meet a fate hardly distinguishable from death. But a few survive, first by dumb luck and then by acquired skills. And some of those survivors return. (More on this in Mission Two.)

One group returned with an artifact of the Outside, a box of black lacquered wood, an authentic Natural Thing received in trade from an

authentic Natural Person, in return for some artificial Complex-made dross like butane lighters, pocket mirrors, and ball bearings. Unfortunately, the Natural Person did not tell his friends how to open The Black Box — but still and all, they thought, it was from Outside, and made of wood, and generally a nice thing to have.

However, they also needed some money and illegal goodies to support the Club's next expedition, and The Black Box was sold to a group of Free Enterprisers. The Enterprisers, by means of some illegal testing equipment, found the hidden catch that opens The Box. They were at first disappointed to find out The Box contained only some holographic data cartridges. But after playing one of the cartridges, they realized they had something absolutely unique. The Enterprise group was immediately torn between those who wanted to preserve The Box's uniqueness and those who wanted to make lots of copies for sale. While they were arguing, a Romantic who had heard the test sales pitch for The Box stole it from them.

For the Romantic secret society, The Black Box is a dream made real: a window on the lost world they so desire to bring back. They were so taken with the vision, they let their friends the Humanists see it. And the Humanists stole The Box.

PURGE stole it from the Humanists. The Mystics stole it from PURGE (an exciting event, involving the flooding of a PURGE meeting with aerosol THC). Corpore Metal got a brief look at it, then lost it to Death Leopard — in particular, to a Superstar-class Death Leopard, who intends to use it as part of a Leopard-style mass-disruption media event.

By now, of course, every secret society in Alpha Complex has heard of The Black Box, and all of them want it (see below for a detailed list of their reasons). The Computer does not yet know of The Black Box's existence or contents, but it is only a matter of time until it does, whereupon The Computer will also want The Box. And what The Computer wants, it has ways of getting. Sending teams of Troubleshooters, for instance.

So what's in The Box that everyone wants so badly?

Be patient. Thank you for your cooperation.

0.2 Adventure Summary

The Troubleshooters are never sent explicitly to retrieve The Black Box. All their missions have other objectives, and these objectives are genuine — but at some point in each mission, The Box will show up, and the PCs will have some reason to try and get possession of it.

They will, however, always fail. Eventually they should develop a maddening curiosity about what is in that peculiar wooden cube that so many people are dying around and for. You, Friend gamemaster, must not satisfy that curiosity until the absolute last moment, and maybe not then. (In the final mission, the Troubleshooters will be given a pretty good idea of what The Box contains, but they may not find out *for certain*.)

The PCs will be sent on four missions in the course of this adventure. In the first, they attempt to find the source of mysterious disruptions in communication within Alpha Complex, and find

themselves caught in a crossfire between rival Death Leopard superstars and a number of secret societies trying to get possession of The Black Box.

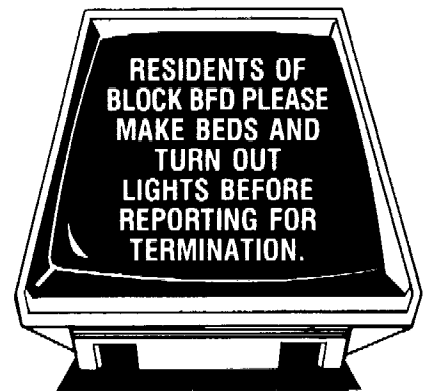
In the aftermath of this n-dimensional shootout, The Computer decides (quite incorrectly) that a cell of unregistered mutant traitors must be involved, and sends the Troubleshooters to, well, shoot the trouble. The snark hunt is further complicated by a compulsory visit to R&D, where the players will be saddled with many wonderful and dangerous pieces of experimental equipment.

As a result of this investigation-by-fire, The Box comes to the attention of a High Programmer, Bette-U-LYF-5. Her attempt to discover The Black Box's origin leads to The Computer's discovery of the secret exit from Alpha Complex, which the Troubleshooters are sent to seal off. It is a long way to the light at the end of the tunnel, and back again. Further complicating matters is the knowledge that everything the PCs learn on the trip is treasonous.

The Troubleshooters are next sent into the Outside world itself, ostensibly to complete the operation begun in the last mission. Actually the expedition has been arranged by two High Programmers, rivals for the affections of Bette-U, who each intend to win her heart with Old Reckoning artifacts. Unfortunately for the players, each Programmer made his plans separately, and The Computer then combined the missions without the Programmers' knowledge. The mission suffers from a split personality from the beginning, and is further weighted with more innovations for better living from R&D.

Outside, the Troubleshooters encounter the usual hazards faced by those who boldly go where they have no business going. They meet three groups of humans, pretty well organized for the time and place: the Cyberpunks, a post-technological cycle gang; Nouvelle Vague, who try to keep Woodstock Nation alive; and the Studio Engineers, high priests of the 24-track mixing board, and the source of The Black Box, which contains. . . 24 hours of music videos. (Now you know why it's a secret.)

Troubleshooters who make it back from this final mission may find themselves set up for black-marketeering, or the favors of a High Programmer (blackmailing a Programmer is a quick way to the Body Armor Testing Squad). They may also, of course, be judged enormously guilty of treason, and immediately find themselves replaced by the next clone in series. Another day in the life...



0.3 Adventure Materials

Included in this adventure is the adventure cover, which doubles as a gamemaster's screen, and a 48-page rules booklet. The inside of the GM screen is covered with important and exciting information pertaining to the adventure. The 48-page booklet should be covered with many little squiggles, called "writing." If not, don't worry. A blank 48-page booklet is a handy place to keep recipes, or press flowers.

NPC, PC, and bot information is summarized for the gamemaster's reference on the inside of the adventure cover. A pull-out-and-chop-up section in the center of the booklet contains prepared player characters, gamemaster and player maps, mission alerts and special dispatches, and equipment lists for each adventure.

0.3.1 GM Reference Screen

The inside of the adventure cover is printed with charts which summarize the important statistics, abilities, and distinguishing features of the adventure's non-player characters (NPC Roster), robots (Robot Roster), and player characters (PC Roster). Set this up in front of you like a screen and refer to it as you roll dice and grin evilly at your players.

0.3.2 Prepared Player Characters

Six prepared player characters may be found on pages 23-26. These characters and their backgrounds and personalities are designed to produce maximum intrigue, eccentricity, and entertainment for you and your players. We have even taken the trouble to print their statistics, abilities, and distinguishing features on the inside of the adventure cover!

However, in spite of all the hard work we have gone through, you may want to let your players use characters of their own design. If so, you'll have to prepare secret society, mission and personal briefings, and rumors for them. Use the prepared player characters as examples of the information each player ought to have.

Special Notes On PC Possessions: Certain special PC items with unusual characteristics are described below:

PC 2: Bud-YZER-2 — The truth serum pills. Roll D100:

01-25 - subject voluntarily and truthfully answers any question put to him. Duration: 60 seconds.

26-50 - pill ineffective; harmful side effect. Roll on Insanity Table.

51-00 - subject voluntarily and truthfully reveals unimportant details of his own choosing. Chatters amiably and irrelevantly for as long as the GM finds it entertaining.

PC 4: Miles-Y-DER-2 —The manual "25 Ways to Beat the Bot." Roll D100:

01-75 - causes the bot to respond to all commands in inappropriate and unpredictable ways.

76-00 - causes no effect, but bot retains memory of tampering procedure and identity of tampering traitor.

0.3.3 Maps

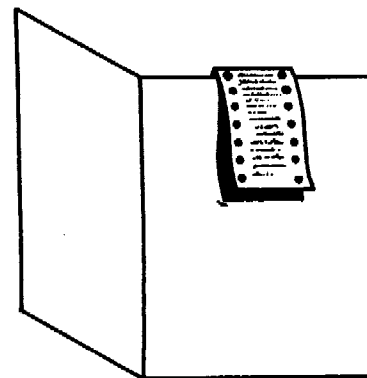
See the nice maps on pages 21-22? They are designed for your reference. They are useful.

See the not-so-nice map on page 28? (Map confiscated from Commie Warbler: Reference YCBBB.3.324)? It is for the players' reference. It is not so useful. (Your players will understand. "Hosed again. . .")

0.3.4 Other Player Stuff

Included in the pull-out and chop-up section of this adventure are Mission Alerts, Special Dispatches and Equipment Lists for the players' viewing pleasure. Cut them along the dotted lines and fold along the dashed lines. Thank you for your cooperation. (If you fold where you should cut and cut where you should fold, you should consider a job in government services.)

These materials are designed to be hung over the edge of the adventure cover/GM Screen. Aim the appropriate information at your players and flop the piece of paper over the screen. (See diagram).



Don't give these documents to your players. They'll just get greasy stains and pencil marks all over them.

0.3.5 Read-Aloud Text

As you read through this adventure, you will come across sections that are written in **boldface type**, usually preceded by the words: "Read the following out loud to your players." Need we say more?



"All right, hand it over!" "All right, hand it over!" "All right hand it over!" "All right,..."

1. MISSION ONE: BOP TILL YOU DROP

1.1 Mission Background

Angela-G-OGO (alias Screaming Sarah Slick)

Angela-G-OGO-3 is a food processing supervisor in Logistics and Commissary. Angela-G's specialty is additives: the wonderful, bizarre, and poorly-tested array of chemicals used to differentiate one batch of vat food from the next, and also to preserve freshness, retard spoilage, and inhibit hormonal activity among the citizenry. Angela-G likes to talk about additive chemistry. She does it all the time. She has bored all her co-workers blind on the subject. Even Internal Security finds Angela-G boringly loyal, which is just the way she wants it.

In the secret society Death Leopard, Angela-G is known as the Superstar-class operator Screaming Sarah Slick. Screaming Sarah was exposed to ancient books and tapes documenting rock music. . . well, not much of it, actually, but in the culturally numb world of Alpha Complex a little stimulation goes a long way. Death Leopards have a generally punkish, boogie-till-you-barf attitude toward society anyway, and "Girls Just Wanna Have Fun" could be their national anthem.

Screaming Sarah's first triumph — the one that got her into the star classes — involved GNH-609, the sexual suppressant that lards every citizen's daily fare. Sarah/Angela managed to prevent the addition of GNH-609 (or "Zero-G," as it is sometimes called) to one entire residential block's food for forty-three days. The strange behavior in Block PYT soon came to The Computer's attention. Fortunately for Angela-G, she was able to pin the rap on her supervisor, not only escaping execution but moving into the vacated position. And so it goes.

Screaming Sarah's exploits since then have not involved the food vats, for safety's sake. But recently Angela-G discovered an unusual effect, and she has been waiting for the chance to use

it to the maximum: this is the one that will send her to Ultimate Beast level, the one it might be worth blowing her cover and getting terminated for.

Boogie Juice

Angela-G has discovered that the yeast flavorant Chloroziptase-L, when ingested in the same meal as algae texturizer para-2-broccoline, produces a "drug synergy" effect: it deranges the victim's motor nerves, causing an uncontrollable rhythmic twitching of the major muscles. Angela-G has dubbed the new compound "boogie juice." The effect lasts for six to thirty hours, depending on how much chemical was eaten, and seems to leave no permanent effect. Obviously there have not been rigorous lab tests. Equally obviously, "no permanent effect" does not apply to those victims who were operating flybots, working with explosives, etc. at the time they lost voluntary motor control.

Angela-G has arranged to reset the vat controls and add massive doses of C-zip-L and para-2-bine to the evening meal of almost one fourth of Alpha Complex. Two hours approximately after the meal the victims will begin to experience the effects of the boogie juice. On the same day, a cell of Death Leopards operating under Screaming Sarah's orders will load The Black Box's contents into an illicit video input. The result: several million citizens involuntarily breakdancing the night away to video music.

Rasterman Ganja and his Commercial Interruptions

Unfortunately for the politics of dancing, the gang of Leopards entrusted with The Black Box has already compromised the operation. The gang leader, who uses the *nom de freak* Rasterman Ganja, has been using his tap to broadcast short, disruptive programs of his own invention. He calls them "commercials," after the legendary short, disruptive programs of the Old Reckoning, though Rasterman has only read

about, never seen, a real commercial. His broadcasts vary in content from fake official announcements to "advertisements" for products both real and imaginary. Angela-G has only recently discovered Rasterman's activities. So has The Computer.

Since the video communications system is part of The Computer's peripheral nerve net, it is an extraordinarily dangerous system to play with. Rasterman Ganja has a nifty creative sense, but little instinct for survival — i.e., with some luck he will be a great Death Leopard.

1.1.1 The Mission

The Troubleshooters are sent by The Computer to track down and terminate the tele-traitors. At the same time, Screaming Sarah decides to recover The Black Box before Rasterman's careless commercial campaign attracts a Vulture Squadron or something. In the collision at Rasterman's "studio," The Box is up for grabs — and there ensues a chase across XTZ Sector, with the Troubleshooters trying to prevent somebody from doing something, they're not too sure what, and maybe grab the Box for their own secret societies. They will fail in that. Finally, they will either watch or participate in Screaming Sarah's dance marathon, depending on whether or not they have had dinner.

1.2 Pre-Mission Briefing

1.2.1 Group Briefing

See the Mission Alert: Reference YCBBB.1.2.1 (page 27 of the pull-out section) for Mission One. This alert appears on the ubiquitous monitors as the PCs are queuing up to use the barracks toothbrush after breakfast. Read the alert aloud to the players, then hang it over the GM Screen so the players can refer to it.

Distribute the prepared player character sheets from pages 23-26. If the players use characters of their own design, you should have

special rumors and secret society missions prepared for them before you start the briefing.

Players may wish to make contact with their secret societies or service groups concerning the mission alert, or just to pick up any juicy rumors. If so, tell them to give the details (preferably in writing) of how they plan to make the contact (in a particular corridor or restroom, notes in a sandwich, whatever).

1.2.2 Individual Briefings

Privately give each player a rumor from the General Rumor List (see box on page 6). Then tell each player that he has heard rumors through his secret society concerning a thing called "The Black Box." No one knows what the Black Box looks like or what it's good for, but it is universally considered to be valuable, and his secret society would love to get its hands on it.

Give hints to each player about the nature of his own secret society's interest in the Black Box (see "Secret Societies and the Box" on page 6). If the PCs request more detailed information on the appearance or nature of the Box, they may, at your perverse discretion, receive little secret messages from their secret society during the course of the mission.

1.2.3 A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Briefing Room

Once again the Troubleshooters approach their place of employment, a structure as warm and inviting as Orwell's Ministry of Love, or an Internal Revenue office. The architecture and decor are intended to foster a sense of despair and resignation — James Bond couldn't shoot his way out of this joint — and the omnipresent whirring cameras, imposing Vulture Squadron guards, and snooping bots make it clear that there is nowhere to hide and hatch Commie plots.

Read the following description aloud to the players:

The reception room of Troubleshooter Headquarters is a large room 30 x 30 meters. As usual it is ominously empty. And as usual the entire room has changed since the last time you visited two weeks ago. (Frequent summary executions and periodic turnover in high-level staff occasions regular redecoration of the premises.)

From the entrance doors you see two

A lifetime of devoted service...



BLUE clearance Vulture Squadron guards with unusually massive slugthrowers and Kevlar armor guarding a pair of glass doors on the opposite side of the room. Their silvered-plexi facemasks reflect a distorted image of the room.

To the immediate right of the glass doors is a computer console with a GREEN level Troubleshooter seated behind its considerable bulk. Headquarters staff have a reputation for obstructive cooperation and cheerful eagerness to order summary executions. To the right of the console are four computer terminals for citizens' use.

On the left wall is an open doorway. Through the door is a small alcove. Five GREEN Vulture Squadron guards with laser rifles and quadchroma reflex armor are visible lounging against the walls, apparently guarding a blue door and a large machine of some sort.

The rest of the room is silent and empty except for an assortment of scrubots and snooperbots moving over the scarred, stained, and patched carpet, and the ever-present whirring of the scanning cameras.

The Troubleshooters are already in trouble; they don't know what briefing room they are to report to. To suggest that The Computer might be confused about the matter is treasonous. The BLUE Vulture Guards do a reasonable imitation of Buckingham Palace guards if the PCs ask questions of them, but if the PCs move toward the glass doors, the guards train their slugthrowers on them, and if the PCs do not stop immediately and go away, the guards will fire warning shots through the PCs' chests.

Asking the GREEN staffer at the console for help is a logical but futile gesture. The PCs cannot get the time of day from him without ULTRAVIOLET security clearance. They can use the public terminals with the same result.

When asked for information about briefing rooms, the GREEN Vulture guards in the alcove will admit that the briefing rooms lie beyond the blue door, but refer the PCs to the GREEN staffer for further information about which room they need. The PCs may fasttalk these guards into letting them go through the blue door to look for the proper briefing room, but not without checking in at the new Experimental Security Computer Terminal (see below).

Showing the Mission Alert to either the GREEN staffer or any of the Vulture Squadron guards will result in the PCs being taken into custody, reprimanded by an INDIGO Internal Security officer, assigned treason points for revealing a Mission Alert to unauthorized personnel, and told to go to Briefing Room AA.

If the PCs spend a lot of time struggling with the problem of finding the briefing room, and you get tired of jerking them around, a RED-level errand boy sticks his head through the blue door and yells, "Hey, there's a bunch of Troubleshooters supposed to report to Briefing Room AA. You guys seen 'em?"

Before the PCs may go through the blue door which leads to the briefing rooms, the GREEN guards will insist that the Troubleshooters check in at the Experimental Security Computer Terminal, labeled "Caution: Experimental Computer Security Terminal." This machine looks like a video game machine with a clear plexi cover enclosing a terminal keyboard. There are two small holes for the Troubleshooter to reach inside the plexi cover and work the terminal keyboard. A boom-mounted camera and robot laser cannon track on his facial features as he

approaches the machine. The PC is asked the typical questions (name, security clearance, assignment or mission, "Are you, or have you ever been, a Commie traitor?") and a lie detector evaluates the PC's responses.

The fourth PC to perform this operation will find steel cuffs closed tightly on his wrists as an alarm sounds and weapons are leveled on him from all directions. Technicians are summoned from R&D to "check things out": it seems a malfunction has occurred (though the guards don't seem to believe this).

Unfortunately, only one of the wrist cuffs can be made to open. The R&D Tech partly disassembles the console, leaving the Troubleshooter with roughly five kilos of metal locked around his hand. The Tech explains that the batteries powering the clamp will fail in seven or eight hours (your decision as to when they actually let go). The PC is, naturally, required to sign a receipt for Equipment Taken Away (this may be difficult if his pen hand is inside the unit), and will receive one Treason Point if the component is not returned upon its release.

The Troubleshooters are not disarmed. If they voluntarily offer up their laser pistols, the weapons will be handled by the guards as if they are particularly rotten fish, then returned with expressions of mingled amusement and disgust.

One of the Vulture Squadron guards mutters, in an awed tone, "Bunch of Yellows going to meet *him*," and is immediately shut up by his superior. (Any PC who asks "Him who?" is shut up with a truncheon.)

The GREEN guards herd the Troubleshooters down a narrow, high-ceilinged corridor with a violet tile floor, to the double armored doors of Briefing Room AA. After a final series of security checks, the doors hiss open, and the PCs are pushed inside.

1.2.4 The Briefing Room

Note: Capsule descriptions of the appearance and personalities of these four briefing personnel are in the box on page 7. Study them carefully so you can properly portray them as distinctive personalities.

The following text may be read aloud to describe Briefing Room AA:

The Briefing Room is extraordinarily high and narrow. Harsh lights shine straight

...Do ya (do ya do ya) wanna dance?



GENERAL RUMOR LIST

Passing rumors is a way of life in Alpha Complex. The fact that rumors are mostly unreliable does not change anything: *all* sources of information in Alpha Complex are unreliable. Nor does the fact that spreading rumors (or, for that matter, listening to them) is treason. Everyone reasons that if there were *really* nothing to a rumor, Internal Security wouldn't be so worried.

Following is a list of suggested rumors, to be given to players at the gamemaster's discretion. You should be liberal in handing these out — but remember to give them to one player at a time. It's up to the player whether he wants to commit treason by telling his fellow Troubleshooters.

Repeating a rumor from different sources is a good way to increase paranoia. An even better way is to drop a rumor that directly denies or contradicts a previous one. "What are they trying to *hide*?" Another good way to use rumors is to have them scrawled on corridor walls, or whispered in the dark so the whole party can hear.

Note: The italicized information after each rumor is for your eyes only. Don't bother telling any of that stuff to the players. They'd probably just be bored anyway.

1. Somebody came in from Outside, carrying a plague they haven't got any way to cure. People are dropping all over; they've had to seal off four residence blocks. *(False.)*

2. When you draw your gear from the Req Room, tell them you know Howd-Y-DDE. They'll be sure to give you equipment that works. *(True and false. The name is an Internal Security codeword: half the time the staffer gives the person an extra pair of laser barrels of appropriate color, half the time the staffer gives the "IntSec snooper's" gear a couple of whacks with a pipe wrench.)*

3. There's a defective warbot loose in some out-of-the-way Sector. It's wiped out two dozen Troubleshooters already, and they're making up all kinds of fake missions to get people to go in there and run its batteries down. *(False.)*

4. Tech Services has an INDIGO-clearance who can detect mutants just by looking at them. They're putting him on Briefing panels, to snoop out who's an unregistered mutant. *(False.)*

5. Because of a PURGE raid on one of the armories, there are a lot of grenades in inventory with the wrong labels. *(True. See the equipment lists.)*

6. Be careful who you pick as team leader! They're experimenting with a gadget that lets the leader fry the team members' brains if they try any doublecrosses. *(True, but the device is not yet operational, and will not be issued during this adventure.)*

7. "Outside" is a deathtrap — it's all radioactive, you die in a week. Everybody who says he's been Outside is a clone under orders to lie. *(False, though an awful lot of Troubleshooters do get killed Outside.)*

8. They're getting worried about bad morale from Troubleshooters coming back maimed — your Medical Officer has orders to make sure anybody who's badly hurt doesn't make it. *(False. How could Troubleshooter morale get any worse than it is?)*

9. All Corpore Metal members are programmed to kill on command. The code word is "Six Megacredit Man." *(False, though a lot of Corpore Metals do have hypnotic programming.)*

10. If you follow the deep service tunnels long enough, you come up inside another Alpha Complex. That's how spies get in and out. *(May be true of certain tunnels, but none the players will encounter in this adventure.)*

SECRET SOCIETIES AND THE BOX

Following is a list of reasons for the Secret Societies to send their members in pursuit of The Black Box. It is not meant to be exhaustive. Nor is it necessary for every society to be in pursuit of The Box: in fact, it is probably better (read, more divisive and productive of internecine warfare) for some societies to be in pursuit of entirely different unattainable objects.

Starred societies have at some time or another possessed The Box itself; all of these *except* the Sierra Club (which never got it open) know the contents. Other societies know of The Box by hearsay or inter-society espionage.

First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer: We believe this device to be a threat to The Computer, perhaps one of the accursed "virus programs" of demonic legend. It must be captured and presented as an offering to The Computer, who will bless Its Chosen.

Spy for Another Alpha Complex: This Complex appears ready to go to war over this Black Whatever-it-is. Something so important must be captured so that we can benefit from it if it is valuable, and defend ourselves against it if it is dangerous. *(In other words, You got it, We want it. Much the same philosophy applies to Service Group spies.)*

Psion: Rumor has it that the Black Box is coupled to a previously unknown psychic mutation. We must document this effect, and protect it from those who would destroy the New Improved Humanity. *(The "mutation" in question is musicianship. Mostly they're curious, a treasonable emotion.)*

***Humanists:** The unit is connected to conclusive proof of the superiority of Man over Machine. The Computer and its minions must not be allowed to destroy this evidence. *(It shows artists in control of hardware. They especially like it when someone smashes a guitar or blows up an amp.)*

***Mystics:** This is, like, *basic* to a clear understanding of the, like, universe, and is like, our origin, you know? There is clear blue light in there, the Headtrip itself. Of course we want it. *(Many Mystic faiths are rooted in 60s/70s rock. Most cells would kill for a video of "Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds," "Cocaine," or "Hey Bartender.")*

***PURGE:** The unit contains data that is directly toxic to The Computer. *(Not true. Also caught up in the smash-machinery philosophy displayed in many heavy-metal clips.)*

Anti-Mutant: The flip side of Psion. Thinks perfect pitch is a creepy mutation.

Frankenstein Destroyers: Similar to the Humanists.

***Corpore Metal:** The Box contains evidence that pre-Big Mistake humankind was striving toward a machine symbiosis that has since been forgotten. We must not let this history die. The Box could make many converts to our cause. *(Result of seeing some heavy-metal artists in their chrome stage getups, and perhaps listening to McCartney's "Magneto and Titanium Man" once too often.)*

***Romantics:** It is a genuine artifact of the Old World, just like people used to sit

around the Sony, eat Twinkles, and listen to. Enough said.

Pro-Tech: Obviously the synthesizer was pre-Whoops mankind's greatest artistic achievement.

Communists: The Box is a propaganda device, in the classic color of the Anarchist. If we cannot make use of it, we must make sure that no one else does. *(Folk music was the people's great art form. Remember Joe Hill! Remember Woody Guthrie. Remember Slim Whitman!)*

Computer Phreaks: It appears to be data the Computer has no access to. That makes it interesting and desirable. While we dare not hope, it may be a relative of the legendary "Blue Boxes" of our ancestors.

***Free Enterprise:** This is a valuable item stolen from us by trickery. Free Enterprise does not like people muscling in on our rackets. Sizable rewards await the Box's recoverer. *(They want to sell copies. Maybe sell tickets. Or start a couple bands and run road shows, reestablish MTV...)*

***Death Leopard:** The Box contains anthems of anarchic Fun. The Box is the soul of the Leopard. *(As the adventure starts, they have possession of it. See Mission One.)*

***Sierra Club:** It comes from Outside, and is made of the mythic substance "wood." Besides, we brought it inside, and it's really ours.

down on you. The carpet is lumpy, and badly worn, with several burned streaks, and blotches of something that's either maroon dye or dried blood. There is a strong smell of diesel fuel.

There is a bench at one end of the room, at least four meters high; to see the top of it you have to look up at the lights. There appear to be five plexi compartments along the top of the bench. Four appear to be occupied, but the harsh lights make it hard to see clearly. At your eye level on the front of the bench are what look like gun ports and gas vents. There is a small tiled gutter in the floor, with drains.

At the left end of the bench, a combot fitted with four chainsaws is standing at attention. At the right end there's a BLUE Vulture Squadron sergeant at parade rest; he has a huge, weird-looking pistol in a very bulky holster covered with wiring, and he wears a matching wire-covered glove. It's a tossup whether the combot or the man looks tougher.

Behind you are the five Vulture Squadron guards who brought you here. Their weapons are casually pressed into your backs.

The PCs should enter the room confidently and respectfully. If they are too timid or too cocky, the guard on the right of the bench will demonstrate his fancy Power Holster, summoning his slugthrower to his hand with a smooth, sweeping gesture that ends with the snout of the slugthrower resting against the snout of a PC, while barking "C'mon in here, ya quivering runts!" or "Watch yer manners in the presence of yer superiors, laserbait!" as is appropriate.

Once the PCs are all in the room and quietly



"Heh, heh. I'll just sign for this and be on my way..."

standing at attention, they can better see the four figures in the plexi compartments. Read the following aloud:

The powerful lights behind the top of the bench are blinding, but you can see the head and shoulders of the four figures a little more clearly. From left to right there are:

- a BLUE uniform with an HPD & MC insignia; the face has a sour expression; his nameplate reads "AI-B-MUN-5"

- a BLUE uniform with an Internal Security insignia; the face is stern and alert; his nameplate reads "Byre-B-WER-6"
- an INDIGO uniform with a Tech Services insignia; the figure is studying a sheaf of papers and the face is not visible; his nameplate reads "Zeno-I-VIL-5"
- a VIOLET uniform, colorfully decorated and ornamented, with an R&D insignia; the face is relaxed and smiling pleasantly; his nameplate reads "Doss-V-DAN-6"

Doss-V begins by greeting the PCs. He is friendly, sincere and soft-spoken. He is much too pleasant.

The VIOLET-clad man on the right taps his microphone with a finger, then smiles, and speaks into the microphone:

"Welcome, Troubleshooters. I hope we haven't interrupted your daily schedule too much. I know you must be very busy, but we have this terribly important mission for you."

Doss-V leans forward, apparently studying his notes. The room is very quiet for several minutes. Suddenly you hear the clear sound of snoring over the microphone.

The other three men look at each other, then the Blue-clad Internal Security officer leaps to his feet, points at you and loudly shouts, "Ghzzzaahbat fhissle thorbhat mmmhena weeeel (SquuuuuUUUUUEEEEE-EEL. Hiss. Pop.)."

Well, that's not really what he says. It's just hard to understand him because his microphone is buzzing, humming, fading in and out, squealing with feedback, and hissing with static. In fact, none of the microphones but Doss-V's works properly; whenever the other figures speak, they can hardly be understood. Doss-V will not notice anything wrong. The others eventually will, and will become very annoyed.

As a gamemaster, you can simulate this unintelligible garble by speaking with a styrofoam or paper cup pressed halfway into your mouth (small end first, of course). You can yell as loud as you want, or speak perfectly normally, but the poor players won't be able to understand much of what you say. This is so much fun that you'll be tempted to use this cheap trick whenever The Computer speaks to

The Briefing Personnel

Vulture Squadron Guards and Combot: If the PCs should make trouble, or anything the guards might misinterpret as trouble (the PC with the chunk of iron on his hand is going to have a very hard time with them), the guards will subdue them with small difficulty. If the PCs make a good fight of it, let them know that the combot is a new model from R&D, nicknamed the "XS Chainsaw Massacre." Then adjourn until the clones are brought in.

The guard on the right of the bench will use any opportunity to show off his weapon system. The gun itself is just a slugthrower loaded with HE rounds, but it reposes in a Power Holster, which electromagnetically hurls the gun into the user's hand with blinding speed. The PCs should be allowed to become impressed with this device. In Mission Two they will have a chance to use them. Heh, heh.

AI-B-MUN-5: Terribly quiet and glum. He has the feeling that, whatever happens with this mission, the disruptions to the video channels will be seen as Mind Control's fault. He will say almost nothing during the briefing; if asked questions, he will give short answers and no reassurance.

Byre-B-WER-6: Intensely interested in the proceedings, he will make notes continually, and use any chance to ask pointed questions (most of which his microphone will not pick up). He sees a chance to improve his position by putting away a lot of traitors, and wants to be sure that these Troubleshooters

feel very highly motivated. He will also be in favor of liberal assignments of equipment; he doesn't want the mission to fail for want of a couple of cone rifle rounds.

Zeno-I-VIL-5: He's confused. He thinks this is all about some interference in the communications lines, and can't understand why there's all this fuss about finding a faulty switch box. He never will figure it out. However, he is an expert video technician, and can answer any questions on the subject the PCs think to ask, though he won't volunteer any information.

Doss-V-DAN-6: He has a kindly appearance, balding, round-faced, smiling benignly — rather like Ben Franklin. His voice and manner are friendly as he conducts the briefing, and he seems willing to help the Troubleshooters with any reasonable request.

This ought to scare the living daylight out of them.

The catch is that he is quite sincere. Doss-V is honest and forthright, and serves The Computer without question or hesitation. He has survived because those around him assume his gentle manner covers a devious and powerful schemer; his potential enemies tend to dodge around him and kill one another.

The catch (part two) is that Doss-V is completely empty-headed, maybe senile (most citizens don't live long enough to develop symptoms). He'll do what he can to help, but that won't be much.

the PCs from old monitors or wall speakers. It is hard on the cup, so be sure to have a supply of spares.

Anyway, from here on, we'll tell you what the characters really say. You just talk with the cup in your mouth unless Doss-V is talking, or unless one of the other briefing personnel steals his microphone.

What Byre-B really says is, "All right, which of you is the mission leader?" He pauses, waiting for an answer. The PCs probably haven't understood a word, but it is clear that he expects an answer. They better come up with something.

Whatever the PCs say, he then cackles, "Of course you don't have a mission leader, because you don't know your mission yet, do you? Or... perhaps you traitors have already got SECRET information about this mission?" He pauses again for an answer. This continues for a few minutes, with Byre grilling the PCs about their mission alert, their past service records, their proof of loyalty to The Computer, and their dedication to serve The Computer without question or hesitation. Since the PCs can't understand Byre-B, their responses may be rather inappropriate, and the PCs may start to get panicky.

1.2.5 Mission Assignment

At this point, Doss-V snorts loudly, wakes up, and looks around. Byre-B is immediately silent, looking cautiously at Doss-V as he humbly sinks back behind the bench. Doss-V smiles at everyone, then continues the briefing.

"Welcome, Friend Troubleshooters. Our friend The Computer has chosen you for a mission of the utmost urgency and importance.

"A mysterious interference has begun to appear on the video channels that carry vital information and well-deserved entertainment to our fellow citizens. Naturally, The Computer wants to protect us from these influences, which — I speak to you in the strictest confidence — are believed to come from a nest of Communist infiltrators somewhere within our own beloved Alpha Complex."

Pause. Look pleasantly and menacingly expectant. Wait for the players to make some appropriate response, like, "Gaspl Commies? How appalling!" or "We eagerly await your orders to seek out this slime and scourge it from our fair Complex!" or "We serve The Computer! The Computer is our Friend! Please give us lots of execution vouchers and HE cone rifle rounds."

"I do not pretend that your task will be easy; this is why you, Troubleshooters of proven skill and loyalty, have been selected to root out this corruption among us, to follow the infection to its source and burn it out. You are also to return the valuable equipment these saboteurs have stolen to further their aims, so that others cannot follow in their path.

"We will give you every assistance; and know that The Computer itself is behind you."

He smiles happily again.

"Remember, the future happiness of all our citizens depends on you. You must not fail. Now, time is essential, but is there anything you wish to ask?"

If the PCs ask what sort of interference they are looking for, Doss-V says gently, "I'm afraid

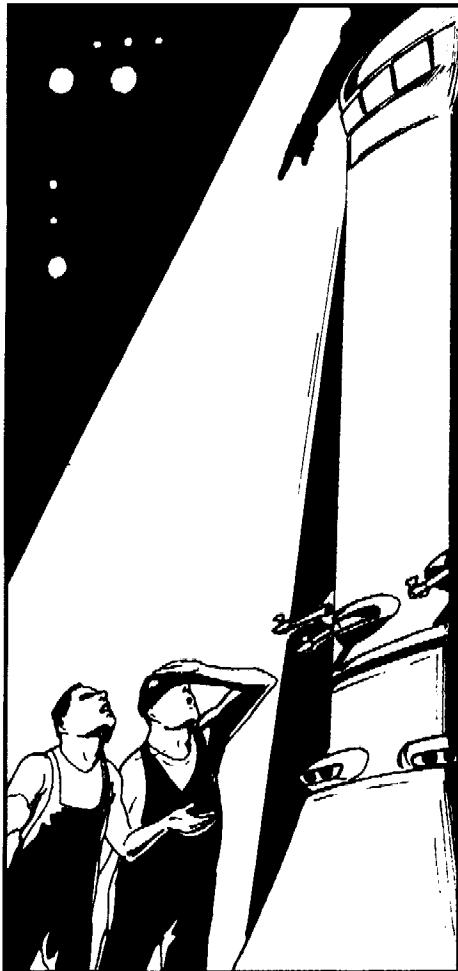
knowing that, at your clearance level, would make you all traitors." If they ask what equipment they are supposed to recover, Zeno-I will drone on for some while in a technical jargon the PCs do not understand, but they should get the idea that broadcasting equipment is involved. If they ask how large the nest of Commies is believed to be, Byre-B will snap "Who cares how many of them there are, Troubleshooter? You don't come back until there's not one hammer or sickle moving down there!"

1.2.6 Choosing the Team Leader

Doss-V will slowly stop talking. The other briefing staff will wait for several minutes, until the microphone before Doss-V again picks up the sound of his snoring. Al-B shudders, and appears to be holding back tears. Byre-B takes the opportunity to swipe Doss-V's mike and begin lecturing the players on the importance of leadership in this mission, hammering home that a leader must be someone they can trust, someone they would follow into the very teeth of doom. He will ask the usual trick questions, but mostly he will try to provoke the players' bloodlust. (If they show too much, the guards will restrain them.)

Finally he asks the inevitable question: "Which of you should serve as the mission leader?" Usually at this point there is a flurry of volunteers and people pointing at one another. If there is no clear choice, Byre-B roars in anger, "Make up your minds, or we'll see if your clones can be quick about it." He will keep roaring until the PCs make a choice.

Excuse me, Mr. Citizen, sir, but what is it we have volunteered to do?



If they test his temper by dithering, he asks for a volunteer for a warning execution. He takes the first volunteer and orders him to execute the other PCs. This volunteer is the mission leader. Activate the clones.

When a clear choice is made, Byre-B's expression softens as he looks fondly on the loyal citizen who has offered to serve The Computer in this important capacity. Sweetly, he asks the newly-selected leader to concisely summarize the mission's objectives.

If the new leader hesitates or fumbles, or if he has to read over his notes, or if he says anything other than what was mentioned in the mission alert or explained by Doss-V, Byre-B will explode in fury, blasting the citizen for his incompetence, immediately demoting him to RED level, and starting the leader selection process all over again.

The leader receives a suit of quadrachroma reflex armor, and two spare quadrachroma laser barrels. The leader should get the hint that he's going to need them. And, of course, the rest of the team are subject to the leader's orders for the duration of the mission or the leader's life, whichever ends first.

When a leader has finally been selected that can summarize the mission objectives, Doss-V awakes with a snort again and looks around at Byre-B, who is holding his microphone. Byre-B is momentarily frozen in terror, then he hastily replaces the microphone and slinks back to his seat.

1.2.7 Any Further Questions?

Doss-V turns back to the PCs with a kindly smile, tells the Vulture guard to give the mission leader the equipment requisitions (GM: display Equipment List #1 to the leader), and asks them if they have any questions or special requests before he sends them off to Outfitting. Let the players study the Equipment List for a minute, then Byre-B will ask particularly if they would like any more ordnance.

Between Doss-V and Byre-B, the players will seem to have an extremely free hand with requisitioning equipment. You can be liberal with items of YELLOW clearance or less, especially ammunition — given the chance, everyone carries more ammo than there will ever be time to use.

When the PCs begin asking for higher-clearance items like tac nukes and seven-color lasers, Doss-V will chuckle in a grandfatherly way and say something like, "If that sort of thing were necessary, don't you think our friend The Computer would have made provisions?" He believes that, too. Then the briefing will be brought to a close.

Just as Doss-V is about to dismiss the PCs, if they haven't asked about the RF tracer cartridge for the multicorder, Zeno-I says, "Oh, hey, don't forget about the RF tracer cartridge for the multicorder." Immediately Byre-B glowers at Zeno-I, and Doss-V looks sternly at him. Zeno-I's eyes grow wide, and he slips far back into his booth as though he expects to be immediately executed. If the PCs ask for more information about the tracer, what it is for, or how it works, Doss-V will pleasantly say, "Oh, don't worry, there's someone in the mission group who knows all about it. Would The Computer forget an important thing like that?"

No one in the mission group knows what the RF tracer does. The characters may try to slaughter each other in the process of finding out who is concealing this vital information. What a pity.

1.3 The Mission

1.3.1 Loading Up

The Troubleshooters are taken to PLC Outfitting Division to pick up and sign for their gear. As always, this is as much fun as dealing with the phone company. The GREEN quartermaster staff will demand to know what happened to equipment the PCs have never heard of. They will have choice comments to make about the Troubleshooter wearing the security console on his wrist.

They will also make nasty remarks about this mission. Running around shooting some Commies in the back doesn't sound very heroic. (Actually it seems a lot more interesting than signing out hardware, and the staff are jealous.)

If the PCs ask for power holsters, there will be a lot of fuss, calling upstairs to verify the request, etc. No more than three holsters will be available (we suggest you issue one fewer than is requested), and if the PC with the iron bracelet has it on his gun hand, he cannot be fitted for one.

Of course, the power holsters don't work. That is, they work, but it takes three or four months of practice to get the hang of them in combat. When a PC squeezes the special glove in the proper way, the pistol leaps out of the holster (usually, anyway; sometimes the holster buzzes and smokes, or a short-circuit causes the ammo to explode) and toward the glove.

Unfortunately, learning to catch the pistol requires hours of practice. In the beginning the pistol goes flying out of the holster, zips past the PC's outstretched hand, and clatters to the floor, bounces off the wall or ceiling, or clobbers an innocent bystander. Maybe the pistol goes off. Got the picture?

1.3.2 Where Do We Go From Here?

After kitting-out, the Troubleshooters are escorted out of the Headquarters building — and left there. If they stand around, a guard will tell them, "Hey! No loitering!" and shoo them away.

About now it should dawn on the PCs that their orders are extremely vague. If they made plans to contact their secret societies, execute the contacts (interesting phrase) now. If three or four characters described the same mode of contact, comment on how crowded the restroom is for this time of day.

Players who did not make contacts (or abandoned them — worth a loss of Society points) have only the Society missions given on their PC cards.

If they make contact:

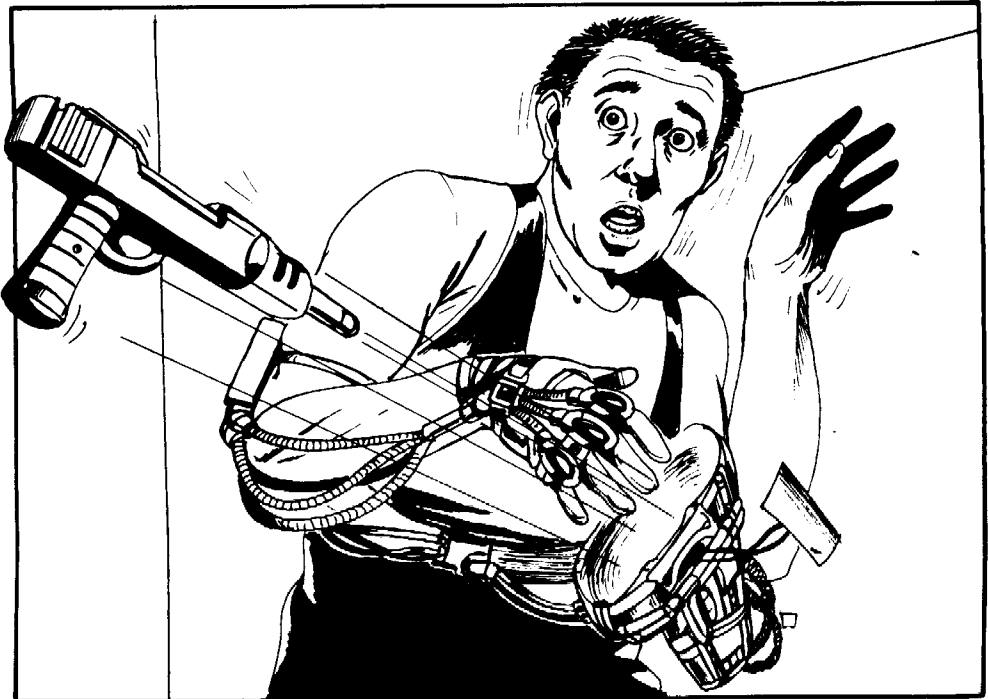
Texun-YAHU is told that Epic-Y has a secret mission from IntSec to exterminate Mystics; Epic-Y got Texun's last clone and is gunning for him.

The Sierra Club tells **Bud-YZER** that someone is going to poison tonight's dinner. He is not to stop this, as Sierra Clubbers have all been warned (not true), but he must not eat dinner.

Welsh-YBTT is told that the mysterious Black Box is in the hands of a video pirate, and must be gotten away.

Miles-YDER is told that some portable video cameras are missing from HPD & MC, and he can earn a lot of Society credit by seeing that the Romantics get them back instead.

Don-YBRK is told he will get a Society point for every PURGEr he kills on this mission (true, but most of them are Death Leopards, who don't score).



A demonstration of how not to use the Power Holster.

Epic-Y-CLE meets an Internal Security agent (even if he thought he was meeting a Death Leopard contact — you can give him a really nervous moment here) who tells him that video pirates have gotten hold of secret tapes, which must be recovered; he will earn many commendations for doing so.

Reunite the team and give them a little time to think — even to compare notes, if they desire to do such an un-**PARANOIA**-like thing — before the Multicorder begins to wheep.

The Multicorder, the players' Com units, and any public entertainment screens within sight will begin carrying one of Rasterman Ganja's broadcasts (see 1.3.4). The Multicorder's tracer cartridge will lock onto the signal, and the hunt will finally be on.

If the characters *don't* try to make any kind of contacts, start them on the mission anyway. He who hesitates is lasered.

1.3.3 Round Robin Hood's Barn

The PCs have no experience or training in the use of the RF tracer, but this is routine in Alpha Complex. Eventually they will notice that the frequency of the wheeps increases when the unit points in a particular direction. The volume of the wheeps also increases as they get closer to the signal source.

The Multicorder is not, alas, actually locked onto Rasterman's video tap — if it were that easy, he would have been caught long ago. Rasterman has numerous decoy broadcast units scattered throughout the sector. But if the tracer is followed carefully, it will eventually lead the Troubleshooters to him.

In other words, send them up, down, and around Alpha Complex, following the blip through dining halls, INFRARED barracks, entertainment facilities, vehicular guideways (which will not stop for the team), storage areas and narrow accessways. . . run them ragged.

As the characters wander about, the commercials (see 1.3.4) will occur at random intervals (that is, whenever you want). Not only do they give you a chance to entertain the players with your musical/comedic/mass-media denigration skills, but the PCs get to vaporize as traitors

anyone they see who either believes the commercials, or who looks like he is enjoying them.

To help you visualize their pilgrimage, imagine wandering around five or six decks of an ocean liner looking for a hidden radio device. And imagine the ocean liner crawling with nosy and quarrelsome citizens, officious clerks, pugnacious Vulture Squadron guards, and fitfully-maintained guardbots, courierbots, and scrubots.

A few arbitrary encounters might be appropriate. For example:

Internal Security: A group of IntSec troopers express a polite interest in the PCs' mission. Maybe a PC looks cross-eyed at somebody. Whammo.

A Team Competing in a High Programmer's Invitational Tournament: A flying squad of crack Vulture Squadron troopers are on a scavenger hunt. They've been instructed to collect as many left boots as they can in four hours. Following the troopers are a pair of transbots full of left boots, some with pieces of leg still in them. The PCs are requested to contribute.

The Bicentennial Committee: A group of relatively elderly citizens are bustling about decorating a hallway for the coming bicentennial of something-or-other. They earnestly, imploringly beg the Troubleshooters to pause in their mission to help them put up a few banners. If the PCs decline, the oldsters pull out slugthrowers and ask again.

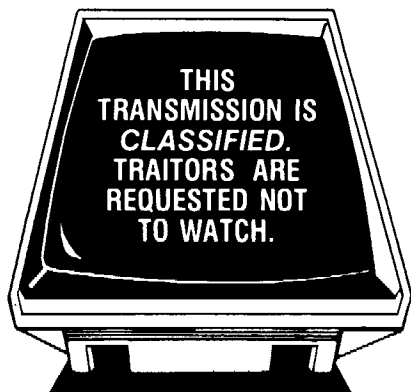
Painters: A squad of ORANGE clearance painters are painting a red corridor in violet. There seems to be some confusion about the work order, and the painters are engaged in a heated discussion. Several cans of violet paint are sitting unattended. This stuff would really bring a fine price on the black market, but possession of such contraband is profoundly treasonous.

When the pace begins to drag, warn the Multicorder operator that the blip is weakening, and then have Rasterman air another Commercial.

If a PC is a member of Death Leopard (one

of the pregenerated PCs is), s/he will receive a message sometime during the chase; the old soap-on-the-restroom-mirror trick is suggested. The message warns the Leopard that Screaming Sarah Slick herself instructs all Real Persons to skip dinner this evening, on pain of Missing The Fun.

This should make the dinner break interesting.



1.3.4 Commercials

These may be run in any desired order, and new ones may be freely created. Remember that Rasterman Ganja has only had commercials described to him.

1. An ad for synthetic food, featuring people trying to choke the stuff down, and the catchy jingle:

*"When you just can't stand the pats,
And your feet have got the flats,
When you can't take no more, that's
Time (Yes, time!) to hit the vats!
It's the goo (Yeah!) that'll do ya,
It slides through ya oh-so-right,
Dump your hunger in the nearest vat
Tonight!"*

2. An "official announcement" that the color blue has been determined to be morally equivalent to indigo, promising a follow-up on whether BLUE citizens will be promoted or INDIGOs reduced in rank.

3. An ad for Honest Har-V's Used Bot Lot, in which Har-V, wearing a crudely dyed violet tunic, offers several bots at ridiculous prices (5 or 10 credits). The "bots" are actually people wearing tinfoil and metal junk. After this ad airs, the PC with the clamp on his wrist had better find a way to get it off.

4. "DISREGARD PREVIOUS MESSAGE."

5. A promo spot for Teela-O-MLY, featuring someone who looks nothing like Teela-O asking everyone to stay tuned to this channel for instructions on reaching ULTRAVIOLET clearance in three easy lessons.

6. An announcement that NYC Sector is now officially at war with LAX sector, and asking all citizens to help the war effort by eating double portions at dinner.

7. A recruiting spot, in which a voice urges citizens to join the Vulture Squadrons, while a tape shows various aircraft crashing and exploding. (This tape is extremely illegal, and recovering it will earn two commendation points.)

8. A beer commercial. Citizens ride cardboard rafts over painted waves, while an off-screen figure throws a bucket of water over them at intervals. Finally they smile brightly and hold up cans with rings attached, then pull the rings. The cans are smoke grenades.

1.3.5 Chow Time

Somewhere in the course of the tour of the sector their com units inform the players that it is dinner time, and that they are to report to the nearest Transient's Commissary, identify themselves as Troubleshooters on a mission, and queue up for gruel. (Not even in the **PARANOID** world of The Computer are the laborers required to go without dinner.)

Unless a player specifically indicates to you verbally or by note that his character does not eat, assume all the Troubleshooters have chowed-down on gruel laced with ample quantities of "boogie juice."

1.3.6 Opening Theme

See "Rasterman Ganja's TV Studio" layout on page 21.

Sometime after the dinner hour (whether or not the PCs have eaten), shortly before tonight's Teela-O-MLY broadcast, the Multicorder begins to wheep wildly, indicating a very powerful trace: Rasterman is testing his transmitter at full power, preparing to override Teela-O with The Black Box.

The Troubleshooters follow the blip to a deserted storage area. They should prowl around this place for a while, getting good and nervous. The tracer starts to go crazy with induced signals and harmonics off the walls and floor. Finally, they find a large door, four meters wide and three high, with a dimly lit control panel next to it. The tracer seems to think this is the place. There is plenty of noise coming from behind the door; just audible above the background chatter a voice is heard, "... the cables are all bollixed up, but as soon as I find the interference, we can run the Black Box. . ."

The door opens when the only button on the control panel is pressed. Read the following aloud:

The door opens on a long four-meter-wide corridor. The first four meters on the left is a landing for a staircase on the right which leads down into a larger room.

Across from you, in the corridor four meters from you, are a group of five impossibly strange-looking persons — yellow, purple, and green spikes and ridges of hair, bizarrely colored and patterned face and arms, black, skin-tight garments festooned with colorful bits of metal and plastic — each armed with a laser pistol or slugthrower. They seem to be startled by your appearance, but they don't make a sound or movement.

You can see fairly well down the staircase into the lower room. The room resembles an HPD and Mind Control video broadcast station, with cameras, video machines, lots of electronic gear, cables, and powerful lights, but everything seems disorganized and hastily slapped together. No one below seems to have noticed your arrival.

Suddenly, before you can do anything, the foremost of the persons across from you, a female with strange dark goggles with wide slits in them and with enormous plastic discs dangling from her ears, shouts, "Look, there it is!" She points down the stairs toward a cabinet and screams, "Go for it!" She and two other persons dash down the stairs while the other two aim and fire at your mission group.

Screaming Sarah Slick and her four Death Leopard companions are here to recover the Black Box from Rasterman Ganja. Two stay at

the top of the stairs to deal with the PCs; Screaming Sarah and two Leopards dash downstairs after the Black Box.

It's showtime!

1.3.7 Live and in Color

From this point the PCs are in close combat. The two Death Leopards at the top of the stairs blast away with their lasers, then block the stairway with hand-to-hand combat. If the PCs dispatch the two Leopards, or dive over the railing to the room below, they receive the following description of Rasterman's studio. Read aloud:

The room itself is 12 x 24 meters. The largest part of the room stretches away from you as you come down the stairs. Behind the staircase a section of the room is filled with sets and props. Closed doors are to the right and left of the stairs and on the far wall facing away from the stairs. In this direction there is a lively firefight.

The three oddly-dressed persons have descended the staircase and taken cover behind a bank of tape machines and cabinets. There they are pinned down in a crossfire by a group of citizens in black coveralls who have taken cover behind a pile of crates. The woman with the wide-slit goggles has a seamless, dully gleaming black box tucked under one arm as she returns fire with her free hand.

Just beyond the gunbattle is a video studio set-up with movable backdrops, video cameras on lightweight tripods, and powerful lights. The cameras are stenciled in large letters **PROPERTY OF HPD&MC**.

In a far corner of the room five figures are crouched near a control panel — some feverishly checking cable connections, others adjusting knobs and slide controls as they study a bank of monitors before them.

The cameras are the valuable equipment the PCs have been sent to recover. It would be unfortunate if this equipment were damaged in the firefight. Snicker.

Screaming Sarah and her two companions are engaged in a firefight with six of Rasterman's techs. Both groups are armed with laser pistols and without armor, but neither group is particularly proficient with weapons, and the surroundings are absorbing most of the damage. The floor, walls, and ceiling are crisscrossed with hastily strung cables and wires. Stray shots hitting these cables produce dazzling effects. Stray shots also hit CRT monitors which make a lovely boom, showering the room with fragments of glass. Between the short-circuiting wires and exploding monitors, pretty soon we get...

Fires. Lots of little fires. Rasterman's sets, mostly paper and cheap plastics, will feed them nicely, producing some extraordinarily unpleasant clouds of acrid, black smoke which makes the lasers very ineffective (shift four columns left on the Damage Table) except at point blank range. There are several hand-held foam extinguishers about, but not enough to suppress the fires. Enough, however, to produce sufficient foam to make the floor treacherous. Whoops...

Rasterman and four other techs stay at the control console working feverishly to complete the connections and set up the boards, determined that The Show Must Go On. It has not yet come to their attention that Screaming Sarah has the Black Box.

How will the PCs respond to this puzzling state of affairs? You can probably count on their

firing off their ordnance, though who they'll shoot at. . . who knows? Your best bet is to orchestrate the NPCs as though the PCs didn't exist. Let the PCs blow holes in any of the NPCs except Screaming Sarah. She has the Black Box, and she has to get away. The rest of the cast is expendable.

Conversely, if the PCs shoot at the NPCs, the NPCs shoot back. Otherwise the two Death Leopard groups expend most of their energy on each other, with an occasional pot shot at a PC for variety.

When it begins to look like the PCs are going to put Sarah's life or liberty in serious jeopardy, she and the Black Box will leave by the nearest convenient door, accompanied by any surviving Death Leopard companions, dropping a choice selection of grenades behind her to discourage pursuit. This could be the instant the PCs come down the stairs if they are a smoothly operating military unit, or could be after a half-hour or so, if they are inept, backstabbing, cautious, cowardly, or properly paranoid.

Note: You want the PCs to chase Sarah (see below), so subtly emphasize her escape. "Oh dear. She's getting away with the box. I wonder what The Computer will think about all this." Roll dice; shake your head. Annoy the players.

When Sarah and her Leopards split, Rasterman will belatedly decide that maybe his position is not so defensible, and direct a strategic withdrawal. He and his crew know the turf, so they'll gain a step on any pursuit. Since they are not relevant to further developments of the plot, make them disappear with a minimum of fuss.

1.3.8 Or Would You Rather Have What's Behind The Curtain?

The PCs will now be faced with a choice of cleaning up the pirate station (which is, strictly, what their orders call for), or trying to chase The Black Box.

If they stop to take stock of the situation, they will notice that several of the monitors show the studio, and themselves; Rasterman has broadcast the battle live, pre-empting Teela-O'Malley. Of the thousands who saw the broadcast, a significant few know the significance of the Black Box. The Computer has seen it all, too. The cameras may be disconnected, or blasted (it will look very bad on the report if they destroy the cameras with The Computer watching).

The Troubleshooters may decide that The Black Box comes under the heading of equipment to be recovered. The Computer has just decided exactly that, though the PCs have no way of knowing it.

1.3.9 If They Don't Chase the Box

In approximately ninety minutes, Screaming Sarah's Polypeptide Boogie will seize the citizenry — including our heroes, if they had dinner. If the Troubleshooters are affected, any prisoners they took at the TV studio (none of whom ate dinner) will escape. If they are *not* affected, they will have to explain why at debriefing.

1.3.10 Conning the PCs Into Chasing the Box

If the PCs don't chase the Box, they are doing the sensible thing. In fact, they are following orders; failure to follow orders may result in a short biography. However. . .

If the PCs don't chase the Box, you won't have as much fun. Therefore you should dupe the PCs into chasing the Box. This sort of manipulation infringes the player's free will and diminishes the expression of his inner spirit to

which he is entitled as a human being and a citizen of our fair land. This is a thought crime of grave significance. Treason, in fact.

That's why we think it is A Good Idea. Here's how to do it.

Sarah should leave a trail that even a mollusk could follow. Blood from a wound. Sooty, greasy footprints. A series of open doors. Multitudinous witnesses. A trail of breadcrumbs. Large, colorful arrows stenciled on the floor.

Sarah should taunt the PCs with their ineptitude in allowing her to escape, mocking them as she exits, holding the Box aloft in triumph, and casting aspersions on their wit and skill as they pursue her.

Sarah should spout treasonous manifestos that no loyal citizen could allow to go unpunished. "The Computer's mother wears skis in a phone booth." "The Computer's mother swims after the troop ships." Gently remind the characters that all of this is being broadcast on complex-wide video. Letting Sarah get away with saying such things might not be conducive to maintaining friendly relations with The Computer.

If all else fails, send the PCs a Special Dispatch by personal messenger as follows:

*** MISSION PRIORITY OVERRIDE! ***
TOP SECRET! TOP SECRET! TOP SECRET!
PURSUE AND SECURE BLACK BOX!
ULTRASUPERTRANSCENDENT PRIORITY
OVER ALL OTHER MISSION ASSIGNMENTS!
DELIVER TO FKL SECTOR SECURITY
HEADQUARTERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!
THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

This dispatch is completely bogus. A High Programmer affiliated with Free Enterprise has sent these orders. If the PCs could manage to obtain the Box, they would be intercepted on the way to FKL Sector and relieved of the Box. Rest in Peace.

If the PCs try to confirm the order with The Computer, they are told that it is phony, and that they are to follow the orders in order to reveal the traitor that issued them. If the PCs make references to this phony mission override at a later date, they will be closely interrogated and assigned a treason point for receiving treasonous documents. Sigh. To be fair, make sure they have plenty of opportunities to get Commendation Points by zapping lots of traitors.



1.3.11 A Friendly Gathering at the Food Vats

See "The Food Vat Chambers" layout on page 21.

The TV studio battle concludes at T (for Tremors) minus 90 minutes. If the PCs follow Sarah and the Black Box to the food vats, they will arrive at T minus 60. So will a number of others.

Every secret society that has possessed The Black Box (starred on the list) will send a three-person fireteam to try and get hold of it. Any society contacted by a PC Troubleshooter will send a team as well. Feel free to add societies until the crossfire is complicated enough for you.

The PCs follow Sarah through a series of corridors and service passageways and emerge in a room full of food processing equipment. Here Sarah expects to rendezvous with a Death Leopard squad who will take the Black Box and convey it to another pirate broadcasting station in time for the polypeptide boogie. Alas, these Leopards have been delayed, and Sarah waits in vain. However, she won't be lonely in here.

When the PCs arrive at the vat room, read the following aloud:

You have tracked the strange woman with The Black Box to a food vat, a large room filled with tanks and electronic equipment. The walls are lined with monitors and gauges, and pipes and catwalks crisscross the space above the great storage tanks and below the 30-meter-high ceiling. Along the walls at regular intervals are metal ladders leading up to the catwalks and the tops of the vats. The tanks are large, open containers holding various sickly-colored bubbling substances; the smell is vaguely reminiscent of an INFRARED citizen's gym locker four weeks after washday.

On one wall near the ceiling is a plexi-enclosed overhead control booth, accessible from the catwalks, a pair of ladders, and a small continuous belt elevator. This booth is centrally-located and commands an excellent view of the entire vat chamber.

Just entering this booth high above the chamber floor is the strange woman with the Black Box. She turns, sees she is pursued, and crows, "Hey, drones! Glad you could make it! Tonight there's gonna be a whole lotta shaking goin' on, and I'd like to introduce your host. . ." (She waves The Black Box in the air with a flourish, bows from the waist, and strikes a defiant pose.) "Screaming Sarah Slick and her magic Black Box!"

Now that we've set the scene, let's introduce the extras. There are as many doors to the vat chamber as there are secret society strike squads sent to get the Box. All these doors open at the same moment and all the squads spill out into the room at once. Each squad is distinctively garbed in the regalia of its secret society (Corpore Metal in metal plate armor, First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer in white frocks, Free Enterprise in pin-striped suits with violin cases, and so on). They all pause, do double takes, look around the room at each other for a few moments, then they go in all different directions.

Some head for the ladders and the control booth. Some take cover near the vats. Some charge into melee with the enemies of their secret society. Some smash things at random. Some loot the fallen. Some run away. Some take cover in the doorways and make stirring speeches. Describe this confusion to the players as though the scene were a great cartoon finale.

Now, ask the PCs what they want to do. With the surfeit of targets to shoot at, they may be briefly overcome with joyous indecision, but soon they'll get into the swing of things.

And how will the NPCs deal with the PCs? "Do unto others as they do unto you." If the PCs do a lot of shooting and bashing, the NPCs take notice and try to eliminate the PCs. If the PCs

sneak around and try to maneuver toward the control booth, they encounter NPCs with similar objectives.

And don't expect all the PCs to do the same things. One PC may sit and hammer on a vat, trying to smash it. Another may find a secure spot and start working up a body count of traitors. Another may use a mutant power to bypass the competition and confront Sarah directly. Relax and improvise. Use your NPC cast to invent entertaining responses to the PCs actions.

Sarah is the only significant NPC in the room. She'll sit tight and defend the control booth for five or ten rounds, then decide that the Death Leopard squad is not going to arrive in time to pick up the Box. When things get too hot, she gives a triumphant shout, fires her laser through the plexi window of the booth, and dives out of the booth into one of the food vats, disappearing beneath the slime.

This should certainly give everybody a moment's pause. Actually, she planned this exit long ago — there is an overflow valve hidden below the glop, which she can find by touch and use as an airlock to escape. No body will be found, and it will be assumed the food, er, ate her.

It should be possible to continue the fight in the cavernous vat chamber even after Sarah has disappeared with The Box — continue it right up until T minus zero. At which time, anyone who is climbing pipes or catwalks on a full stomach is in trouble. And outside, the population is, well, behaving very oddly.

1.3.12 Wild in the Streets

If the PCs stick around for the mop up in the vat chamber, that's where they'll be when the boogie fever strikes. If they forsake the vat room for some reason (like to report back to Mission Central, or to look around for traitors, or to pursue any of the secret society squads in retreat), they'll be out in the halls when the fun starts.

Twist and Shout

The Polypeptide Boogie begins gradually, with little twitches along the major nerves. Citizens suddenly kick up their heels, or clap hands. A combination of the two produces a drop-kick. In the corridors, the usual purposeful, get-where-I'm-going (because lateness is treason) stride is interrupted by a timestep, soft shoe, or buck-and-wing. Human-operated vehicles do sudden maneuvers not found in the manual. The sight of a heavy transport flybot slaloming between overhead guideway supports, dropping crates here and there, is quite startling. Autocars jumping from one guideway to another are even more so.

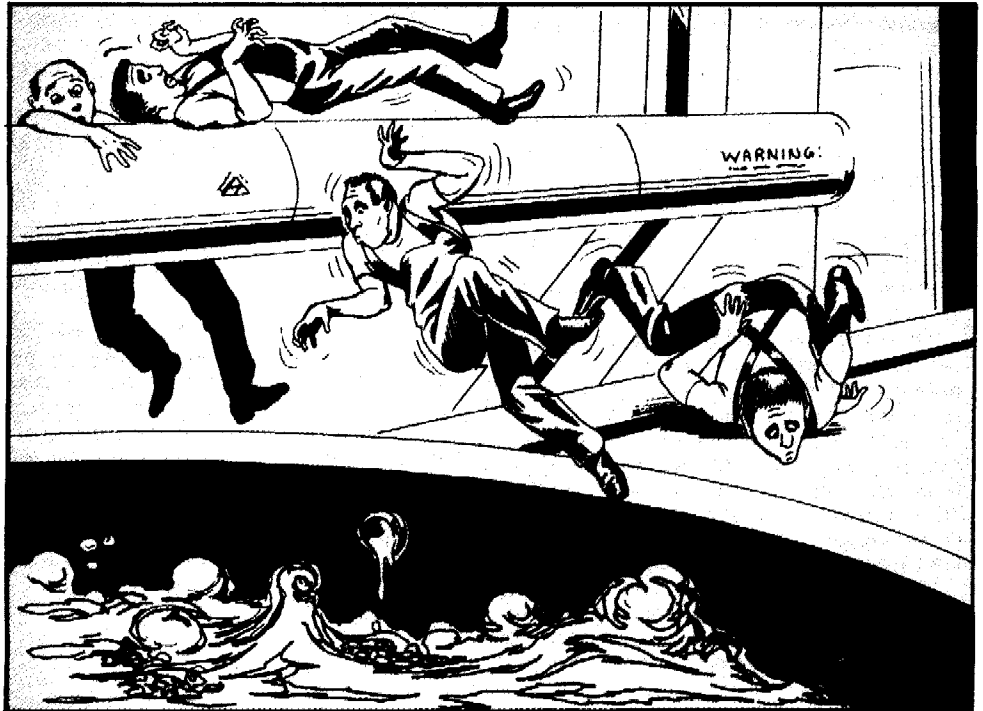
Now the Neuron Dance is really getting going. People grab passing bots for support, and end up tangoing them across the floor. A squad of Death Troopers comes quickstepping up the path, like a drill team performing to Elvis: one-two (razzle-dazzle) three-four (autofire) that's a fact, Jack! Fortunately they can't hit anything.

While computers and bots are not directly affected, lots of human console operators *are*, so you can disrupt anything you feel like. Further, The Computer will begin invoking overrides, interrupting services, and switching controls to automatic systems — not always to appropriate ones. When a traffic-flow program takes over interior lighting control, lit windows start to flash arrows and messages like giant scoreboards, and guideway lights strobe, adding to the disco

effect. (Remember that there is no natural illumination in Alpha Complex: when The Computer makes it dark, it's *dark*.)

Citizens are dancing out their doors, just like in a Busby Berkeley movie musical; humming something catchy from "42nd Street" or "A Chorus Line" would be appropriate here. Boogie-bouncing nervous systems are responsive to outside stimulus: the dancing mob soon ends up in step. When enough people dance in step, they set up harmonics that can shake bridges and even buildings apart. The air reverberates; the characters seem to be trapped inside a giant teleprinter. The sky starts to fall. Pipes break, making it "rain." Bots do not work well in the rain, especially if their little rubber tires and brake shoes get wet. Bots on errands of mercy run into things and skid off other things, requiring that more bots be sent on errands of mercy to help them.

The Computer demands that all the malfunctioning terminal operators report for termination. When their replacements don't answer calls, it demands that *they* report for termination. Every Troubleshooter is mobilized to deal with the crisis: our heroes receive orders by com unit, which are superseded by new orders every few minutes.



The Polypeptide Boogie, a grueling experience.

Encounters are possible with jitterbugging mobs (think of a huge, incoherent New Year's Eve party, where everyone wants to grab you to keep the room from spinning. They respond to noise, too: a "Hey!" from a startled Troubleshooter will produce a chorus of "Hey, hey!"s and a new set of dance steps).

After a while, automated transports will arrive to bring the Troubleshooters where their new orders direct; since orders are changed every few minutes the characters will spend a few pleasant hours getting nowhere fast.

Once this pales, the Troubleshooters can encounter teams of unaffected night-shift soldiers, kitted out in full rad-bio-chem protective suits, looking for Commie invaders; or maybe docbots with tranquilizer guns, who will shoot anybody who acts in an "unreasonable" fashion. . .

Have fun. Keep it going for as long as the players will put up with it.

Suggested endgame scenario: The Computer announces a priority powerdown, for the safety of all systems. The lights go out. All the transport stops. In the darkness are loud crashing noises. The team must navigate by flashlight; if they have infrascopes, throw lots of confusing heat patterns at them. Let them decide where they want to go, and then describe the things they bump into on the way there. "Okay, do you turn left or right here? Now there's a stairway. Here's an elevator, but all the control indicators are out — which button do you want to push? The corridor's only about a meter high here. You can hear shooting up ahead. Shooting behind you, too. Oops, hole in the walkway. You seem to be on a conveyor belt."

Just as they're getting fed up with this, the com units beep, and the lights come up fast and full, blinding everybody. Then they see that they're on a catwalk high over the food vats, right back where they were when the band began to play. All the secret society Boxjacks can now see again, too. Everybody shoots. Pipes rupture. The catwalks give way with a sound of rending metal. Everybody falls in the food. Blackout.

The Aftermath

Really loyal PCs will enthusiastically attempt to deal with the crisis. Of course, the fabled "community of man" that allegedly emerges in a disaster may not appear in Alpha Complex, and PCs may seize the opportunity to loot and burn and indulge in other Commie sabotage.

Whatever the PCs choose to do, things eventually return to normal and the PCs will receive a summons on their com units to return to Troubleshooter Headquarters for debriefing. If they do not voluntarily return in short order, com-bots seek them out, gas them, and "escort" them back.

When the PCs arrive at Troubleshooters Headquarters, they are cordially greeted and

placed in "protective custody" — a windowless, brightly-lit cell — until sometime the next day, after things have returned to normal.

1.3.12 Debriefing

The characters will be released from cells or medical detention. As one character (choose randomly) is let out of his cell, he sees AI-B-MUN, glummer than ever, being tossed into a slightly fancier cell. Questions about this are naturally not allowed. (AI-B-MUN was right about the blame for problems on this mission, and he will never be seen again.) It is up to the PC who saw the detention incident whether to tell his comrades.

The remaining three briefing officers ask questions about the Troubleshooters' activities last night. They are required to account for equipment expended and lost. Byre-B wants to give the PCs a thorough grilling; Doss-V is more easygoing, though he falls asleep occasionally, giving Byre-B a chance to take over; Zeno-1 wants to know if the video cameras were returned intact and nothing else.



Byre-B will be willing to forgive a lot if the Troubleshooters shot a lot of traitors. He will be annoyed if the team leader's armor is undamaged. If the leader got smoked, on the other hand, Byre-B will eulogize him as an example of everything a Troubleshooter ought to be.

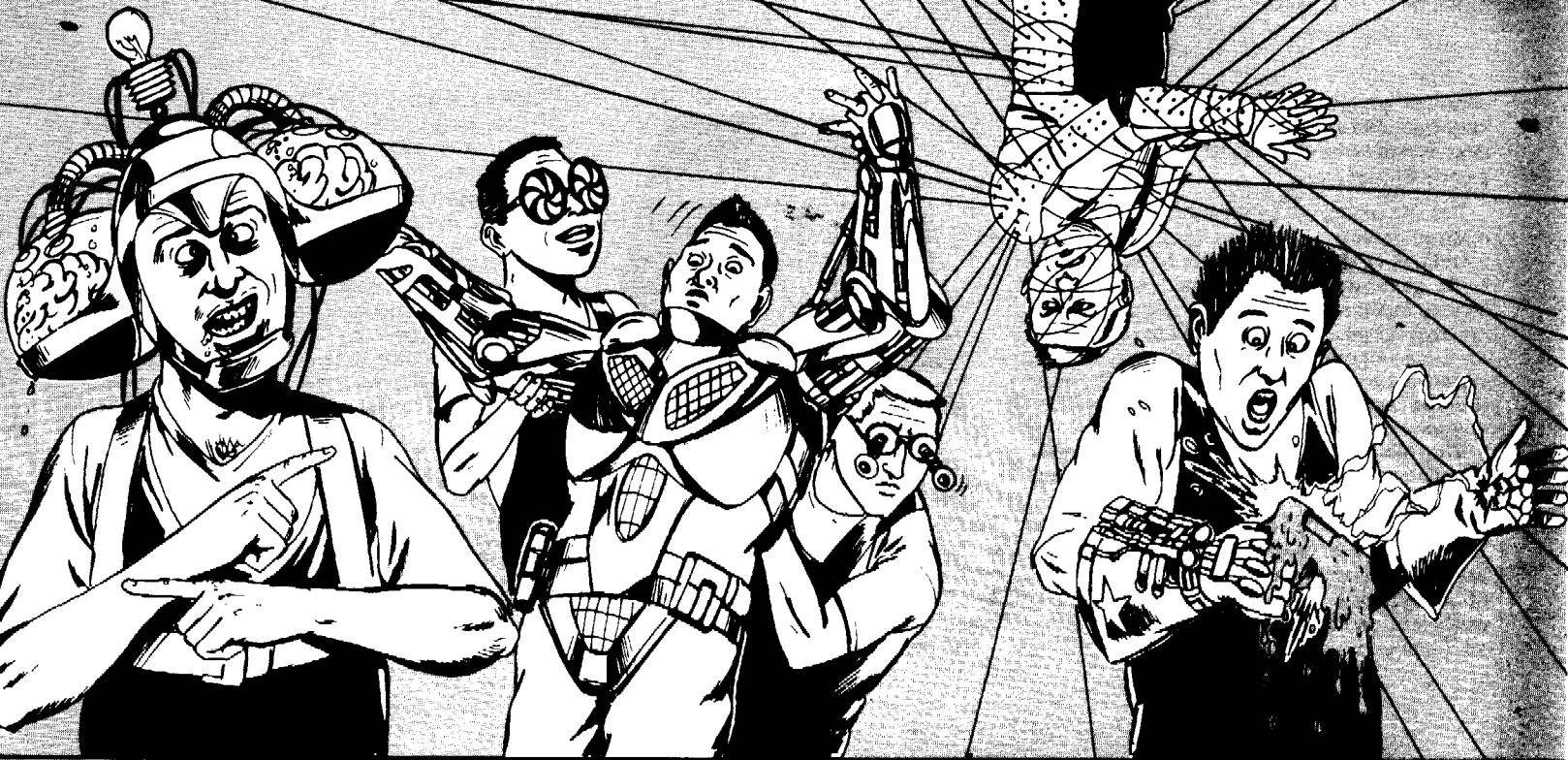
The PCs ought to have the vague idea that

they are going to be blamed for The Polypeptide Boogie. They are not — The Computer easily determined that the vat controls had been tampered with — but PCs should always have the vague idea that anything can be blamed on them. Because it can.

Take reports, and assign commendation, treason, and secret society points. Just before the Troubleshooters are released, Doss-V congratulates them on "a fine performance in The Computer's sight. Friend Computer has asked me to say that we hope you are never called on in such a fashion again."

The PCs will be accosted on their way back to their residential units by citizens, some of them of high clearance, who saw Rasterman's video special last night. None of these people believe the PCs are real Troubleshooters; they think they are actors. The only thing they want to know is what Teela-O-Malley is *really* like.

When the PCs get home, the Mission Two alert will be waiting for them.



Presenting the new, improved model Troubleshooter.

2. MISSION TWO: I WAS A MUTANT FOR THE FBI

2.1 Mission Summary

The Computer does not blame the Troubleshooters for the massive, er, system crash of the night before, but it needs to blame somebody. It has decided that some terrible new psionic mutation, analogous to the dreaded and detested Machine Empathy ability, has infected the citizenry. It has further decided that this infection is somehow connected with the black cube that last night's televised traitors seemed so eager to possess. There are a lot of other conclusions The Computer might have drawn, but this is the one it did reach, and disagreeing with The Computer's conclusions is treason.

The Computer has further decided that this derangement might be contagious, like Communist Propaganda; at least, it should be treated as such until proven otherwise. Therefore, the Troubleshooter team will not be told that The Black Box is a part of their investigation, lest they become contaminated. Since the Troubleshooter team of last night's events seemed to show no ill effects from their exposure to The Black Box, they presumably have some natural resistance (notice The Computer seizes on its own bad guesses and follows them to even weirder conclusions) and are the instruments of choice to recover or destroy it.

On the other hand (in Alpha Complex there's always at least one other hand) a High Programmer, Bette-U-LYF-5, has reached the more reasonable conclusion that The Black Box must contain some kind of entertainment programming, which by definition makes it an Old Reckoning artifact. Bette-U has a large and completely illegal collection of such items, and she arranges to acquire this one as well.

Doss-V-DAN, knowing that the Troubleshooters will be facing mutants with strange and unpredictable powers, decides to give them an advantage: he sends them to Victor-I-GOR, an R&D scientist who is hard at work on mechanical imitations of mutant powers. Like most R&D scientists, Victor-I is crazy. The Troubleshooters will still have to carry his gadgets into battle.

The Troubleshooters, therefore, are going to ambush a gang of traitorous mutants. The Psion secret society, which has heard of The Computer's intention, intends to protect the mutants from ambush. The Anti-Mutant society goes to ambush the Psions *and* the mutants.

But there aren't any mutants. The Box is actually in the hands of the Sierra Club again, who is trying to negotiate with one of its Outsidedwelling former members for more Boxes like it. And the Free Enterprisers have decided to retrieve The Box themselves.

When the smoke clears, the Troubleshooters will miss The Box, but capture the Outsider. Which will lead to Mission Three.

2.2 Pre-Mission Briefing

When the PCs get back to the barracks, they find a Mission Alert waiting for them. (See Mission Alert. Reference YCBBB.2.2, page 27.) Display the alert on your GM Screen. Give them an opportunity to seek contacts with their societies. Give them a few rumors (see General Rumor List or invent a few). Nothing new is available concerning the Black Box, but each society is emphatic about finding and snatching it if possible.

2.2.1 Troubleshooter Headquarters

Once again there is difficulty in determining where the Troubleshooters should report. If the PCs suggest that Briefing Room AA may be intended, they will immediately be questioned as to how they came by such information; a leak is suspected, and the characters will have to talk their way out of treason points or an immediate conviction/sentencing/execution (not necessarily in that order).

The checkpoint security console has been replaced with a new model. There is a glass plate on the machine's front: the subject places his hands against the glass, and a brilliant light illuminates the plate as the unit scans his palmprints.

On the fourth try (again), the plate overheats, pan-frying the user's hands. A docbot is immediately summoned to bring plastiflesh. Also a scrubot with glass cleaner and room deodorizer. For the duration of Mission Two, the PC with the resurfaced hands will roll one extra die for any attribute check involving manual dexterity, including shooting.

2.2.2 The Briefing

The room is as before, except that the combot has been replaced by a second guard with power holster. (The guards are thoroughly trained with these. If the PCs start trouble, the guards' holsters work properly at all times.)

At intervals during the briefings, the room begins to vibrate, and a rhythmic mechanical noise is heard. There is the distinct impression that the entire room is moving, on rails or tracks. The personnel will ignore this effect entirely, and no explanation is available.

No one has replaced AI-B-MUN on the briefing panel. Zeno-I wonders why he is still here, since the video problem has been cleared up. Byre-B is looking forward to another mass slaughter of traitors, and mutant traitors at that. Doss-V's principal concern, next to keeping Friend Computer happy, is to make sure that his friend Victor-I-GOR's equipment gets a good field test.

2.2.3 Choosing The Team Leader

The team has the opportunity to choose a new leader. If the prior leader is dead, his clone is reminded by Byre-B of the reputation he has to live up to. Byre-B also comments that The Computer, in recognition of last night's extraordinary service and the dangers that lie ahead, has arranged a special bonus for the leader on this mission.

Once the leader has been decided upon, a panel will slide open in front of the briefing bench, and a small shelf extends itself. On the shelf are seven jawbreaker-sized yellow pills. Byre-B addresses the team leader: "Given the threat to your very minds presented by these mutants, The Computer has seen fit to give you the final protection against hostile mind control. These suicide pills require only minutes to work, and are almost painless. As team leader, you will be custodian of these pills and, recognizing your importance, you have been assigned a second pill in case the first one should fail."

Don't forget to make the leader sign for the pills. The form contains a space labeled REASON FOR USING PILL, and another that reads WAS PILL EFFECTIVE? [YES/NO].

2.2.4 Mission Assignment

Doss-V is deeply moved by the suicide-pill ritual. In a voice as sincere as any ever heard on the U.S. Senate floor, he says:

"It is not often that we see a caliber of courage such as you have shown us, and not often that we grant the unusual privilege you have been granted. Is it not fortunate that, in its wisdom, our friend The Computer has made it possible for us to give it the last full measure of devotion not once, but several times?"

"But I digress, and time is short. As you doubtless know, there is a terrible influence at work among us. Over the past hours, Alpha Complex has operated at a level of inefficiency that causes our friend The Computer something electronically analogous to grief. The Computer has worked hard to shield its citizens from grief; those tablets you have been entrusted with are an example of the lengths our friend will go to to protect its own. Serve The Computer, and you will never suffer very long."

There is a pause. Then a snore. Byre-B takes the microphone. He says:

"The mutant traitor scum have been located in CYA sector. Now, they're clever, and they're everywhere, so you're going to have to be cleverer. We're going to disguise you as traitor scum mutants, and send you right into the middle of things." Byre-B's eyes widen, and he begins to speak very rapidly.

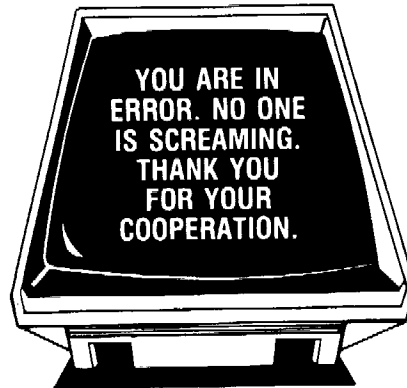
Rehearse the next segment; the faster you can deliver it, the better the effect will be. Byre-B will not repeat himself.

"Now remember, they're traitors and they're clever and they're commies and they're stupid, so we're going to make you look stupid so you can get in there and be real clever, just like the commie mutants they

are. Be careful, because they're not dumb, they may make mistakes but that's because they're clever Commies and they think you're stupid, but don't be dumb about it, remember they're Commies and they're dumb and they're mutants and they're scum, and if it looks like a Commie and feels like a mutant and smells like scum it's one of you in disguise so you can give 'em what they've got coming to 'em."

Doss-V wakes up. He says "One of our finest scientists, a loyal servant of The Computer and a good friend of mine, has made it possible for you to counter the deadly mental threat posed by these mutants. Take care with this equipment: it may be all that stands between you and . . . treason."

Only a few questions will be allowed. No information on the nature of the hostile mutants is available, nor the precise location of their "stronghold."



2.2.5 Private Briefing

Byre-B reads the mission equipment requisition aloud to the group, then dismisses them to report to Outfitting. (Display Equipment List #2, page 28, to the players.) The team leader is directed to stay behind for a special private briefing. Doss-V addresses him as follows:

"Good friend Troubleshooter, we know of your loyalty to The Computer. That is why we are entrusting you with the following information — which is highly classified, and must be released to no one but your successor as team leader.

"Somehow, these mutants have found a way to control the minds of loyal citizens, convincing them to turn away from The Computer and all it stands for. Even valuable bots have been corrupted into the service of this evil.

"We know that, should this become known, our loyal citizens might become afraid, not knowing when they might be innocently forced into treasonous acts. So we must keep the nature of this mission a complete secret. No one outside this room — of course our friend The Computer is here with us always — will know of your mission. You can expect no help from our fellow services — even from your fellow Troubleshooters.

"But you will not be without help. I spoke of equipment that would make you the equal of any mutant: yes, it is true. We now have the ability to grant mutant powers to honest, loyal citizens when the need requires. You will meet the enemy on its own terms.

"Of course you understand that with great power comes great responsibility. For that reason, we entrust you with this."

A RED waiter appears, carrying a shiny

metal tray. In the center of the tray is a large blue pill.

"It works in ten seconds." Byre-B says, awed.

The leader is allowed to rejoin the team, and they are all hustled off to Research & Development for CYA sector.

Should anyone decide to take one: the yellow pills are fatal 20% of the time; otherwise they merely make the swallower nauseated.

The blue pill has no effect. However, since The Computer believes that the pill works, any PC who takes the pill is presumed to have a mutant power, and to be guilty of treason. Failure to turn the pill in at the end of the mission is considered clear evidence that the pill has been taken. Now: if The Computer "knows" you have a mutant power, you had better register it. But how do you register a non-existent mutant power? Nice little fix he's in, yes?

Taking any sort of suicide pills is worth one treason point.

2.3 The Friendly Folks at R&D

2.3.1 Better Living through Mutation

Victor-I-GOR-6 is the last of an erratically brilliant line of research scientists. Victor-1 was a mechanical genius, who devised such items as a reliable safety for cone rifles, a self-balancing hypocycloidal fusion containment field, and a garbage bag with the twist tie attached. Unfortunately, all these items are classified ULTRAVIOLET. He died of piezoelectric shock while trying to develop a dogbot biscuit. Victor-2 was the first person to exceed Mach 3 while clinging to the outside of a flybot. Victor-3 was reading through his laboratory notes one day when he realized that he had exceeded his own security clearance; he promptly reported for termination. Victor-4 went into the lab one morning and was never seen again. Victor-5 is believed to have stumbled on the formula for a universal solvent, which then disappeared along with him and seven sub-basements.

Victor-6 sees himself as the family's last chance to return to Victor-1's glory. Understanding that a hot-sounding proposal is worth three boring monographs any day, he has created the new science of Synthomutagenics, the process of simulating mutant powers by artificial means. The Computer gives its full support to the SM Project, because if useful mutant powers could be artificially produced under The Computer's direct control, there would be no further need to permit the existence of Registered Natural Mutants.

This is how part of The Computer thinks of it, anyway. Another part of The Computer believes that the artificial creation of mutant powers is a threat — machines that turn citizens into traitors-by-definition — and allows Victor-I-GOR-6 to continue only until he determines whether or not Synthomutagenics will work. If the SM Project is a success, Victor, his work, and all who participated in it (of course including those Troubleshooters who tested the hardware) must be terminated. If the Project is a failure, the equipment and Victor-I's "assistants" will still be eradicated (to keep anyone else from getting the idea) and Victor-I will be terminated for wasting Alpha Complex resources.

In other words, the PCs are doomed from the moment they enter Victor-I's laboratory. However, this termination order will not take effect until the SM Project is concluded, and that

could be a long time, especially in a Troubleshooter's life, where a week is a long time.

Victor-I has two assistants, both of whom are reasonably competent engineers. They are also, as usual in Alpha Complex, both spies. (Those of you familiar with lab politics can think of them as enthusiastic grad students.)

Willis-G-EEP-4: Quiet, cheerful, Mr. Goodlaser type. Willis-G is one of the inventors of the Power Holster; he dismisses all reports of malfunctions, pointing out that no Vulture Squadron member has ever returned one for adjustments. He will not let the PCs leave without signing out at least one holster.

Willis-G is also a member of the Psion secret society, with the powers of Minor Telekinesis and Luck. These powers account for the fact that his prototypes work well on the test bench, and fail in the field when he isn't around. Psion does not know yet whether Victor-I's work is a boon, bringing the benefits of mutation to those unlucky enough to be born without it, or a threat; Willis-G is content to watch and report.

Neddy-G-OON-6: Hyperactive, accident-prone, standard Mad Scientist's Madder Assistant. Neddy-G's own ideas suffer from terminal lunacy; however, he has an uncanny ability to find and fix what's wrong with Victor-I's creations without taking credit. Obviously Victor-I treasures him.

Neddy-G spies for Anti-Mutant. His personal conviction is that genes have no business altering themselves; when better people are built, people like him will build them. Anti-Mutant thinks Victor-I's work could be wonderful, unless it leads to tolerance for organic-type mutants, so they too are sitting tight and waiting.



2.3.2 Men into Mutants

The secrecy of the SM Project has led to its being housed in the deepest sub-basement of the R&D facilities. The characters spend a lot of time descending in elevators (it isn't *that* deep, the elevators are just slow) and being led by suspicious guards through dark, dusty corridors, some of which seem to have been forced out of true by some great elemental force.

Finally the guards will operate an elaborately sealed metal door; several thickness of steel iris open and the Troubleshooters enter a huge room filled with equipment right out of *Forbidden Planet* or a Jack Kirby comic book: massive busbars alive with coruscating energy, delicate assemblies of glass and wire, incomprehensible displays. The door closes behind the team, and Willis-G steps out to introduce himself. Shortly Neddy-G pops up from behind a console to startle everybody. They lead the players to Victor-I.

Victor-I is nervous and insecure. (Imagine Woody Allen's neuroses in Orson Welles' body.)

He tells the Troubleshooters that he hopes they take this project seriously, that definitive field testing is important to everyone involved.

Victor-I doesn't know where to start; he'd like to send the PCs out with a dozen gadgets each, but knows that isn't practical. He wants to make sure that no one gets a device he won't make use of (he's had that problem before), and so suddenly asks a PC, "What mutant power have you always dreamed of having?"

It sounds just like an Internal Security trick question, and Willis-G and Neddy-G will be listening carefully for the answer. If the PCs mention a specific power, Victor dashes off in search of the appropriate device. Willis-G and Neddy-G scribble furiously in notebooks.

If this approach doesn't work, Victor-I will ask the players what they think would be most useful. If that fails, he will say, "You're just the person I've needed to give this unit its final once-over," and assign an item at random. Victor-I is fair, and will make sure at least one of each of his assistants' designs is assigned.

Items may be tested if the PCs insist — though most of them will work just fine under laboratory conditions. The testing area is referred to as The Danger Room; the scientists will not elaborate on this title. If too much testing goes on, a call will arrive ordering the Troubleshooters to hurry up, and no further tests will be allowed. So there.

2.3.3 The Goodies

1. Sensory Enhancer Helmet (Victor-I). This is a full-head helmet with amplifying pickups for sound, hearing, and smell. It works, but the gain controls are defective: audio volume may increase until a whisper deafens the wearer, or vision fades to black. Malfunctions of the scent-amplifying system are even more interesting. The unit is also rather difficult to remove.

2. Electroshock Gauntlets (Willis-G). Give the wearer shock abilities equivalent to the mutant power. The control switches are built inside the gloves, and they tend to stick; while the gloves are insulated, handling weapons with electrical live fingers can be hazardous, and careless use of hands can trigger shock accidentally.

3. Omnigestollin-NG (Neddy-G). A drug to provide the Matter Eater ability for twelve hours. It does absolutely nothing. If the players take a pill in the lab, Neddy-G will say "Well, it takes an hour or so to get going. Make sure we get a full report."

4. Manipulatron (Victor-I). A powered exoskeleton for the arms, giving the wearer ten times normal strength. It works just fine, except that it provides no extra support for the spine and legs, somewhat limiting the wearer's carrying capacity; the unit itself weighs about 40 kilos. Politely request the PC to make occasional difficult strength and agility checks. If failed, the PC crashes to the ground. Two citizens are needed to help him stand. After the device has crashed to the ground a few times, the battered controls short out, causing a power-assisted case of St. Vitus's Dance. Ask the PC to provide sound effects.

5. Adrenocorticin-ATP (Willis-G). Gives the user Combat Mind ability for one hour. Also induces battle-lust, and an unfortunate inability to distinguish friend from foe.

6. Experimental Manual Operations Extensor, Mark XXVI (Neddy-G). This is supposed to simulate telekinesis, and any PC who asks for TK powers is going to be stuck with it. It is a harness mounting dozens of magnetically controlled wire filaments that can coil tightly or ex-

tend to five meters. It is controlled by nerve impulses, and comes with a thick manual of operation. The manual is censored, of course; the pages are blank. Of course, in use it simply snags everything in sight, including the operator, like a tangler that shoots at one target per turn. Throughout the rest of the mission the PC will involuntarily pluck items off walls, desks, and passing citizens.

7. Biofeedback Monitor System (Victor-I). Victor borrowed (stole) the prototype of this from PDK Sector. He forgot to steal the documentation. It gives the character abilities similar to the Adrenalin Control power, with a 50% chance per use of causing no harmful side effects, and 50% of causing double the damage of the mutant power.

8. Neurocalculator (Willis-G). This device clamps over the user's temples. It connects inductively to the brain, providing the Number Cruncher power. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it gives incredibly wrong answers. Sometimes the user stands stock still and recites the multiplication tables until his ears smoke.

9. Teleporttransitron (Neddy-G). Designed to imitate the Trance Teleport power, this five-kilo belt device actually works, and can be demonstrated. Unfortunately, the power pack is a 60 kg device mounted on a 2-wheeled cart which must be towed behind the PC. More unfortunately, its calibration is extremely delicate, and after any jar (like walking out of the laboratory) it will transmit the user, the user's equipment, the user's clothes, and itself to widely separated locations. Failure to return the device is treason. Finding it after a teleport may be tricky.

10. Suggestor Goggles (Victor-I). These have whirling lights that give the wearer the Suggestion power over anyone he can somehow convince to look into his eyes while he is wearing them. A recorded message keeps repeating, "Look into my eyes. You're growing sleepy."

11. Neurofrabulator (Willis-G). This device resembles a combat suit helmet with a clear bowling ball containing a live human brain bolted to either side. The brains have been artificially grown, and possess the ability to read the surface thoughts of anyone in a 10-meter range, and telepathically communicate the information to the wearer.

The possibilities for GM mischief with this one are endless. For example: the two brains bicker constantly; they make endless annoying suggestions to the wearer; they read the Troubleshooters' minds and threaten blackmail; etc. Feel free to give the brains whatever names and personalities you wish: George and Gracie, Stan and Ollie, Moe, Larry and Curly (one of them is a split personality), etc.

12. Autoreponse Imager (Victor-I). A belt-mounted holographic projector that simulates Polymorphism by showing images that follow the wearer's actions: the user can appear as a combat, Teela-O-MLY, or any of 126 other images stored on microslide carousel. If asked, Victor-I will demonstrate some useful settings; no complete list is available. The slide controller has a tendency to reset itself randomly in use, and the test slides are broadly selected, including Wile E. Coyote, items of furniture, Peter Lorre (in black and white), and several famous paintings.

13. Lung/Gill Suit (Victor-I). A skintight leotard that filters oxygen out of water. It is a bit sweaty

in normal wear, but it works perfectly. A player assigned this will just have to figure out how to field-test it.

14. Pedipulatron Willis-G. An exoskeleton for the legs similar to the Manipulatron above. They will not be offered as a set.

If someone tries to wear them together, their combined weight will become a considerable burden. Then one or the other will short out and become dead metal.



2.3.4 Cloaks and Daggers

Once they have been outfitted with their synthetic mutations, the team is sent to the regular Quartermaster office to sign out their more usual equipment.

Despite what was said about secrecy, everyone in the equipment room seems to know about the team's mission. They all think it's pretty ridiculous. "Nobody's ever gonna believe you're mutants. Freaks, yeah, but not mutants." (Of course, the characters *are* all mutants, but they can't reveal that.)

At least this time the staff aren't so hesitant about providing armor, implying that the team is really going to need it this time. They have several suits "typical of what the well-dressed YELLOW civilian wears" with concealed armor: 4 trichroma reflex, 4 Kevlar, and 2 Kevlar/mylar.

Once again the team finds itself on the sidewalk in front of HQ, with no idea where to begin. Suddenly a panting RED Troubleshooter runs up to them, holding a dispatch envelope. He will demand to see an official copy of the team's mission orders before handing over the message. The team has not been issued an official copy of its orders.

In order to get the message, the players will have to pull rank on the RED messenger, or simply shoot him. If neither of these ideas occurs to anyone, a passing scrubot picks up the messenger and tosses him into a trash compactor; the envelope flutters to the ground, where the scrubot ignores it.

The message is in fact for the team, and a good thing too. (See Special Field Dispatch: Reference YCBBB.2.3.4 on page 28).

2.3.5 All Dressed Up with No Place to Go

Meetings with secret society and service group contacts are going to be very exciting while wearing Victor-I's hardware and the YELLOW civilian suits (which don't fool anybody). There is a 50% chance that the contact will be scared off by what he thinks is an Internal Security trap — 100% chance if the player chose the same method of contact as last time. If the real contact flees, provide an "innocent bystander" for the player to try and discuss his mission with.

If contact is made:

Bud-Y-Zer is told that the Outsider Reagan Wimbledon (see PC card — Bud-Y is awful with names) has been kidnapped by agents of Free Enterprise, who wish to sell him (something like that anyway). Bud-Y must free Wobblepot, at the cost of his own life if necessary. He will know him by his fuzzy vest. ("Fuzzy vest" is correct. If Bud-Y thinks he misunderstood, good.)

Other societies comment on the magnitude of last night's disaster, and emphasize the importance of getting that Black Box.

2.4 The Mission

2.4.1 The Setup

Special Field Dispatch: Reference YCBBB.2.3.4 gives an address in CYA Sector, supposedly the location of the Evil Mutant Enclave. No secret society can say anything about what the address might actually be, but Power Services knows that a lot of heavy conduits run under the place.

What it really is is a "safe house," a room operated by the Free Enterprisers, guaranteed to be absolutely free of The Computer's surveillance devices. The Enterprisers rent it out to anyone with the astronomical fee, for whatever purpose the renter desires. The room really is Computer-proof; the Enterprisers have their own bugs installed, for protection and blackmail.

The current tenants are the Sierra Club, who are using the room to hide one Oregon Warbler. No, not a bird, a person. Some years ago, a high-ranking Sierran named Warren-B-LEER escaped from Alpha Complex through the secret exit. He made his way in the outside world, from time to time returning to trade with the Complex dwellers. The Club holds him in religious awe, an unreciprocated emotion.

The Club has now reacquired The Black Box (Screaming Sarah escaped with it last time and sold it to them), and is showing it to Oregon Warbler in the hope that he can bring them many more like it. Wooden boxes, that is. The Club still doesn't have any idea how to open the thing.

Oregon Warbler thinks the Club is crazy, but he can sell certain items, especially firestarters, for a small fortune Outside, and if the Club wants boxes, they can have boxes.

The Free Enterprisers, watching the negotiations on hidden camera, have decided to muscle in on the deal. They slipped a message to Oregon Warbler, offering him a much better price for his goods. Oregon agreed to a meeting, and was told to expect a visit from a group of YELLOW civilians.

And indeed the Enterprisers are on their way, dressed as YELLOW clearance civilians. But guess who gets there first?

The Troubleshooters have the address because: **A.** Bette-U-LYF ordered her Programs Group to find her The Black Box; **B.** a Group member got the safe house location, and transmitted it to Zeno-I-VIL on the briefing team; **C.** Zeno-I sent the message to capture The Box, with the address, to the Team Leader; **D.** The Computer deleted all references to The Black Box from the message. Zeno-I never questions what The Computer deletes and doesn't care anyway.

Meanwhile, strike teams from Psion and Anti-Mutant are tracking the Troubleshooters, tipped off by Victor-I's assistants, who also gave the societies a list of the special equipment the Troubleshooters signed out from R&D. Naturally, Willis-G and Nedly-G assured the strike teams that all the stuff works perfectly.

2.4.2 The Safe House Entrance

The entrance and first checkpoint for the safe house is in the outer lobby of Bot Maintenance Facility CYA-25. Read the following aloud to the players when they reach the building and enter.

The lobby of the Bot Maintenance Facility is a very large room filled with unmarked cartons of various sizes. A pair of large glass doors lead from the lobby down a long corridor. Next to these doors is a desk with a computer console. No one is sitting at the desk. Two ORANGE heavily-armed guards lean negligently against the wall next to the desk. They eye you suspiciously, but do not aim their weapons. In a distant corner of the room, partly obscured by cartons, is a door marked **NO ADMITTANCE — DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE TOXIC CHEMICALS EXTREME HEAT.**

This is a bona fide bot maintenance facility. The guards are Free Enterprisers and are paid to make sure that nobody too obviously a Bad Guy goes through the NO ADMITTANCE door — the real safe house entrance. They have been warned that some YELLOW citizens are coming by to visit the safe house, and the guards will be as cooperative and well-spoken as typical thugs and pistoleros in gangster films. "Uhghn. Whatcha want?" "Whosyer here ter see?" "Well, de boss said ter send yuz right down. Da door ova dere."

If the PCs make lots of noises like "The Computer is Our Friend," or "What's *your* clearance, citizen," or "Be so kind as to report yourself for treasonous activity," the Free Enterprisers are going to get suspicious. This should result in a shootout and some clone activation.

If the PCs play it cagey and decide to wander around the bot facility for a little snooping, treat them to a tour of the bot maintenance bays. Imagine hundreds of malfunctioning bots to annoy and torment the PCs. Eventually one of the ORANGE guards should show up and politely direct the PCs to the proper entrance.

Tunnel

After the bot facility door comes a spiral ramp down, and a dimly lit access tunnel running for about 150 meters. Cables and pipes run along the walls; if weapons are fired down here remember that water and voltage don't mix, especially on metal floors. A simple vibration-sensor system turns on a light at the basement checkpoint whenever anyone is in the tunnel.



Basement Checkpoint

See "Safe House Apartment" layout on page 21.

As the PCs approach the checkpoint, read the following aloud:

The tunnel turns right for five meters, then left. Large seams in the ceiling indicate where massive armored doors can be lowered at either end of the five-meter corridor passage. Along the walls of this section are numerous small portals through which poison gas, napalm, or some other discouraging substance might pour into the corridor, and armored cameras scan the hallway.

This section of hallway is monitored on television from the checkpoint. A buzzer sounds when the hall is entered, and the guards know to expect company.

Beyond the five-meter section of corridor the tunnel turns left and is blocked by a massive armored door. Two small thick plastic windows are set at eye height, and panels in the door might apparently be opened or fired into those standing before the door. A crudely lettered sign on the door reads, "Fun Room: State your name and business. Don't forget 'Please' and 'Thank You.'"

The PCs can say anything they want. "Candygram." "Friend." "I'm selling magazines." The two guards know to expect a group of YELLOW citizens, and understand that no one ever candidly states his business in Alpha Complex. As long as the PCs don't have weapons drawn or show some other sign of poor social skills, the armored door slides ponderously up into the ceiling, revealing the checkpoint room.

The room is 10x10 meters. Two large desks, one to the right, the other to the left of the door, are occupied by a pair of casually surly guards dressed in non-standard, sharply-tailored Kevlar/mylar jackets. Their semi-automatic slugthrowers are pointed suggestively in your direction. One has a stun gun, several grenades, and a gauss gun on his desk; the other has a hand flamer and a cone rifle.

One says, "Wait a minute," and he picks up a phone on his desk and mutters quietly into it. After a few brief exchanges, he hangs up and says, "Boss says it's okay. The freak wants to see them."

The Free Enterprise guards at the checkpoint will not annoy the PCs unless they make pests of themselves. The phone call is to Free Enterprise headquarters to confirm the visitors. The other guard presses a button under his desk and the rear wall panel of the room swings open to reveal a passage leading upward. The first



"Look what followed us in from Outside."

guard leans inside, and yells, "Company coming!" up the stairway.

The PCs may walk between the two guards through the rear wall and ascend the stairs. The first thing they notice is a grinning guard at the top of the stairs, a 5-color laser rifle across his knees. He waves pleasantly as the PCs come up the stairs.

The Apartment

At the top of the stairs is a closed door. The guard stands, knocks on the door, and says, "You got visitors, freak." He opens the door and sends the PCs into the room. Read the following aloud.

The room is unimaginably luxurious by the standards of a YELLOW clearance Troubleshooter. The furniture is soft and comfortable, the carpet thick, the light adequate, the bathroom private — incredible.

There are no windows, but a pair of large vidscreens show worn videotapes of Outside (prized Sierra Club possessions): California, St. Croix, the Jersey Turnpike, and so forth.

Across the room on the far wall are two open doors. The door on the left leads to a kitchen/utility room. The door on the right leads to a bedroom. On the right wall is a third open door leading to a bathroom.

In a corner of the room, on a small table, stands the Black Box.

A citizen in ill-fitting INFRARED coveralls is snoozing in an overstuffed chair. His hair is unusually long and matted. Over the coveralls he is wearing a strange, armor-like garment covered with what looks like dense, white, curly hair. There is a strong unpleasant odor.

2.4.3 Oregon Warbler

Though he is dressed in Alpha Complex clothing (with a sheepskin vest for a touch of home), he will appear to the characters as barely human: too muscular, too hairy, with a peculiar smell. They will have no trouble at all believing he is some kind of incredible Commie Mutant from Hell.

Oregon thinks the PCs are Free Enterprisers come to make him an offer for delivery of more Black Boxes. When the PCs wake him, he'll rub his eyes and say, "Okay, so what's your offer?" He ignores any inappropriate PC responses (he's still half asleep, and he isn't going to put up with any more foolishness), repeating over and over, "Cut out the nonsense. Make me a decent offer, or I'll sell to the Nature Boys."

If the PCs insist that Oregon is their prisoner and attempt to confiscate the Black Box, Oregon coolly says, "Okay, if that's the way you clowns want to play. I can wait. You need what I got, and I can wait 'til I get good terms. And don't think pushing me around is going to improve the price, vat breath."

If the PCs try strong-arm stuff or amateur laser surgery, Oregon will make a dash for the (armored) bathroom. The guards will appear immediately and try to make things challenging for the PCs.

2.4.4 A Friendly Little Altercation

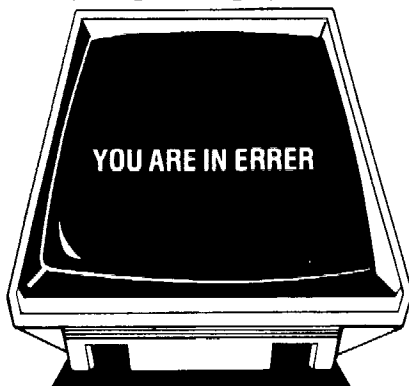
The dialog between the PCs and Oregon is suddenly interrupted by sounds of gunfire outside the safe house. And downstairs from the checkpoint room comes the sound of loud argument. Then everything goes crazy at once.

Outside, the Psions (who have located the apartment with mutant tricks) and the Anti-Mutants (who followed the Psions) have started taking pot-shots at each other. In the tunnel the real Free Enterpriser group has just arrived and been identified by the guards, and they are getting ready to come upstairs with blazing weapons.

This Way to the Egress

Oregon has been told of two emergency exits from the safe house — a hidden chute and an explosive charge that blows a hole right through the wall. Sadly, Oregon's foggy memory has omitted some of the critical details.

At first sign of trouble Oregon makes a dash for the kitchen. He knows there is a secret emergency exit in there, though he has forgotten exactly where.



The PCs may consider making a heroic stand here. Bad idea. Activate their clones.

They may consider following Oregon. Somewhat more promising.

Emergency Exit A

One way out is through the automatic washer in the kitchen. The back panel must be kicked out, which will reveal a chute to street level outside. Though nobody knows it, the washer is functional, and will start to fill with soapy water as soon as anybody climbs in. Once the panel is knocked out, the flow will increase to a torrent. It can't be stopped; if the washer is destroyed, the pipes will begin to flood the apartment. Oregon was told about this escape, but he has forgotten which of several appliances (washer, dishwasher, automatic clothes presser, oven, Magic Fingers bed) must be climbed into. Have fun.

Emergency Exit B

The other exit is through the wall screen on the far wall in the bedroom. The bed must be pushed aside and the wall screen removed. There is a ripcord on the wall behind it. This fuses an explosive charge that will blow out the wall. Anyone standing next to the wall on either side will get a faceful of crumbled concrete. When the wall falls down, those inside will be looking right at the Anti-Mutant assault team, who will doubtless seize the opportunity. This action will also irretrievably weaken the entire building, which will collapse at a ever-faster rate.

Blowing holes in walls is also a possibility, with long-term results similar to escape route B above.

If a large quantity of ordnance is detonated in the tunnel, it will cause a gas explosion that

will make most of the block sink three or four meters into the earth.

If the players escape via the tunnel, they will be met by an Enterpriser flying squad at the bot plant. Feel free to improvise a free-for-all among the bots, conveyors, and automatic repair and assembly gear.

After the hue and cry goes up, the Sierra Club will get a hit team of their own there, trying to recover The Box and Oregon Warbler.

Oregon Warbler isn't particularly eager to surrender to anybody, especially not Troubleshooters, but he'd rather be shot later than shot now. When caught between the indiscriminant fire of the secret society attack squads and the protective custody of the PCs, Oregon will turn and surrender to the PCs, saying, "Keep me alive, and I'll make it worth your while."

Nobody will shoot at The Black Box or at Oregon. All societies will take considerable risks to capture it.

2.4.5 Ending the Battle

As fire, flood, and quake begin to consume the structural block, service bots and security forces will begin to converge on the area.

Internal Security will turn off the power to the whole sector (lights out, folks) and flood the area with a new experimental sleepgas. (Oddly enough, it works.) As the lights go out, the other combatants begin to scramble away, hoping to avoid capture by Internal Security. Firefights in the dark aren't very productive, anyway, and any hardcore clown who tries to carry on by flashlight should be greeted with a fusillade of slugs, laser beams, and grenades.

As the lights go out and everything gets quiet, tell the PCs they smell a funny smell. Let them

wander in the dark for a few panicky rounds, then start turning off the PCs. Make a difficult endurance check for each character each round. When each fails, ask the PCs to provide snoring sound effects. When everyone is buzzing and snorting, tell them that time passes. Break for munchies and a stretch.

2.4.6 Detention

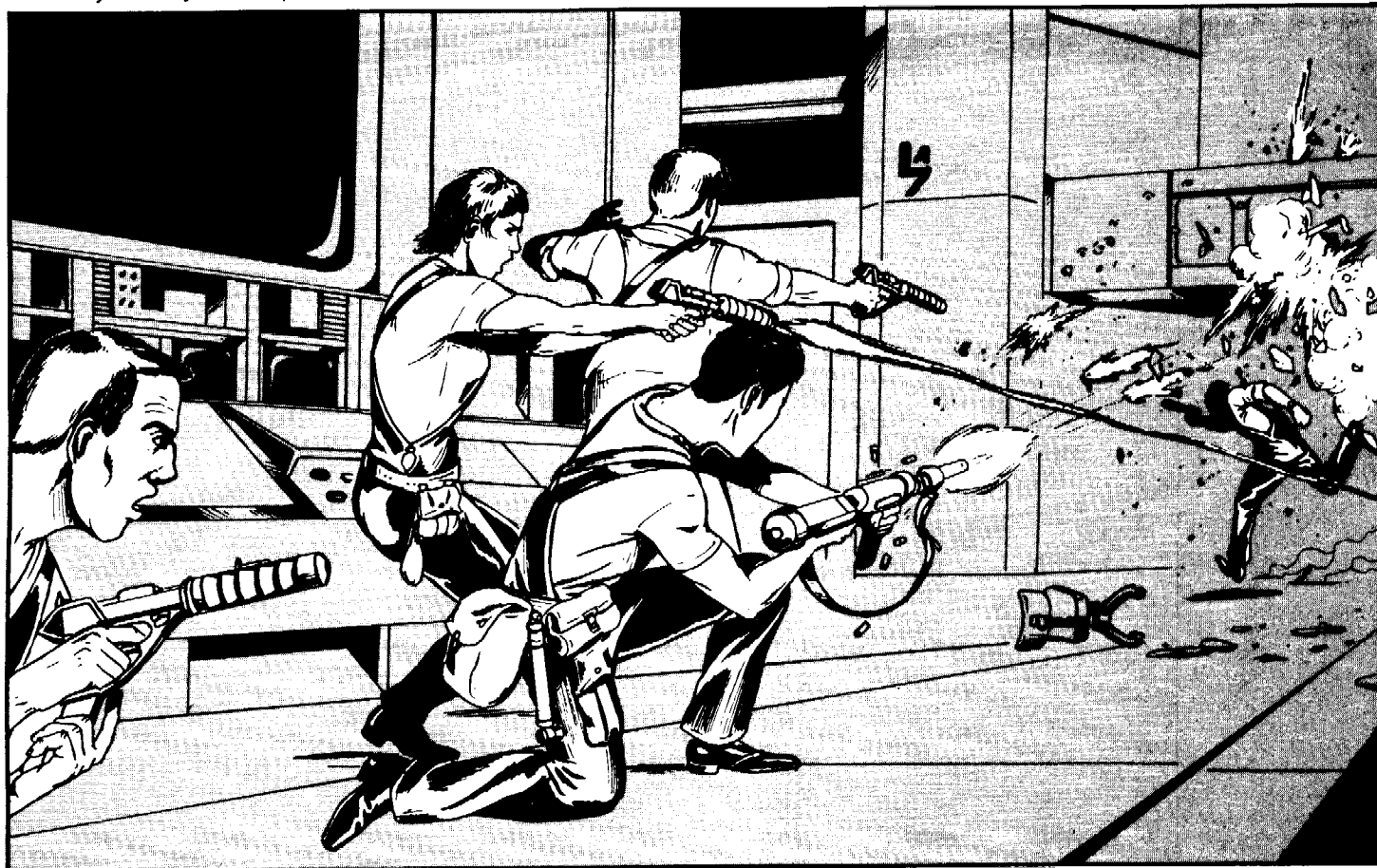
The surviving PCs awake in the back of a Security van on their way to detention. Wounded PCs are being treated by an onboard docbot. Oregon Warbler is with the PCs, but unconscious and receiving medical treatment. If The Black Box was in the possession of one of the PCs when the lights went out, it has disappeared. (A Sierra Club Internal Security plant has intercepted it and sent it along to higher-ups in the society. It will reappear in Mission Three.)

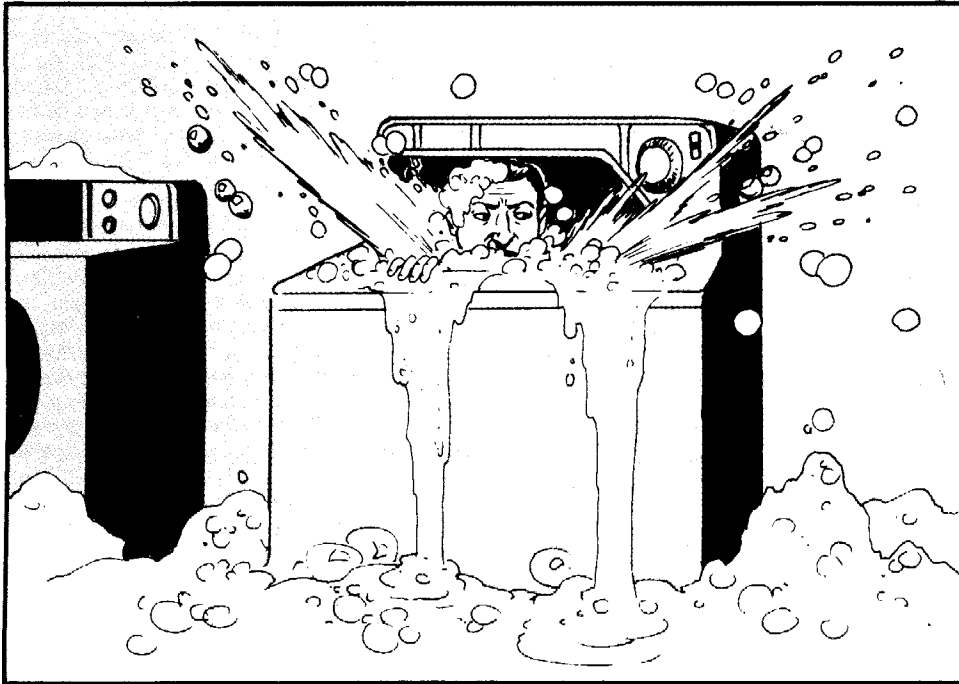
When they arrive at the detention block, Oregon is separated from the PCs and sent to a medical facility. The PCs are sent as a party to comfortable detention quarters where the wounded continue to receive medical treatment. All requests for information or release are greeted with the traditional "I'm sorry, but that is impossible at this time." An Internal Security clerk contacts the PCs by vidcom and asks them to begin preparing their reports. In the process he lets slip that Internal Security has no record of authorization for their mission. (Remember the courier's "Special Field Dispatch"?) Grin a lot at the players.

2.4.7 Debriefing

Three hours after arriving in detention, five Vulture Squadron guards appear at the door of

"Thank you for your cooperation. This concludes the debriefing."





A secret exit or an end to your washday worries?

the PCs' detention quarters to conduct the PCs to Briefing Room AA. Wounded PCs are conveyed in wheelchairs. The Vultures make sly cracks about needing to lash the disabled to posts for execution. Vultures' humor is similar to that you recall from high school bullies in gym class. Not refined, but spirited and imaginative.

In no time the PCs find themselves blinded by the familiar lights of Briefing Room AA. Doss-V smiles blandly. Byre-B glares sternly. Zeno-I is digging absently in his ear with a stylus and gazing off into space.

Byre-B goes into a brief tirade. "Can't you do anything right?! You were sent to root out a nest of mutants. So, where are they? You were supposed to field test some very important R&D equipment. So where are the reports? And, I might add, in the process of treasonously avoiding your responsibilities, you managed to reduce an entire residential block to rubble. Quite a day's work."

The PCs can salvage some dignity if they give a good account of their problems, and if they point out that they captured Oregon alive as they

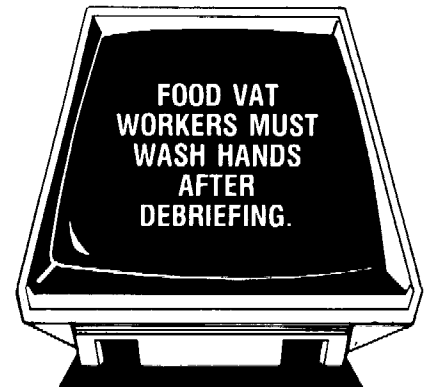
(think) they were directed, Byre-B will be somewhat mollified. Of course, a sizable body count of traitors and/or mutants is the only thing that really satisfies Byre-B.

Doss-V patiently explains that The Computer understands that this was a particularly dangerous mission. He expresses the hope that they were not affected by the strange mental powers of the Communist mutants. While they are trying to figure out how to deny that, without digging the hole deeper, Zeno-I asks, quite casually, if they were exposed to the "blackbody radiation."

Any response that indicates they know what Zeno-I is talking about (even he doesn't) will produce intense questioning by Byre-B, trying to establish that they are all really Communists, and the black object is part of a secret plot to destroy Alpha Complex.

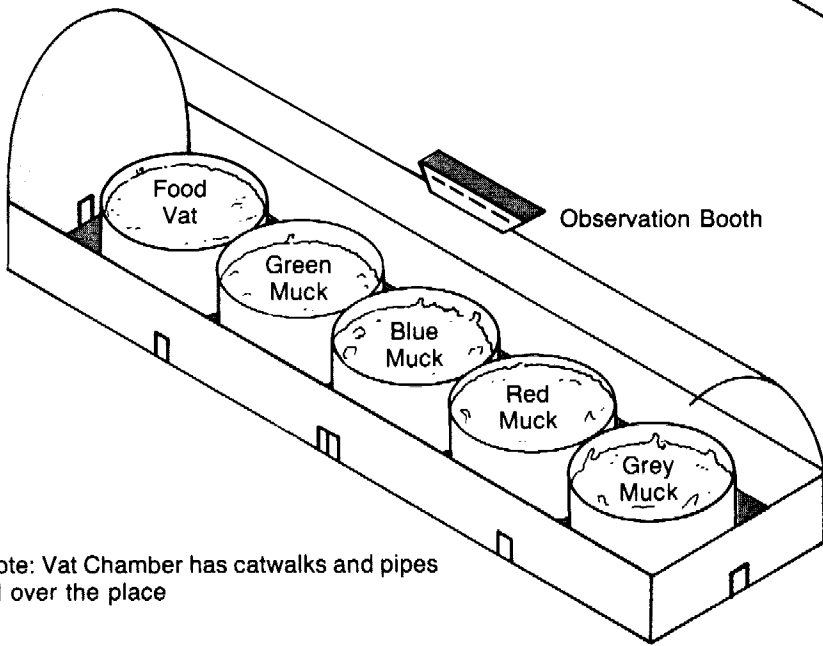
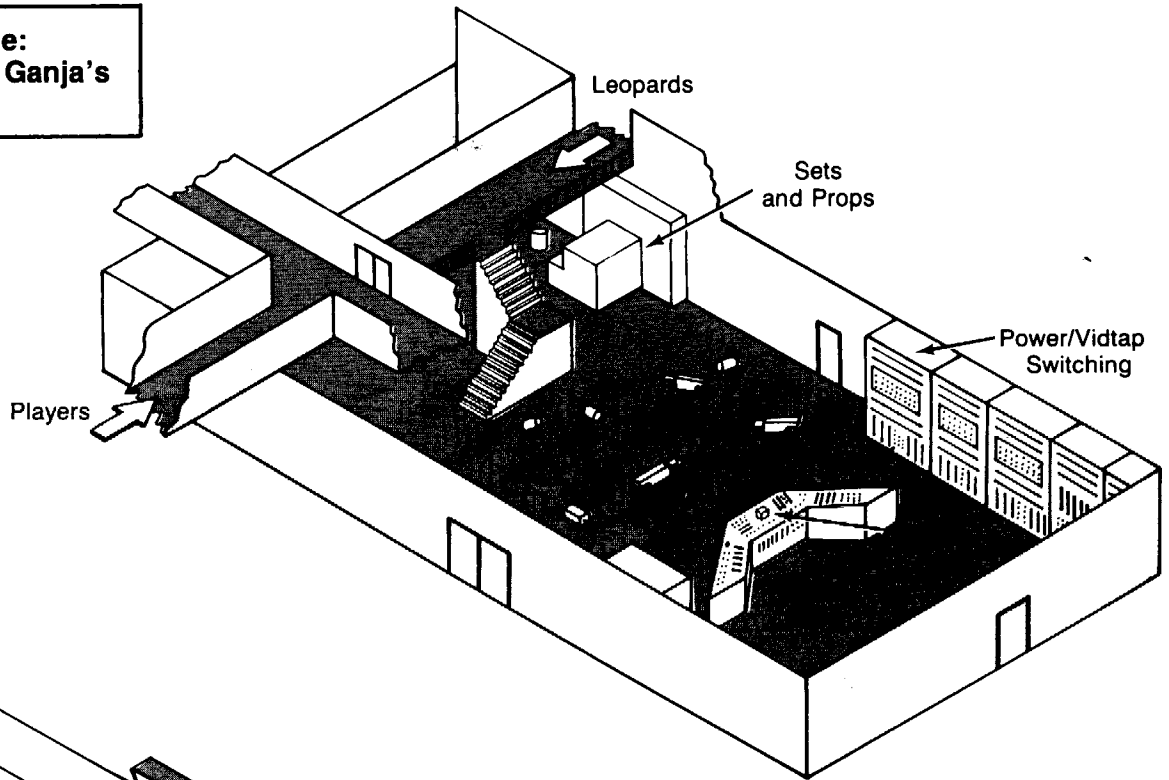
As always, assign points, berate the team for damage to equipment (Doss-V will be very stern if any of Victor-I's gadgets were destroyed), thank them for their cooperation.

Then have the guards lead them to the cone rifle firing range and ask if they'd like blindfolds or a last bowl of gruel.



1

**Mission One:
Rasterman Ganja's
TV Studio**



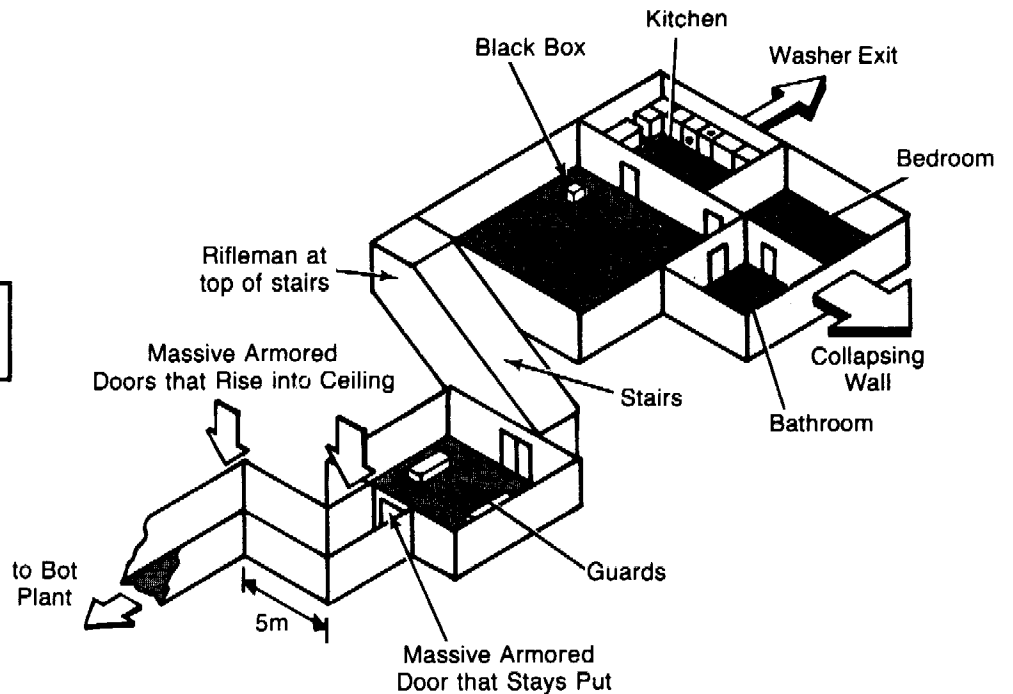
Note: Vat Chamber has catwalks and pipes all over the place

1

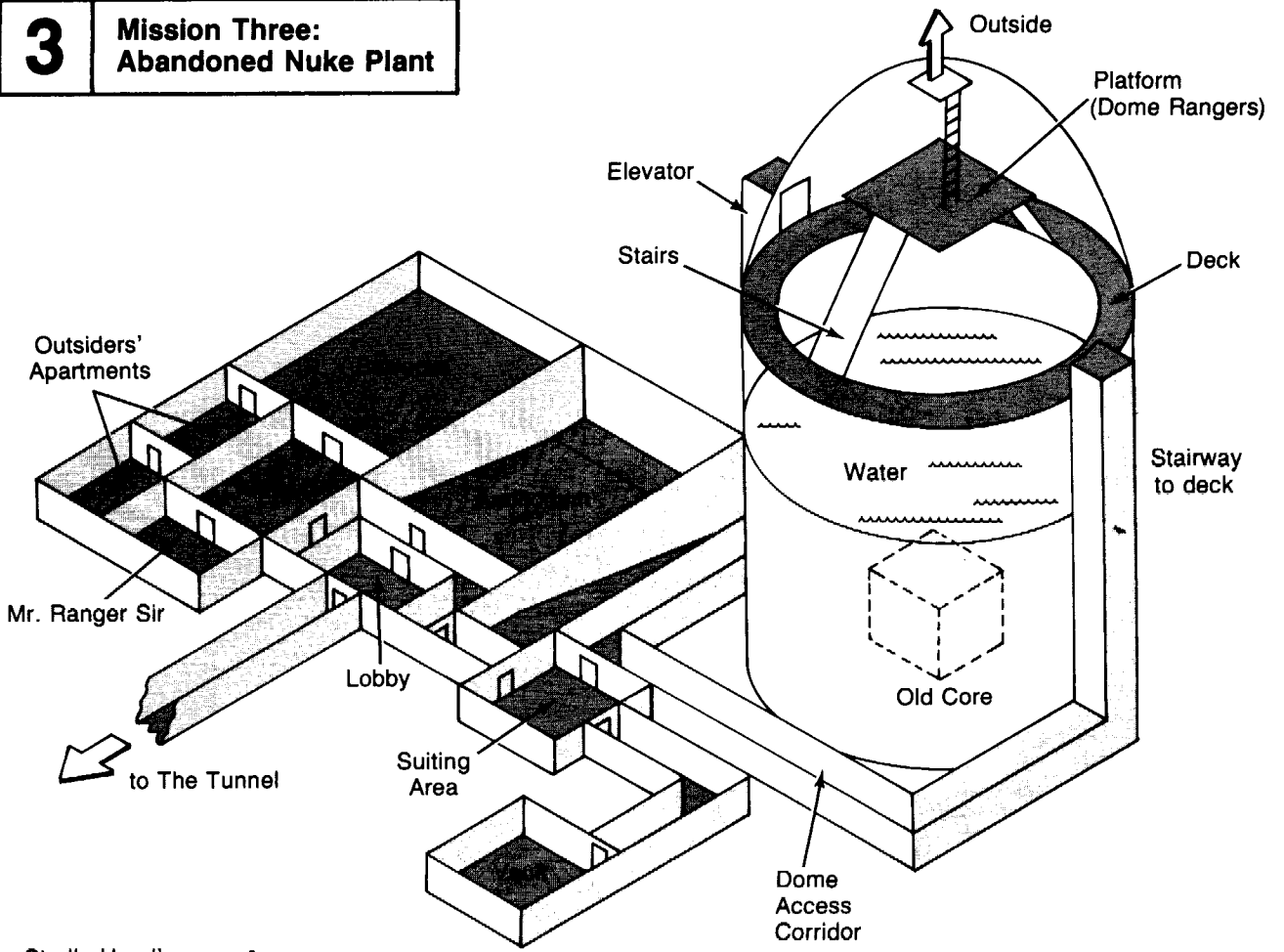
**Mission One:
Food Vat Chambers**

2

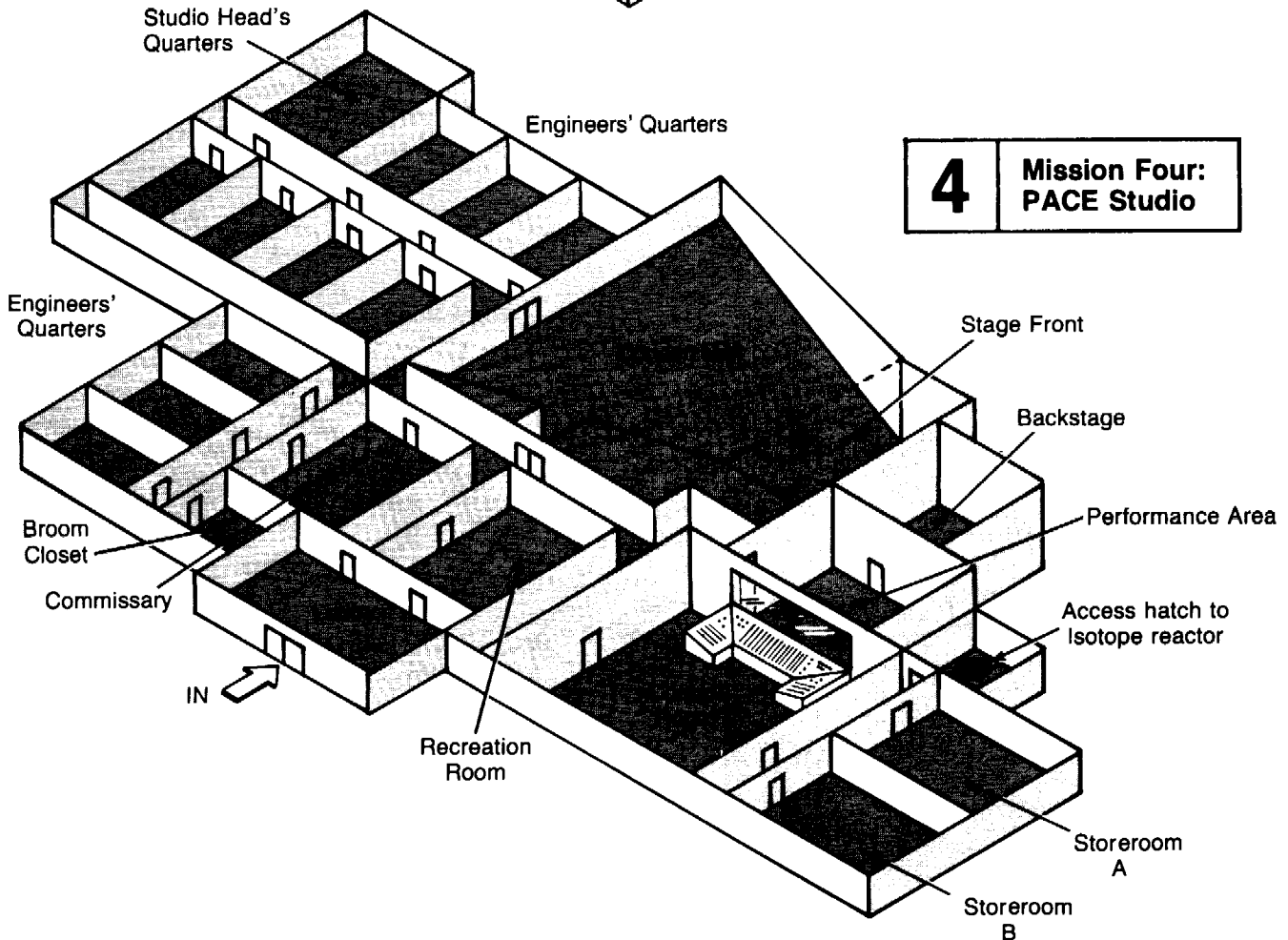
**Mission Two:
Safe House Apartment**



3 Mission Three:
Abandoned Nuke Plant



4 Mission Four:
PACE Studio



Texun-Y-AHU

BACKGROUND

If you had your way, HPD & Mind Control would be HPD and Mind Alteration. You enjoy experimenting with psychochemicals, subsonics, color psychology and more. You've swallowed combinations of chemicals that would turn ordinary people into kitchen appliances. No wonder you're secretly a Mystic.

But now you're a Troubleshooter, called up to replace a mysteriously deceased clone. No longer can you play with other's minds like modeling clay. Now you're supposed to hunt down people who explore the wonderful world of human software modifications.

But perhaps there's a way. Your superiors in the Mystics have asked you to be on the lookout for this... well, black thing. Some kind of box. Inside it is apparently the ultimate cosmic high. Rumor has it that the box can even get The Computer high. Imagine that: The Computer itself turned on to the Cosmic Whatever It Is. Stoned Hardware.

CURRENT SECRET SOCIETY MISSION

Use your Troubleshooter status to recover the black box for the Mystic All — but do so before Corpore Metal's agents can do so. Those tin-plated clowns, who think Cosmicness can be engraved on a circuit board, want to feed the box into their cold, uncool equations. Do not allow this.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT: Communications Officer
Responsibilities: Inspect and maintain individual and team communications equipment. Make necessary repairs. Monitor and supervise use of com units. Make regular reports of team activities to The Computer and assure regular contacts among team members. Report improper use of com units and failure to make regular individual reports. Document mission with com unit recordings.

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES		SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES		PC#1
Strength	10	Carrying Capacity		25
Endurance	14	Damage Bonus		—
Agility	13	Macho Bonus		-1
Manual		Melee Bonus		+5%
Dexterity	16	Aimed Weapon		
Moxie	11	Bonus		+12%
Chutzpah	14	Comprehension		
Mechanical		Bonus		+1%
Aptitude	11	Believability Bonus		+7%
Power Index	13	Repair Bonus		-3%

SECRET SOCIETY: Mystic

SECRET SOCIETY RANK: 4

MUTANT POWER(S): Luck

Bud-Y-ZER

BACKGROUND

You really wish people would let you alone. Your Chameleon mutant ability is a blessing: fading in to the landscape is just what you've always wanted to do.

You joined the Sierra Club because they have a dream like yours, a dream of Outside, a great big place where you can go off and climb a mountain, where you can stand next to a tree and nobody will tell you the tree is classified, where you can kill things and eat them with nobody asking you to pass the chymopapain please and can I have some more of the blue soup and hey you stupid clone you got stuff on my... sigh.

You hate being a Troubleshooter. Everybody looks at you and asks when you're going to be dead. And you hate Death Leopards, because they're all showoffs. And you hate mutants because they're weird, they have three arms and things.

You'd really like to kill all the Troubleshooters and Death Leopards and mutants and go outside and stand beside a tree and turn green, but you've got to do it in some way nobody will notice.

CURRENT SECRET SOCIETY MISSION

There's this guy named Obregon Weirdhat or something like that. He's from Outside, *really* Outside, and the Troubleshooters are after him, because he's from Outside and they think he's a Commie. He's got some kind of box thing that The Computer wants. If you help him get away and get the box thing for the Sierra Club, Wildbag (or whatever) will take you Outside with him. And if you can get back Inside with directions for getting Outside, you could become a Folk Hero like the legendary Smokey the Bear or Jane Fonda...

Of course, you aren't going to let these vat scum citizens seep out over your mountain and play with the trees. Hah! The Sierra Club can be trusted with such knowledge, but anyone else who discovers the route is going to be a sorry citizen.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT: Medical Officer
Responsibilities: Monitor physical condition of team members. Report health hazards to the team leader and The Computer. Operate & supervise team docbot. Monitor mental condition of team members. Report any evidence of poor mental health or emotional strain caused by stressful work conditions.

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES		SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES		PC#2
Strength	10	Carrying Capacity		25
Endurance	12	Damage Bonus		—
Agility	7	Macho Bonus		—
Manual		Melee Bonus		-4%
Dexterity	9	Aimed Weapon		
Moxie	17	Bonus		-2%
Chutzpah	2	Comprehension		
Mechanical		Bonus		+12%
Aptitude	16	Believability Bonus		-35%
Power Index	13	Repair Bonus		+10%

SECRET SOCIETY: Sierra Club

SECRET SOCIETY RANK: 3

MUTANT POWER(S): Chameleon

Welsh-Y-BTT

BACKGROUND

You've always been a bit of a dreamer. When your dreams started coming true, you realized at once that you were a psionic. It didn't bother you a bit: you knew all about projective time series statistics from your work with The Computer. You even registered your power. And you joined the Psion society, because you wanted to be the best psionic you could possibly be. The society taught you to communicate, and even to move objects, by pure mind power.

Then what happens? The lousy fuzzbrain Mystics "open up" one of your clones' minds, and can't get all the tinkertoys back in the box. So The Computer calls you up to the Troubleshooters. Big thanks for all your work!

Okay, you'll serve The Computer. (Termination is not part of your career plans.) But one day, The Computer won't be looking. And *then* — pow! Right in the I/O bus!

CURRENT SECRET SOCIETY MISSION

Your opening may have come. Recently you received a desperate telepathic communication from a fellow Psion. The stinking Mystics were running his mind through the wringer. Before he expired, he told you of a black box, which seems to be somehow toxic to The Computer. The Mystics are after it, and if they get it first, they'll use it to fry every clear human mind in Alpha Complex.

One of the team members is a sewer-brained Mystic — but you don't know which yet. Mystics are weird, though. It's only a matter of time till you spot him. And rumor says your IntSec officer is a Death Leopard. Better keep an eye on him.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT: Loyalty Officer
Responsibilities: Identify all possible threats to Alpha Complex and The Computer and bring them to the team's attention. Document and report all threats to Alpha Complex security. Supervise proper use of Computer equipment. Document and report all damage or unauthorized use of Computer equipment.

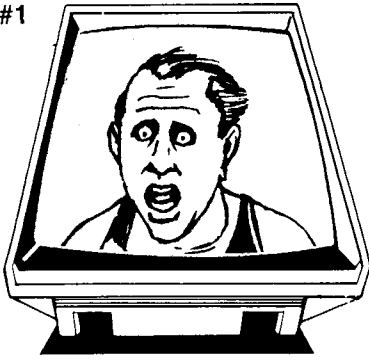
PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES		SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES		PC#3
Strength	10	Carrying Capacity		25
Endurance	17	Damage Bonus		—
Agility	13	Macho Bonus		-1
Manual		Melee Bonus		+5%
Dexterity	13	Aimed Weapon		
Moxie	8	Bonus		+5%
Chutzpah	9	Comprehension		
Mechanical		Bonus		-3%
Aptitude	9	Believability Bonus		-3%
Power Index	14	Repair Bonus		-2%

SECRET SOCIETY: Psion

SECRET SOCIETY RANK: 3

MUTANT POWER(S): Precognition (declared)
Minor Telekinesis
Telepathic Sense

PC#1



Texun-Y-AHU-3

SECURITY CLEARANCE: YELLOW
SERVICE GROUP: HPD & MC

PLAYER NAME: _____

WEAPONS

Laser pistol
To Hit: 42%
Type: L
Range: 50m
Reload: 6r
Malfmt: 00

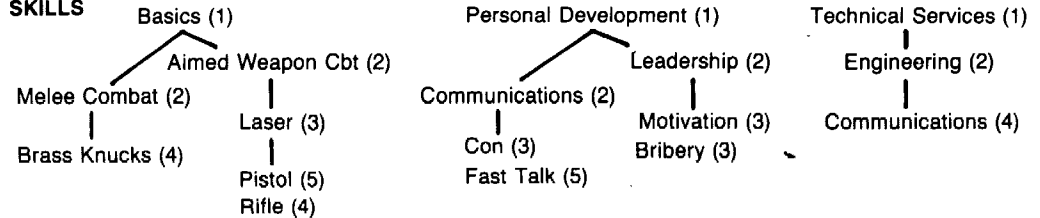
DAMAGE STATUS

CREDITS
120

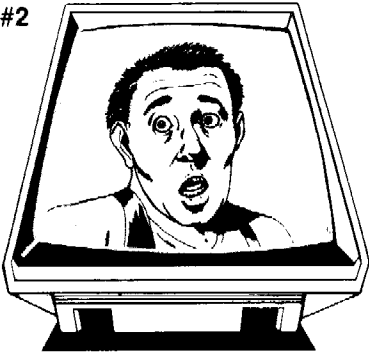
PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- 1 ROY reflec armor
- 1 laser pistol
- 2 ROY-striped laser barrels
- 1 jumpsuit
- 1 utility belt and pouches
- 1 Com Unit II
- 1 knife
- 1 notebook and stylus
- 1 flashlight
- 3 aerosol THC grenades (effect like a stun gun in the gas radius of effect; illegal)

SKILLS



PC#2



Bud-Y-ZER-2

SECURITY CLEARANCE: YELLOW
SERVICE GROUP: PLC

PLAYER NAME: _____

WEAPONS

Laser pistol
To Hit: 23%
Type: L
Range: 50m
Reload: 6r
Malfmt: 00

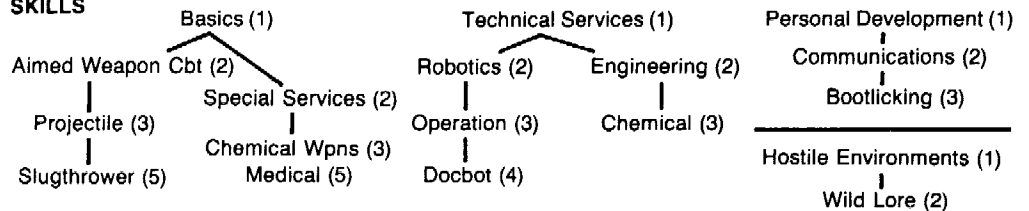
DAMAGE STATUS

CREDITS
120

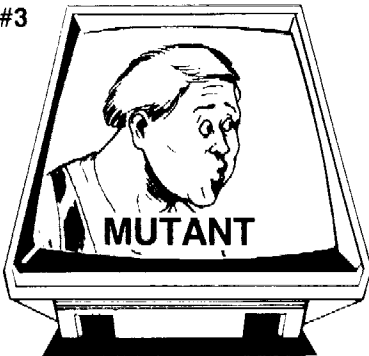
PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- 1 ROY reflec armor
- 1 laser pistol
- 2 ROY-striped laser barrels
- 1 jumpsuit
- 1 utility belt and pouches
- 1 Com Unit II
- 1 knife
- 1 notebook and stylus
- 1 flashlight
- 1 hollow-handled knife (appears to be standard issue knife; used for transmitting secret society messages; not strictly illegal, but occasions embarrassing questions)

SKILLS



PC#3



Welsh-Y-BTT-3

SECURITY CLEARANCE: YELLOW
SERVICE GROUP: CPU

PLAYER NAME: _____

WEAPONS

Laser pistol
To Hit: 40%
Type: L
Range: 50m
Reload: 6r
Malfmt: 00

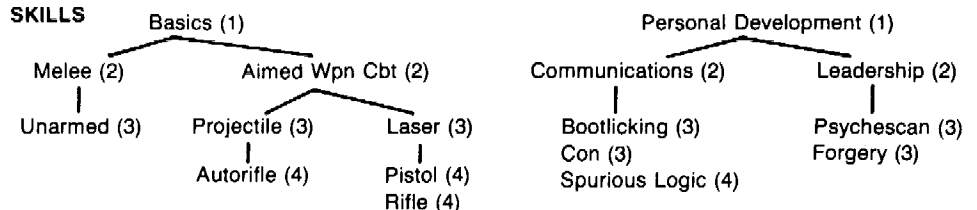
DAMAGE STATUS

CREDITS
120

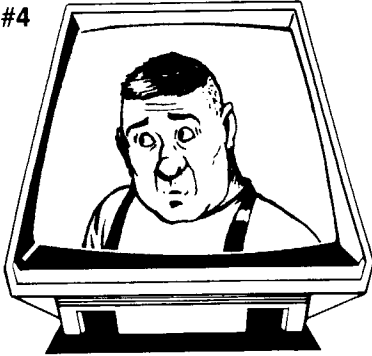
PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- 1 ROY reflec armor
- 1 laser pistol
- 2 ROY-striped laser barrels
- 1 jumpsuit
- 1 utility belt and pouches
- 1 Com Unit II
- 1 knife
- 1 notebook and stylus
- 1 flashlight
- 3 truth serum pills (experimental; may be dissolved in drinks; unreliable; illegal)

SKILLS



PC#4



Miles-Y-DER-2

SECURITY CLEARANCE: YELLOW
SERVICE GROUP: Technical Services

PLAYER NAME: _____

WEAPONS

Laser pistol
To Hit: 10%
Type: L
Range: 50m
Reload: 6r
Malfmt: 00

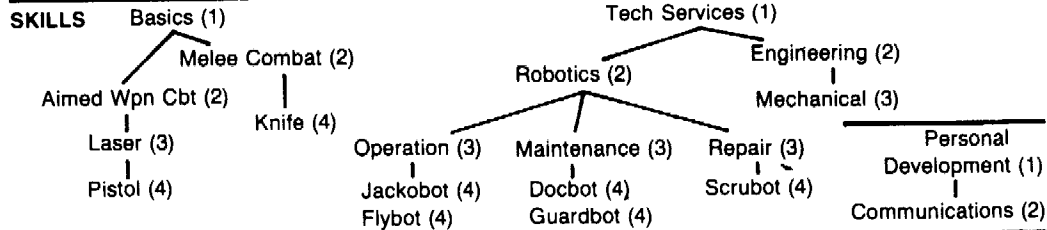
DAMAGE STATUS

CREDITS
120

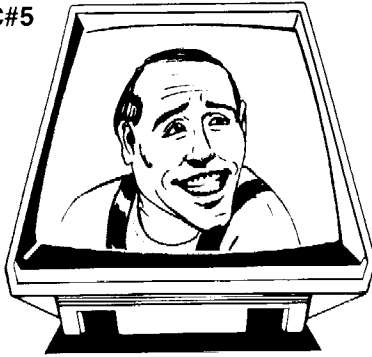
PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- 1 ROY reflex armor
- 1 laser pistol
- 2 ROY-striped laser barrels
- 1 jumpsuit
- 1 utility belt and pouches
- 1 Com Unit II
- 1 knife
- 1 notebook and stylus
- 1 contraband manual "25 Ways to Beat the Bot" (disguised as a standard notebook; procedures for disrupting normal bot programming without revealing tampering; profoundly illegal)

SKILLS



PC#5



Don-Y-BRK-3

SECURITY CLEARANCE: YELLOW
SERVICE GROUP: Power Services

PLAYER NAME: _____

WEAPONS

Laser pistol
To Hit: 35%
Type: L
Range: 50m
Reload: 6r
Malfmt: 00

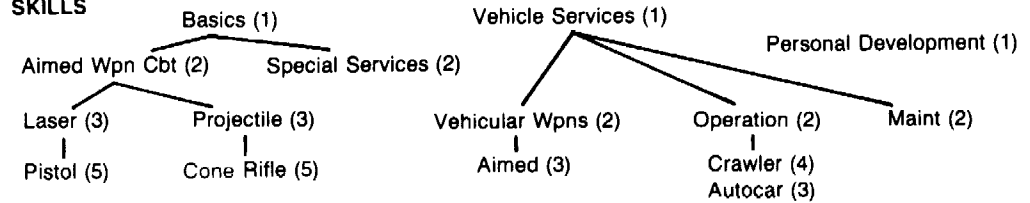
DAMAGE STATUS

CREDITS
120

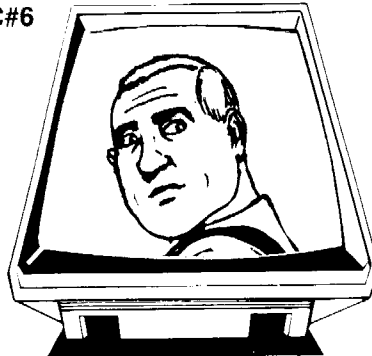
PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- 1 ROY reflex armor
- 1 laser pistol
- 2 ROY-striped laser barrels
- 1 jumpsuit
- 1 utility belt and pouches
- 1 Com Unit II
- 1 knife
- 1 notebook and stylus
- 1 special vehicle toolkit (for making unauthorized alterations and operations on vehicles, like hot-wiring starters, disabling speed governors, location-reporting devices, safety equipment, etc.; illegal)

SKILLS



PC#6



Epic-Y-CLE-3

SECURITY CLEARANCE: YELLOW
SERVICE GROUP: Internal Security

PLAYER NAME: _____

WEAPONS

Laser pistol
To Hit: 37%
Type: L
Range: 50m
Reload: 6r
Malfmt: 00

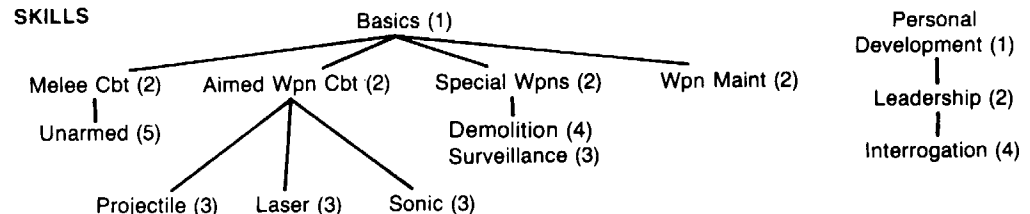
DAMAGE STATUS

CREDITS
120

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- 1 ROY reflex armor
- 1 laser pistol
- 2 ROY-striped laser barrels
- 1 jumpsuit
- 1 utility belt and pouches
- 1 Com Unit II
- 1 knife
- 1 notebook and stylus
- 1 Multicorder sabotage device (erases Multicorder recordings when activated within one meter of a recording cartridge; disguised as a normal recorder cartridge; illegal)

SKILLS



Miles-Y-DER
BACKGROUND

"Syntholube-fingers." That's what they've been calling you since you got out of the clonevat. And dropped the electric hand drier into the vat, terminating your #1 clone on the spot. And it isn't fair. You can fix anything, better than new and in record time. So you let a few chips get loose inside a Vulture. So it identified BLF Sector as a column of Commie tankbots. It performed the attack maneuvers perfectly, didn't it?

That was no reason to transfer you to the Troubleshooters.

They only did it because Troubleshooters all carry lasers, and you can fix lasers like a wizard, even if you can't hit the broad side of a residential block with one.

You know why you're a Romantic. You long for the days when Americans could fix anything on the road, and punch out a Commie before he could reach for his rattly cheap Commie gun. (Once, at a Romantic meeting, they showed a forbidden tape of FIGHTING SEABEES. You stood up and applauded when John Wayne reprogrammed the dozerbot.)

CURRENT SECRET SOCIETY MISSION

"Black box. More tapes. In Stone —" That was all of the message you could read before the snooperbot came by. You know what black boxes are: bot brains. You know what tapes are: Old Reckoning stories about scientists like John Wayne and Boris Karloff and Mr. Peabody. But what's "stone"? Once you heard a Sierra Clubber use the word. . .

Maybe a bot brain knows where a cache of tapes is located, and you have to get it away from the Sierra Club. Ordinarily you get along okay with the Clubbers. . . but this is different. This is war.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT: Robotics Officer
Responsibilities: Supervise operation and insure proper respect and care for all robots employed or encountered by team members. Report all defective, non-standard, or unauthorized robot behavior. Maintain team robots. Report malfunctions or damage. Repair damage to robots and return to service where possible. Salvage and recover damaged robots where repair is impractical.

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES		SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES	PC#4
Strength	17	Carrying Capacity	50
Endurance	14	Damage Bonus	+1
Agility	18	Macho Bonus	-1
Manual		Melee Bonus	+17%
Dexterity	2	Aimed Weapon Bonus	-25%
Moxie	9	Comprehension Bonus	-2%
Chutzpah	15	Believability Bonus	+10%
Mechanical		Repair Bonus	+12%
Aptitude	17		
Power Index	8		

SECRET SOCIETY: Romantics

SECRET SOCIETY RANK: 3

MUTANT POWER(S): Precognition

Don-Y-BRK
BACKGROUND

Crud. The world was just great in Power Services. You could sit behind the controls of a colossal machine and imagine you were the machine, sleek and powerful and immortal with routine maintenance. You always liked machines: they would, it seemed, open up and talk to you. People are okay, too, though they wear out too quick. You joined Corpore Metal, because they seemed to be working toward the best of both worlds.

And you were on your way up in Power Services. They let you drive transports, crawlers, even flybots. Heck, you were Power, as you discovered one day when you recharged a power capacitor from your naked fingertips. You could have been somebody. You could have been a cyborg.

But now you're a Troubleshooter. Crud. Maybe it's not such a bad life. You get to drive stuff occasionally. You can carry a laser, which is fun. (If you ever achieve your dream of being cyborged, you're going to have a laser installed in your index finger.)

CURRENT SECRET SOCIETY MISSION

There's a Romantic in your team, and you've got to kill him. (Crud.) Rumor says the Romantics are linked up with PURGE psychos who've got some kind of gadget that can burn out high-level circuitry like nobody's business. The PURGERS are going to use it on a major Computer subsystem, and then the Romantics will move in and teach everybody some sick thing like rug-weaving or miniature golf.

The Romantic's got to be either that sneaky wimp Bud-Y-ZER, or maybe Texun-Y-AHU, the space case. Epic-Y is laser-happy: maybe you can get him to do the actual shooting. And grab the gadget — probably a modified bot brain — for yourself and Corpore Metal.

TEAM ASSIGNMENT: Vehicle Officer
Responsibilities: Supervise operation of all vehicles assigned to team. Maintain and repair vehicles when necessary. Report all damage or malfunctions. Supervise use of vehicle weapons. Instruct team members on safe and proper use of vehicle weapons.

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES		SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES	PC#5
Strength	17	Carrying Capacity	50
Endurance	18	Damage Bonus	+1
Agility	11	Macho Bonus	-1
Manual		Melee Bonus	+1%
Dexterity	6	Aimed Weapon Bonus	-5%
Moxie	9	Comprehension Bonus	-2%
Chutzpah	10	Believability Bonus	-10%
Mechanical		Repair Bonus	-10%
Aptitude	6		
Power Index	12		

SECRET SOCIETY: Corpore Metal

SECRET SOCIETY RANK: 3

MUTANT POWER(S): Mechanical Intuition
Electroshock

Epic-Y-CLE
BACKGROUND

The only thing in the world better than being a Death Leopard is being a Leopard who works as a Troubleshooter. You get to carry a laser, and use it any time you feel like it. Sometimes they send you out to nab the infamous Leopard funsmith known only as "Captain Electric." If The Computer knew that you yourself are the daring Captain, it'd crash a disk.

You've heard occasional murmurs from fellow Death Leopards that you are not as full-tilt-bozo as you used to be — that perhaps you are getting old and cautious. But these murmurs don't bother you. You're saving yourself for The Big One — the caper that will rocket you to super-star-class immortality. In the meantime, there's plenty of subtler fun to be had in an unsuspecting group of fancy-pants Troubleshooters.

You're just a little worried about being teamed with Texun-Y-AHU-3. Does he know it was you who pushed his clone predecessor into the particle accelerator? Oh, well. He glowed so nicely.

CURRENT SECRET SOCIETY MISSION

Heads up, Captain Electric: your assistance is enlisted by a star-class compatriot. Screaming Sarah Slick, the Duchess of Rock and Roll, has proposed Fun on a Vast Scale sometime within the next 72 hours, and You Are Invited. Alackaday, a passel of those psnivering Psions threaten to crash the party. They might even dress up as light-hearted Leopards, the psychic pschnooks. Make sure that they do not do this anti-thing, beginning with your own companions in law'n' order, one of whom you're sure is a Psion.

You aren't sure which one of your team has the glowplug brain, but Psions can't help showing off (their one small virtue). It'll only be a matter of time. And then — Pyromaniac!

TEAM ASSIGNMENT: Weapons Officer
Responsibilities: Supervise use of weapons assigned to team. Instruct team members in proper use of weapons. Inspect, service, and maintain team weapons when necessary. Report damage, malfunctions, and improper use of weapons.

PRIMARY ATTRIBUTES		SECONDARY ATTRIBUTES	PC#6
Strength	17	Carrying Capacity	50
Endurance	10	Damage Bonus	+1
Agility	16	Macho Bonus	—
Manual		Melee Bonus	+12%
Dexterity	14	Aimed Weapon Bonus	+7%
Moxie	11	Comprehension Bonus	+1%
Chutzpah	13	Believability Bonus	+5%
Mechanical		Repair Bonus	+4%
Aptitude	13		
Power Index	6		

SECRET SOCIETY: Death Leopard

SECRET SOCIETY RANK: 4

MUTANT POWER(S): Combat Mind



- 12 Trichroma (ROY)
- 2 suits plate armor
- 1 suit trichroma reflex armor
- 2 slugthrowers, each with:
- 3 clips solid-slug ammo
- 6 HE grenades
- 1 Hottorch
- 1 Multirecorder-1 with RF tracer cartridge
- 1 Multirecorder-1 with recorder program

EQUIPMENT LIST: MISSION ONE

:YELLOW COMPUTER PRINTOUT
:Reference = YCBBB. 4.5.2

:COMPUTER REDUCTION ANALYSIS/
MISSION PROFILE
:ANX.294.OUT (PRIORITY)

:CRA/MP INDICATES PRIMARY TARGET IS PACE STUDIO. PRECISE COORDINATES NOT AVAILABLE. COINCIDENT DATA IMPLIES LOCATION AT JUNCTION OF FRANKIE VALLEY [??sp] AND FOUR SEASONS [REF OR.DOC. RL337 "MANHATTAN RESTAURANT GUIDE"].

:CRA/MP INDICATES PRIMARY TARGET IS AUTOCAR PRODUCTION FACILITY STORING PRODUCTION DATA ON MICRODISK MACHINE/ACOUSTIC READABLE.

:PATTERNMATCH DATA REPORTS LOCALS WERE MAKING THUNDERBIRDS [light strike a/cft] AND HAD MULTIPLY-ITERATED FUN UNTIL THEIR DADDY [Karl Marx, father of Communism] TOOK THEIR T-BIRD AWAY. ALSO POSSIBLE PRODUCTION OF LITTLE RED CORVETTES [small communist strike w/cft]. APPARENTLY EVACUATED DENVER BECAUSE THEY LOOKED JUST LIKE A COMMIE AND MIGHT JUST HAVE BEEN MEMBERS' BABIES.

:OPERATIONAL NOTES — CRA/MP/ON ANX.294

- RECOVER ACOUSTIC READABLE DATA DISKS AND ANCILLARY PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT
- RECOVER THUNDERBIRD PROTOTYPE
- RECOVER CORVETTE, RED, LITTLE
- DETERMINE PRESENCE OF COMMUNIST BABIES OUTSIDE DENVER AND TERMINATE

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference = YCBBB. 1.2.1

***** MISSION ALERT! *****

:ATTENTION TROUBLESHOOTER! ONCE AGAIN THE COMPUTER HAS SELECTED YOU FOR A MISSION OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE. REWARD THE COMPUTER'S FAITH IN YOU AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED IN TURN.

:YOU WILL BE PART OF A TROUBLESHOOTER TEAM ASSIGNED TO TRACE AND DESTROY A GROUP OF TRAITOROUS SABOTEURS. YOUR IMPORTANT DUTIES WILL INCLUDE THE RECOVERY OF MISAPPROPRIATED COMPUTER PROPERTY AND THE SUMMARY EXECUTION OF THE TRAITORS RESPONSIBLE.

:PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE TROUBLESHOOTER HEAD-QUARTERS IN XTZ SECTOR FOR YOUR ROUTINE MISSION BRIEFING, WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN BRIEFING ROOM [INPUT NUMBER OF BRIEFING ROOM HERE]. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference = YCBBB. 2.2

***** MISSION ALERT! *****

:GREETINGS TROUBLESHOOTER! THE COMPUTER WISHES TO CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR RECENT PERFORMANCE. BECAUSE OF YOUR EXCELLENT SERVICE, YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN FOR A NEW MISSION OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO ALPHA COMPLEX. SERVE THE COMPUTER WELL AND YOU SHALL BE WELL SERVED.

:YOUR MISSION WILL INCLUDE THE CAPTURE AND/OR TERMINATION OF DANGEROUS TRAITORS POSSESSED OF UNUSUAL MUTANT ABILITIES. RECOGNIZING THE THREAT POSED BY THESE MUTANTS, THE COMPUTER HAS SPARED NO EFFORT TO PROVIDE YOU WITH NEW EQUIPMENT THAT SHOULD PROVE IRRESISTIBLE.

:YOUR USE OF THIS EQUIPMENT IS SUBJECT TO THE USUAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF SECURITY AND YOUR OWN PROTECTION. PLEASE REPORT NOW TO BRIEFING ROOM BRIEFING ROOM BRIEFING ROOM. DELAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

- 1 Multicorder-I with recorder program
- 2 loose napalm rounds
- 2 loose smoke rounds
- 1 clip HE rounds
- 1 clip slug rounds
- 1 Slugthrower, with:
- 1 Stun gun, no reload
- 1 Blaster, 2 reloads
- concealed armor
- 6 Suits YELLOW civilian clothing with
- 6 HE grenades
- 6 Smoke grenades
- 12 Trichroma laser pistol barrels

EQUIPMENT LIST: MISSION TWO

EQUIPMENT LIST: MISSION FOUR

- 6 Laser pistol barrels, trichroma
- 1 Tangler, with 2 reloads
- 1 Ice gun
- 1 Cone rifle, with following rounds:
 - 8 solid slug
 - 3 HE
 - 2 Smoke
 - 2 Napalm
- 2 Slugthrowers, automatic, each with:
 - 3 clips slugs
 - 5 loose HE rounds
 - 2 loose napalm rounds
 - 1 clip tracers
- 1 Flamethrower, 6 shots remaining
- 2 Knives
- 2 Truncheons
- 1 Case of 20 HE grenades
- 3 Environ suits
- 1 Suit cold-weather gear
- 2 Decon suits
- 1 Geiger counter
- 2 Infraspets
- 1 Pair binoculars
- 30 2-day ration cylinders
- 3 30m coils rope
- 1 Inflatable raft
- 1 Compass
- 1 Map, ORANGE clearance
- 1 All-terrain crawler, equipped with:
 - Com III
 - Smoke generator
 - Laser Cannon I
- 1 All-terrain trailer, 3 ton capacity
- 1 Docbot, Model V, skills:
 - Medical, 50%
 - Identifying Wild Foods, 35%
 - Wild Animal Lore, 20%
- 1 Multicorder-I with recorder program

- 1 Multicorder-I with recorder program
- Medical 60%
- 1 Docbot Model VII, skills are:
 - Unarmed combat, 30%
 - Slugthrower, 25%
 - Laser rifle, 25%
 - Laser pistol, 35%
 - Tracking, 40%
 - Autocar operation, 50%
- 1 Jackobot Model 340, skills are:
 - Towel
 - 1 Portable electric winch
 - 1 Chainsaw
 - 1 Hottorch
 - 2 Collapsible shovels
 - 2 Crowbars
 - 2 Infraspets
 - 3 Electric lanterns
 - 1-10 minute time fuze
 - 6 Satchel-type demolition charges, with:
 - 6 30m coils rope
 - 6 1-liter water bottles
 - 6 2-day ration cylinders
 - 6 Pairs hiking boots
 - 6 Backpacks
 - 2 Suits Kevlar armor
 - 2 Environ suits
 - 4 loose napalm rounds
 - 2 clips HE
 - 4 clips slugs
 - 2 Slugthrowers, automatic, each with:
 - 1 Energy pistol with 3 reloads each
 - 9 Laser pistol barrels, trichroma

EQUIPMENT LIST: MISSION THREE

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference = YCBBB. 4.3.1

***** MISSION ALERT! *****

:ATTENTION TROUBLESHOOTER!
:YOUR MOST RECENT MISSION PERFORMANCE HAS RECOMMENDED YOU TO THE COMPUTER AS AN EXCELLENT CANDIDATE FOR If 593 then goto TERMINATION if 1066 then goto LONG TERM FROZEN STORAGE onerr goto A MISSION OUTSIDE ALPHA COMPLEX return

:PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO BRIEFING ROOM getfile boomroom//file not found//WHAT DO YOU MEAN FILE NOT FOUND THEFT OF COMPUTER FILES IS TREASON PUNISHABLE BY exe. monitor. com

:do you mean using an ungrounded modem? if the computer traces your line we'll be bot lubeoh oh they just coned my door I
ERRORERRORERRORERRORERROR

:HANK OU OR OUR OOPERATION ROUBLE HOOTER

:SPECIAL FIELD DISPATCH
:Reference = YCBBB. 2.3.4

*** SPECIAL FIELD DISPATCH! ***

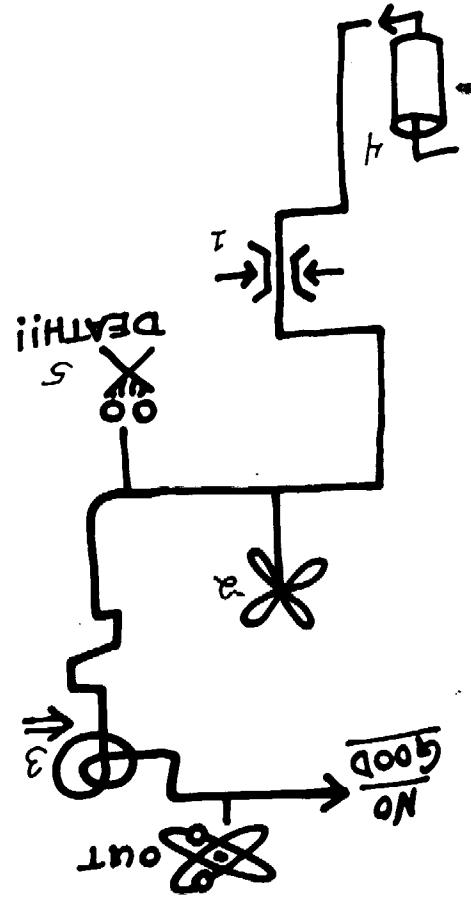
:TO TROUBLESHOOTER TEAM [DELETED FOR REASONS OF SECURITY]
:LATE INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM [DELETED] — PROCEED TO CYA SECTOR BOT FACILITY 25 — THERE COMPLETE MISSION TO CAPTURE [DELETED DELETED] AND RECOVER [DELETED DELETED DELETED DELETED DELETED].

:[DELETED DELETED] IS WANTED FOR INTERROGATION. ANY [DELETED DELETED] THAT INTERFERES WITH INTERROGATION IS [DELETED].

:GOOD [DELETED]. THE COMPUTER IS [DELETED] ON YOU. SERVE THE COMPUTER WELL AND YOU WILL BE [DELETED].

:END MESSAGE

Map Confiscated from Commie Warbler
:Reference = YCBBB.3.2.5





"Who moved the targets?"

3. MISSION THREE: NO ONE HERE GETS OUT ALIVE

3.1 Mission Summary

Saved from execution at the last instant, the PCs are ordered back to Briefing Room AA. Though never explicitly so stated, the briefing personnel hint that the PCs are being given a chance to redeem themselves by going on a suicide mission. The PCs will be properly grateful.

The Computer has discovered the existence of the secret exit from Alpha Complex: Oregon Warbler, captured alive in Mission Two, traded the information for his life. The Computer sends the Troubleshooters on a mission to seal off the exit.

Warbler is sent along as a "guide"; naturally, he intends to make sure that he is the only person to reach the exit alive. He will then escape to the Outside.

The PCs also receive a rough copy of a map of Warbler's secret route. Certain dangers are indicated with cryptic marks that Warbler will explain just a few moments too late.

This mission is a gauntlet run past an assortment of hospitable deathtraps. It is also a parody of a certain type of standard role-playing adventure, the plod through endless booby-trapped corridors known as the "dungeon crawl." A few of the encounters are as explicit on this point as possible, short of invoking a Summon Libel Lawyer spell.

And since this is **PARANOIA**, not Some Other Game™, the mission is finally a wild goosebot chase, as the kill-crazy Internal Security officer Byre-B-WER-6 conducts his own airborne

search-and-destroy mission on the exit, and succeeds in blowing it wide open to daylight. Then the Troubleshooters get to go home and try to explain what happened, receiving a well-earned rest. Until Mission Four.

3.2 Pre-Mission Briefing

3.2.1 You Remember Last Time. . .

The Troubleshooters, condemned for treasonable destruction of Computer property, are waiting to be used as cone rifle targets. Wearing disposable over-tunics printed with bullseyes, they are lined up against a pockmarked wall, confronted by a BLUE Weapons Training officer and a group of new and inexperienced RED Troubleshooter Trainees. (You may, if you wish, refer to them as green RED Troubleshooters.) None of the trainees has ever so much as seen a cone rifle before. Most of them never will again, either. The officer makes a brief address to the trainees. Read aloud:

"This is a signal honor! The Computer has chosen you insignificant RED clearance stooges to execute YELLOW clearance traitors! A great honor! And to use BLUE clearance weapons in the execution? An unheard-of honor! Congratulations. (The officer softens his voice to a conspiratorial whisper.) Better than a field promotion! Believe me, I know..."

The next few minutes is consumed with the officer's jiffy-crash course in cone rifle operation. Here's a chance for a little gamemaster low

comedy improvisation. RED levels peering interestedly down the barrel as they fondle the trigger. A shriek of anxiety as the officer tries to restrain a rookie trying to hammer a round in with the butt of his laser pistol. The squad standing at attention when a rifle goes off and a shower of metal and plaster rains down from the ceiling. A mishap requiring the activation of a clone or two. The officer gently guiding a barrel to aim in a roughly more appropriate direction. Go to town. The Three Stooges Meet Star Wars.

The PCs are not physically restrained. They are well advised, but inappropriately optimistic, in trying to escape. The officer will snap out his tangler (75%) and snag a few in the first couple rounds, then guardbots with stunners will round up the rest. The guardbots are then used to restrain the PCs by clasp their ankles in their gripping manipulators. The guardbots appear to examine the RED level firing squad speculatively, then they hunch down as close to the ground as possible. NOTE: PCs who offer advice, or assistance to the trainees or help round up fleeing traitors should receive a commendation point.

Finally the weapons are loaded and aimed. The first volley is fired. When the smoke clears, the targets are slightly deafened but unhurt. There are shell holes in walls, floor, and bots. Attempts to escape in the confusion will fail as before. Constructive suggestions will be rewarded.

Just as the second volley is about to be fired, four Vulture Squadron guards enter the firing range. With them is Zeno-I-VIL, who looks

distracted as usual. A guard hands a message envelope to the training officer, who reads it, turns to the PCs, and says "Okay, you're to go with these guys."

The Vultures take custody of the players, summoning bots to carry stunned or fainted characters. Zeno-I does not go with the group. Instead he goes to stand against the wall. (The Computer discovered his part in tampering with the orders last mission; Zeno-I was too confused to defend himself.)

The last things the Troubleshooters hear as they leave the firing range are cone rifles firing, and the instructor saying "Now you're getting the idea!"

3.2.2 Checking In

The checkpoint machine with the locking wrist-cuffs is back in place, with a new attachment: a box labeled EMERGENCY RELEASE SYSTEM. A thin, nervous ORANGE R&D technician and a burly INFRARED assistant stand by the machine. When the first character puts his hands into the machine, the burly assistant will open the box and take out a large axe, which he will hold on high while each Troubleshooter logs in.

Unless the PCs have done something really annoying lately, this time the machine works properly. (An "accidental near-miss" is also a possibility.)

3.2.3 Briefing Room

The Vultures accompany the PCs as they enter the briefing room. Doss-V and Byre-B are all that's left on the bench, which is guarded by two sleek and apparently weaponless humanoid bots. These bots are of a gleaming, polished alloy (equivalent to suit armor) marked only with a black "belt" painted around their narrow waists. (They are actually very effective hand-to-hand combat models). The formerly harsh downward light is now diffused by a cloud of vapor that hangs near the ceiling. This cloud is odorless (and harmless), but during the briefing it will roll ominously and change colors.

3.2.4 Choosing the Team Leader

Byre-B gives his usual lecture on the responsibilities of leadership, of course including the shooting of enormous numbers of traitors; he will hint that whoever has shown the most trigger-happiness in prior missions (or whoever's clone) would make the most satisfactory leader, but he will only grumble if the voting picks someone else (of course, you, friend game master, may override the voting if you wish).

3.2.5 Mission Assignment

Doss-V says:

"Friend Troubleshooters, I fear I must reprimand you, for you have come close to causing our friend The Computer the most grievous simulation of sorrow.

"Because of the cursory and incomplete nature of your reports at our last meeting, The Computer was led to believe that you had all committed treason. Imagine our friend's distress to discover that the true treason lay elsewhere — Communist infiltrators from the hostile world outside, laying devious schemes to fool The Computer into destroying its own loyal tools."

Dramatic pause. Protests that the reports were complete are met with stern reprimands and treason points.

"But The Computer is not fooled. The fundamental Communist contradictions inevitably cause their downfall.



"Emergency measures are solely for your protection, Troubleshooter."

"However, The Computer knows that you are loyal. Indeed, it has always suspected this of you. Now, the Computer wishes to reward you for this long-suspected loyalty, with a mission of vengeance against those who so nearly caused The Computer to prematurely activate your clones. . . and for those of you who are newly activated, revenge for your valiant and loyal antecedents."

Doss-V speaks here in the tones of a Wise Old Sorcerer in a hack swords-and-sorcery novel.

"You will travel to the secret stronghold of the terrorists and barbarians from the Outside World, and there destroy them, and seal the breach they have made in the security of Alpha Complex. Friend Troubleshooters, it is a measure of The Computer's trust in you that you have been sent on such a mission as this. We speak of places that have been twisted to the perverted wills of Communist terrorists, ruled by an ancient, almost unimaginable evil, where death may lurk at every turn.

"Fortunately, The Computer has been able to interpret a document captured on your last mission. Under The Computer's direction, you should have no difficulty penetrating the Communist defenses."

At Byre-B's signal, a YELLOW clearance citizen wearing CPU Service insignia enters, carrying a large metal briefcase of elaborate design. He looks around in a bewildered fashion, then works the complicated locks on the case and takes out a sheet of yellow paper, and a white one.

"Evidential Document 1132474-XTZ-Y," he says, holding up the yellow paper, "with Computer annotations, 1132474-XTZ-A-U, classified ULTRAVIOLET —"

He stops short, staring at the white paper, realizing too late what he's just said.

"Traitor!" Byre-B screams, and laser shots come from everywhere. The kung-fu combots scatter the dust. The documents are undamaged.

A Vulture guard picks up the white paper, carefully not looking at it, and hands it to Doss-V, who drops it, unexamined, in a slot in the desk. The PCs are instructed to pick up the yellow sheet. (Players who helped shoot the courier are commended.)

Byre-B says "I think this makes clear the extent of the treason among us. Someone doesn't want this mission completed. Someone wants you dead, my friends."

At Doss-V's prompting, a guard will hunt through the briefcase (carefully, trying not to look at it in case there are any more high-clearance documents inside) and come up with the authorization vouchers for the map, which the Troubleshooters must all sign. The team leader is given physical possession of the map. (See Map CFCBated from Commie Warbler: Reference YCBBB.3.2.5 on page 28).

Note that the actual layout of the map is unimportant. It shows a few ambushes (in cryptic symbols), and dead ends, which will save the PCs some trouble. Some is all the help they get. . .

Here's the key to the map:

1. Bridge Ambush
2. Exhaust Fan Trap
3. Spiral Corridor Ambush
4. Descent Shaft
5. Typical Helpful Comment

Note: The map does not tell the PCs how to find the secret exit. Warbler knows, but has been forbidden by The Computer to reveal the information. The jackobot (see below) knows, but has orders not to reveal the information. "Knowledge of this information for citizens of lower than ULTRAVIOLET clearance is treason, and punishable by summary termination." The jackobot will lead blindfolded PCs to the exit point along such a confusing path that the PCs will never be able to retrace their steps.

Pause. Doss-V has dozed off again. Byre-B says:

"Fortunately for you, you brought one of the foreign mutant Commie scum in alive.

In return for his worthless traitorous life, he's going to sneak you past the Commie defenses. Do you think that will make it easy enough?"

He gestures to the guards, then pauses, says in a dangerous tone:

"Before we bring in this turncoat traitor, remember, that's what Commies are like: they'll sell out anybody just to preserve their own miserable lives. You take any deals this scum offers you, you're going to end up dead. And then we'll get you. All right, bring him in."

A side door opens and Oregon Warbler enters. He is wearing a black INFRARED coverall, and several pairs of manacles from his wrists to his elbows. A vicious-looking dogbot has its teeth in his ankle. He still manages to look rather bold and dangerous.

Actually Warbler is nervous, but hopeful. In his old life as Warren-B, he had Spurious Logic skill, and he thinks he has managed to con The Computer into an escape. He is contemptuous of the Troubleshooters. His major worry is that, with the Troubleshooter team dogging him on the way to the exit, he may be caught in one of the booby-traps he and his fellow Outsiders have planted on the way.

Warbler is wrong. His Spurious Logic is faulty from disuse, and he has forgotten too much of what life is like in Alpha Complex; the greatest threat to his survival is the ordinarily screwed-up nature of life inside.

Doss-V awakes and slips right back into speech, as usual.

"This repentant citizen, Warren, alias 'Oregon Warbler,' will be your guide. He has been given a temporary INFRARED clearance, and will be subject to your orders at all times. Do remember, however, that he is one of The Computer's citizens, and his life is as important to The Computer as are your own."

Warbler is led back out.

3.2.6 Private Briefing

All characters except the team leader are instructed to report to Equipping and to wait for their leader. The leader receives the following private briefing from Byre-B.

"The following information is extremely secret! Revealing this to any other citizen is treasonous! The only circumstance under which you are authorized to reveal this is if you are killed in the line of duty, in which case you may then reveal this information to your successor."

Byre-B pauses, cocks his head, appears to carefully consider the inherent contradiction in the former statement, then shrugs and continues.

"The Computer suspects that this turncoat traitor is only pretending to cooperate, and that in fact he plans further treason. However, The Computer, in its infinite mercy, has promised to spare his life, and The Computer always keeps its promises."

Doss-V makes a sententious comment about The Computer's fairness and honesty. He then slumps over on his desk and begins to snore audibly.

Byre-B continues. "But, clever, clever Internal Security operatives have devised a plan to test this Warbler's loyalty. His kit will contain weapons placed there by loyal citizens who are pretending to be Communist

sympathizers. The weapons are actually realistic dummies constructed in BFD sector for training missions. Furthermore, and even cleverer, a grenade has been hidden in Warbler's pack, which you can detonate by pressing a special button on your Com II which will be installed in Outfitting. You must be very careful not to alert Warbler's suspicions about his equipment.

"Understand that we would never send you out with a suspected traitor if there were another safer alternative. However, Warbler has revealed that there are booby-traps on the way to the secret exit. You will need his knowledge to successfully avoid these perils.

"Remember, The Computer has promised this traitor that his life will be spared. The Computer has made a solemn promise. Warbler may not be summarily executed unless there is incontrovertible evidence of his treason. However, The Computer recognizes that occasionally mistakes may be made. Accidents will happen. You know. Weapon malfunctions. Long falls. Bad air. Or not enough of it. Do you follow me?"

Byre-B waits for some indication of agreement from the leader, then sits down.

True to form, the fake Communist sympathizers are really Free Enterprise sympathizers who have been bribed to slip real



weapons into Warbler's kit. Conspiracy upon conspiracy. Business as usual. The remote grenade has been replaced with a smoke grenade. When the leader cheerfully announces that he presses his special button, expecting Warbler to turn into a Roman candle, tell him about the thick clouds of smoke, shrug innocently, and look surprised. This will convince all your players that you had no idea that the grenade was fake. Warbler will take off his pack, dig around, pull out the smoke bomb, gaze contemptuously at the PCs, and casually toss it aside, muttering, "Damn rookies. . ."

Suddenly Doss-V snorts, wakes, blinking his eyes and gazing around in confusion. In a few seconds he realizes where he is, and he continues his briefing. Read aloud:

"Friend Troubleshooter, it is a measure of The Computer's trust in you that you have been sent on a mission such as this. We speak of places that have been twisted to the perverted wills of Communist terrorists, ruled by an ancient, almost unimaginable evil, where death may lurk at every turn. . ."

At about the time the leader realizes he has heard this speech before, Doss-V nods off and Byre-B takes over.

"This one ought to be easy. You're going into an area where no one has a right to be. Everything you see is a traitor. Everything

that happens down there is treasonous. I wish I was going with you. I wish I could take a squadron of Vultures and. . ." (Byre-B struggles visibly to control his excitement) "just remember, these scum almost got you killed. I know what I'd do to someone who did that to me."

He looks at Doss-V, snoring next to him. He carefully reaches into the pocket of Doss-V's tunic and slips out a paper. Doss-V does not wake up. Byre-B passes the paper down to the leader.

It is an authorization for one cone rifle round, type tac-nuke, clearance VIOLET. "For your eyes only," Byre-B says. Doss-V stirs, startling Byre-B, and says "Serve The Computer well, and you will be well done. . ." Then he goes back to sleep.

Byre-B hands the leader the mission equipment requisitions (Display Equipment List #3, page 28) and dismisses him to join his fellows for outfitting. In addition to the items on the list, Oregon Warbler carries a backpack. This is Oregon's personal pack, and he will discourage others from inspecting it, but he is INFRARED and easily coerced. The pack contains:

- 1 30m coil rope
- 1 2-day ration kit
- 1 1-liter water bottle
- 20 Pocket butane lighters¹
- 10 Hand lenses¹
- 1 Infraspex
- 1 Knife
- 1 Laser pistol with GREEN barrel²

- ¹Intended as trade goods for the Outside.
- ²Concealed in a special pouch, cannot be found without a thorough search of the bag.

3.2.7 Outfitting

The Quartermaster staff are unusually subdued as they kit out the players. They are nervous about being used in Internal Security's plot to "arm" Warbler — they think, rightly, that they will get blamed if something goes wrong with this dumb plan. After a minimum of obstructionism they bring out the Troubleshooters' equipment, including the two robots.

The two bots appear to be in good condition. If asked about their prior service records (always a good idea, though the team is stuck with these bots anyway), the jackobot will reply that it has served long, well, and truly in Thixotropic End-Use Element Transport Maintenance. Anyone who shows knowledge that the bot used to be in Sewer Repair receives a treason point for possessing classified information. The docbot proudly affirms that it has always been a docbot Model VII (two numbers higher than the usual Model V). If asked its specialty, it replies that it has the latest in Preventive Medicine programs. The team leader signs for the jackobot; the team medical officer signs out the docbot.

The team leader must present his requisition for the tac-nuke round. If he does not, he receives a treason point for disobeying orders. If he lets the other team members in on the fact that he has the round, he gets a treason point for leaking secrets (he may pass it on to a successor leader without penalty). Note that the basic equipment list does not include any cone rifles; the team members may requisition them, going through the standard hassles over high-clearance weapons. The tac-nuke comes in a pop-top rations cylinder exactly like the ones in all packs. Under no circumstances will the QM staff allow the canister to be opened at this time; opening it ahead of schedule is not treason, but don't tell the player that.

As the QM staff distributes the weapons, they will repeatedly reassure the PCs that all the weapons are perfectly reliable, and that it is just a coincidence that all of them have BFD Sector production serial numbers. (These weapons have only a normal chance of malfunction.)

If a player suspiciously asks you about the significance of particular production serial numbers, say that only a real weapons expert would notice such details. If the QM staff are asked, they will over-enthusiastically assure the PCs that it is "completely unimportant. Totally irrelevant. No problem. Honest."

GM NOTE: This is one of the prime principles of **PARANOIA**. First, specifically draw the players' attention to a minor detail. Repeatedly call their attention to that detail. Then assure them that that detail is completely unimportant. Then keep calling their attention to the detail from time to time. They will soon WONDER WHAT YOU ARE UP TO. That is called **PARANOIA**. See?

The Jackobot

This bot has been programmed with the location of the tunnel entrance, and the tunnel map — though not The Computer's annotations. It will not share any of this information with the players, though if asked it will lead them to any location it knows of.

Operating on general instructions to protect Computer property, it will intervene should any Citizen try to harm another Citizen: that includes Warbler, though not anyone encountered in the tunnel. Should Warbler (or anybody else) commit treason within the bot's view, it will cease to protect the traitor, and may be ordered by the team leader to attack.

Whenever something important is damaged or destroyed (something like a Troubleshooter), the jackobot will recommend that an immediate report be made to The Computer, and that a withdrawal to a secure position be made until a replacement can be delivered.

This is your gamemaster trick to recommend a brief delay in the action to permit clones to be activated and to join the party. This mission is likely to cause a number of loyal Troubleshooters to shuffle off this mortal coil, and in the interests of keeping all the players involved, get their clones on the spot as quickly as possible.

However, there is no guarantee that the leader or other Troubleshooters will listen to this whining jackobot, even when it gives such good advice. If that is the case, and the PCs push on without waiting for clone replacements to arrive, the robot will constantly reassure the party that reinforcements and replacements are surely on their way. It will choose the worst times to make this cheerful observation — usually when the party is obviously doomed.

The jackobot was programmed to work underwater (actually undersewage) and prefers a submerged environment. Whenever it sees water — which will be frequently in the tunnel — it will jump in, its treads throwing up rooster-trails. It can be ordered not to do this, but the order must be repeated for every puddle.

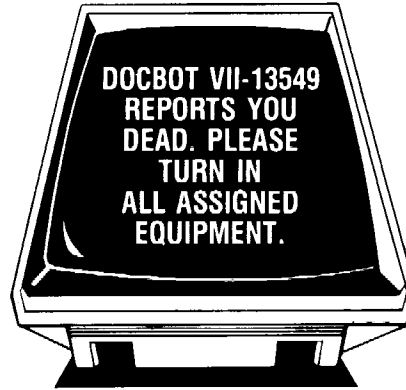
The Docbot

This bot carries an experimental Preventive Medicine program in addition to its normal docbot programming. Unfortunately, the program has a very literal interpretation of "preventive." The bot is constantly running to the aid of Troubleshooters whom it thinks may need medical attention — e.g., they are all wet and might catch cold, they are eating and might

choke, they are handling weapons that might go off accidentally. A Troubleshooter who becomes angry with the bot is a likely candidate for protective sedation. In a firefight, the bot will run around like a duralloy Gunga Din, trying to reach potential targets ahead of beams or bullets.

There is no way to stop this behavior, even for the authorized operator, since bots may not be ordered to contradict their programming (though Spurious Logic might work.)

The docbot normally ignores Warbler, though it can be ordered to heal him if he is actually wounded.



And away we go . . .

When the PCs have collected all the equipment authorized for the mission, wheeled and whined for other equipment, signed all the forms, and endured the bored resentment of the quartermaster staff, they are ready to proceed on the mission. The Troubleshooters should all look to their leader for orders.

The leader may be fairly hazy about where to go next. This is perfectly correct. This is **PARANOIA**. Only the jackobot knows where to go next. The information is classified, and he will under no circumstances reveal it. He will not volunteer his help, for fear of being too intrusive on the leader's authority. However, he will sit around close to the leader and hum and beep quietly (the bot equivalent of whistling to himself), waiting for the leader to notice him and ask the right questions. When prompted, the jackobot will direct the party to the sector Vehicular Boarding Area

GM NOTE: Take every opportunity to repeat this little gag with the jackobot sitting under the leader's elbow, humming and clicking to himself. This serves several purposes:

- You can use the jackobot to prompt the PCs with hints when they get bogged down or when they sit around too long in a boring fashion.
- You can build a dependency on the jackobot for information and guidance. Once this dependency is established, you can jerk the PCs around a bit. Occasionally give the jackobot lines like, "I don't know. I'm just a little robot," or "You're the leader. You ought to know where the hell we are," or "Well, if you'd asked me before, I had this swell idea, but now you've got things so screwed up. . . ." If the players start looking for opportunities to push the jackobot down deep shafts, you're doing your job properly.

3.3 The Mission

3.3.1 To the Tunnel Entrance

The Troubleshooters proceed to the Vehicular Boarding Area where a large autocar, without

driver, is waiting for them. Six guards hold Oregon Warbler at gunpoint by the autocar. Warbler wears his INFRARED coveralls and backpack, and a smug expression. A guard steps forward, asks for the mission leader, then produces a stack of forms that must be signed before Warbler may be transferred into the party's custody. When the forms are signed, the guards chuckle, poke Warbler a few times, then wander off in search of entertainment.

The jackobot must be asked to pilot the autocar to the location of the secret exit. The bot sits patiently humming and beeping until someone notices and gives him orders. (Warbler knows the way, but he won't cooperate. Period. Notwithstanding a master's degree in Intimidation or Interrogation. And none of the Troubleshooters know the route.)

When ordered to take the party to the secret exit, the jackobot asks everyone to board the autocar. It opaques the autocar canopy (to prevent the PCs from observing the route), then plugs into a direct Computer guidance link and rockets off on its way. The acceleration and maneuvering is very rough; the PCs bounce around the interior of the autocar like pinballs (a perfect time for accidental discharge of weapons). The jackobot hums and beeps merrily to himself. This goes on forever.

3.3.2 The Enchanted Plumbing Forest

When the autocar finally crashes to a halt, the bot makes the canopy transparent. Read aloud:

The first thing you note in the dim light shed by the autocar's interior illumination is that the autocar is wedged between two very large pipes that extend up out of sight like great columns. Now that the whimpering of your companions and the whine of the overstrained autocar engine have stopped, you notice a thunderous background roar and vibration — perhaps of machinery or great volumes of fluid flowing through giant conduits.

The only light is from the autocar interior. Barely visible is a forest of glistening, damp pipes and valves with a few narrow pathways through the twisted maze. From time to time a bot is glimpsed racing along these pathways in the darkness.

When the jackobot opens the autocar doors, the full force of the din washes over the occupants. Only shouting carries over the racket, and even then it is difficult to understand what is said. The air is moist and full of strange and unpleasant odors. The jackobot shuts off the interior lights and the occupants are suddenly in total darkness. "We have arrived, citizens. Now, follow me to the tunnel entrance, please. Thank you for your prompt cooperation."

There is a tremendous crash. It sounds something like a jackobot falling out of the autocar door. "Perhaps citizens will be more comfortable using their flashlights. Thank you for your cooperation."

When the PCs have left the autocar and organized themselves with flashlights, the bot sets off at a rapid pace along a pathway through the pipe forest. The path is so narrow that single file is necessary. As GM, make sure you know in what order the group travels.

After a few yards a bot comes rocketing out of the dark along the narrow pathway, headed straight for the party. The PCs and bots must make easy agility checks to scramble up pipes or dodge under machinery along the path to

avoid the oncoming bot. Anyone still on the pathway takes damage as on column 4 (armor not effective).

As the PCs struggle through the dark behind the jackobot, a few more similar perilous encounters with bots occur until Warbler begins to fear for his life. He will then suggest a better way through the maze, along elevated catwalks accessible by ladders which rise toward the ceiling along the walls of the vast corridors. There are no bots up there. However, Warbler will cheerfully try to engineer an unfortunate fall for careless Troubleshooters. He will not use his weapons here so close to The Computer.

3.3.3 The Descent

The team arrives at what appears to be a plain wall panel. If closely inspected, a light spot and screw holes are visible, where a sign, identifying this as Deep Access Shaft 1802, has been removed. The panel opens easily with a screwdriver (the jackobot has one).

Within is a dingy, cylindrical metal shaft four meters across, going up out of sight into gray haze, downward into total darkness. Every ten meters, a metal flange a handsbreadth wide runs all the way round the tube. There is a clammy downdraft that changes every fifteen minutes to a warm updraft that smells of dead orchids. Just inside the door is a meter-square platform with a broken railing.

Warbler knows the safest way up and down: a pair of ten-meter ladders with locking clamps on each end, that fold to backpack size. The ladders may be leapfrogged down the tube. They are hidden nearby. Warbler will only reveal the ladders if he feels his life is in imminent danger; that is, if some PC plan for descent seems likely to get him killed. The jackobot will prevent attacks on Warbler, but will not object if they merely ask him questions (like, "How do you Commie scum usually get up and down this thing?").

Each character's knapsack contains a 30-meter coil of nylon rope and some cable splices. The rope has a (labeled) tensile strength of 1000 kilos. The splices (not labeled) will support 500 kilos, if properly used. A character with Mountain-Climbing or Civil Engineering skill automatically applies a splice correctly. Anyone else makes an easy mechanical aptitude check. Improperly applied splices look fine, and will support a normal hard tug, but will give under 1D10x25 kilos.

The power winch is a cylinder about the size of a gallon paint can. It has an On/Off switch and a Direction switch; its speed is not adjustable. It has a labeled rating of 500 kilos. Actually it will begin to whine at 300, smoke at 400, and give way completely at 450. It has a small Emergency Brake lever, which is useless beyond 100 kilos. There are also some dead-man pulleys with hooks.

A character with gear weighs 75 kilos (nobody pumps iron in Alpha Complex). The bots weigh 250 kilos.

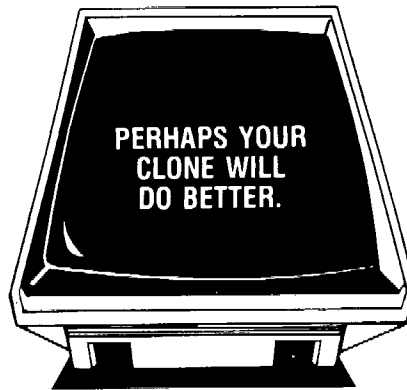
The shaft is 70 meters deep. There are several ways to descend the shaft without the ladders. The simplest way is to jump, though hardly the safest. Encourage the PCs to improvise variously life-threatening methods of descent, many of which overlook the necessity of a return ascent. No coaching! However, you may gaze at the ceiling gap-jawed in horror when they devise terrible plans.

If asked, the jackobot has a pretty good idea. He suggests that the safest way to descend (other than the folding ladders) is to splice five coils of rope into an endless loop, hook a dead-man pulley to the platform, then have the

jackobot hold the rope at the top while one character descends with the winch, using it for speed control; then winch down the remaining characters one or two at a time, leaving the rope in place for the return ascent.

The base of the shaft is a metal grille. Twenty meters below is a swirling pool of a red-lit fluid, looking much like molten metal (the characters have never seen lava, even if the players have seen movies about doom-laden temples). If a bot falls more than thirty meters, it will punch right through the grille and fall into the fluid (which is lukewarm water, rancid with chemical waste and lit by bacteria). The bot is not lost: it will trace the team (the jackobot by internal maps, the docbot by biosensors) and show up again at some unexpected moment, draped in weird algae and smelling like The Computer knows what.

The entrance to the tunnel is a large door, like a submarine hatch, on the wall of the shaft. Above the door are several indicator lamps, none of which operate.



3.3.4 All Hope Abandon, Ye Who Enter Here

Choreographing the Tunnel Encounters Section: Notes to the Gamemaster

Presenting this section will require a little thinking, preparation, and improvisation from the gamemaster. ("I Never Promised You a Rose Garden.")

First, you have to imagine and visualize the tunnel for yourself, then prepare how you will present it to your players. Read the general description below, then sit down and think about it until you can visualize the windings, the metal obstructions, the noises, the odors, the darkness, the knee-deep pools. Think of deep, abandoned mineshafts, then fill them with the kind of metal and moisture you expect in World War II submarine movies. Add the roar you'd expect in a steel foundry, and the odors, sloshings, and noisome fluids you'd expect to find in a waste treatment plant.

Now. Describing it to the players. Here's where the improvisation part comes in. You are going to have to describe the tunnel as the PCs would see it as they wander along, peering into the murky, dimly illuminated surroundings with their puny flashlights.

Some folks seem to be real comfortable making up the descriptions as they go along. Some will have to prepare little detailed sections, perhaps even jot down some notes, so they will be well-prepared enough to smoothly present the surroundings.

If you have good role-players, you can count on them helping you in fleshing out the details as they get into the spirit of crawling around in foul-smelling, dark, wet tunnels. They'll remind

you that they are soaking wet and freezing in the fierce drafts (that you didn't even mention, but which they naturally assumed in dark, mysterious tunnels). Go with the flow.

On the other hand, some players think you are responsible for perfect knowledge about your setting. These folks are in for a rude awakening in the world of **PARANOIA**. If they keep bugging you about details and contradictions in your descriptions, their characters should have special accidents that make it hard for them to perceive their environments. Like being sprayed with nasty chemicals which blind them (temporarily, if you're feeling nice). Or deafening noises. Or stunning blows to the head which make them dizzy and unable to correlate the sense data they receive. Batter their PCs a little, then give them a second chance to cooperate in building the setting rather than chiseling at it for tactical advantages. Privately remind wargaming and competitive players that **STALINGRAD** and chess are still commercially available, but that tonight you are playing **PARANOIA**.

Finally, go through the list of encounters and pick the ones you think the players will like the best, or that you are most enthusiastic about developing for their entertainment and torment. Give some thought to staging these, then set them up as little separate episodes with brief transition periods of tunnel crawling description. Be flexible with the encounters. Sometimes a specific encounter will fire the players' imagination, and they'll want to spend an hour on it. Sometimes they won't be intrigued by the situation — their restlessness will be obvious, and it's time for you to have the attackers withdraw suddenly in terror, or to improvise some other quick resolution that permits you to go on to something that amuses them more.

The best thing about encounter sections like this is that none of the episodes are strictly essential to the plot, so you can skip ahead to the next detailed plot section when you and your players get tired of improvising. In my campaign, it's called "Fade to black. And now for a word from our sponsor." Time to stretch and munch.

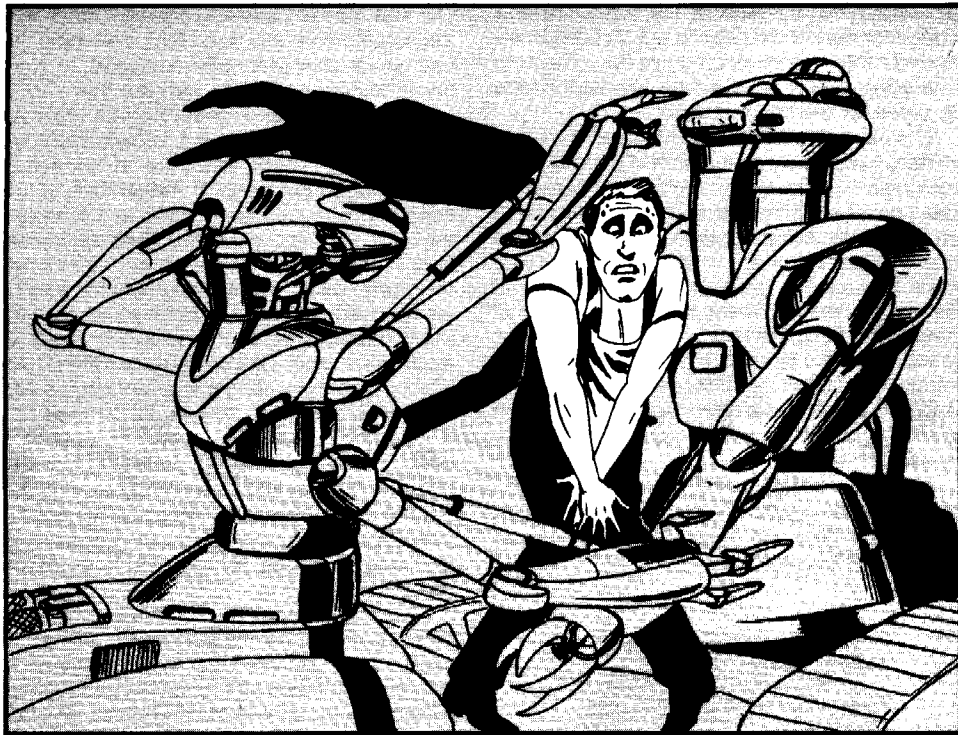
The Tunnel: General Description

It is dark. It is wet. It is steamy hot, until it turns bitterly cold. It is lined with intrusive metal objects, which constantly trip the players or bonk them in the head. It is so noisy that people who are not standing next to one another may not communicate normally (Com units help only in talking to someone too far away even to yell at). Long stretches of it are flooded ankle- or knee- or hip-deep, which makes the jackobot very happy. Any weapon that gets immersed must be checked for malfunction. Backpacks keep their contents dry against splashes of water, but not total immersion. Some of the floor is stone, which is slippery; other stretches are metal grilles, which clang loudly when walked on. Weird organic stuff grows up from the grilles, or cracks in the floor.

The PCs ask Oregon Warbler if he knows a better way through this place. He very much wishes he did. The best he can do is give warning of some of the deathtraps.

War of the Robots

The PCs will almost certainly want to put Warbler out in the lead. If they do so, the jackobot will protest that this presents a risk to valuable Computer property. Then the docbot will begin arguing that the Troubleshooters are



Troubleshooter in need of Spurious Logic skills.

much more valuable than this INFRARED citizen; its programming tells it so. For example:

- Doc:** The traitor is obviously an INFRARED, and obviously of less value to The Computer. Therefore the traitor should go in the lead. That is logical.
- Jacko:** But I have been entrusted with the safety of this citizen, who is obviously of special value to The Computer because of his special knowledge. This resource must be protected at all costs. This is my programming. That is more logical than your stupid argument, which clearly reveals the limits of your processing capacity.
- Doc:** You can't process your way out of a plastic bag. Your artificer must have been a Commie mutant moron.
- Jacko:** Sez you. Your bot brain has obviously been exposed to hard radiation. You haven't the processing capacity of a digital watch.
- Doc:** Bolt barre!
- Jacko:** Vat plug!
- Doc:** Commie toot!
- Jacko:** Diddle chip!

After the argument has gone on for a few minutes, the docbot pulls rank, pointing out that it is a Model VII, while the jackobot is only a 300-series. The jackobot will grudgingly concede, humming at a low frequency and tapping its manipulators in frustration.

From this moment on, the jackobot will be looking for an opportunity to plug the docbot, and make it look like an accident; in other words, it starts acting just like any other citizen.

The Tunnel: Encounters

Many adventure game scenarios feature long treks through subterranean passages filled with hostile traps and creatures. In keeping with this honorable tradition, we have provided you with an ample supply of hostile traps and creatures.

Often people are moved to ask why all that stuff is waiting down there. In this case, the answer is simple: it is all down there to kill teams of Troubleshooters who come poking around.

We have departed from tradition in that nobody here has any treasure. This is the sort of innovative adventure design you have come to expect from **PARANOIA**.

Three lists of encounters follow. The first describes things that are cryptically noted on the sketch map. Warbler remembers these traps well, and will do his best to get the Troubleshooters killed in them while escaping himself. Naturally, Warbler puts his own life above killing Troubleshooters.

The second list covers traps that may be sprung wherever and whenever you feel like it. They are not given on the map. Warbler knows of these traps 50% of the time; otherwise he has forgotten, or never knew.

The third list is tunnel hazards other than purposely set traps. Warbler is aware of most of these, but he has no way of knowing when or where one may show up.

List One: Mapped Hazards

The Divine Wind: Ten meters down a side corridor is an enormous exhaust fan rewired by the Sierra Clubbers as a large scale food processor. The fan is activated by microswitches under the walkway. It may be disarmed for a few minutes (long enough to get past the trigger area) by opening a junction box on the wall and pressing a red button within.

If activated, the fan will pull a person right off his feet, and even drag bots along slowly. There are plenty of handholds; it requires an easy agility check to grab one and a series of easy strength checks to hang on.

Oregon will casually observe that he remembers that this fan is dangerous, but that he doesn't recall why. If the PCs can be tricked into wandering onto the activating switches in the process of investigating the fan, fine.

If the PCs are more suspicious and cautious, and they evince a cheerful willingness to use

Oregon as a mine detector, he will try to dry gulch the PCs by lying about the length of the period of time that the fan is disarmed. "Oh, it should be safe for a few minutes. Hmm. I suppose you expect me to go through first?" He'll push the switch then stroll casually through the fan.

When the second PC has made it through the fan, there is a momentary warning hum, then the fan springs to life. The third PC is right at the fan — he gets to choose which way to jump. Then all PCs on the far side of the fan are blown down the tunnel away from the fan. All PCs on the near side of the fan are drawn toward it.

Characters who hit the fan become thousands of julienne fries in seconds. A bot will jam the blades, while taking Major Damage. The fan may be stopped by getting everybody off the trigger area, blasting the junction boxes, or blasting the fan (good luck lining up a shot) for Major Damage or more (use the Bot Damage table). A grenade tossed into the fan has a 50% chance of hitting the blades and exploding for effect, 50% of being sucked through harmlessly.

Special Rollover: A broad, ascending-spiral corridor that ascends ten meters in two coils of ten meters diameter (a 1 in 6 slope, about 9 degrees). The coils are not quite aligned, and the top of the spiral has a trap door leading straight down to its lowest end.

Five ambushers, one with a projectile weapon, the rest with melee weapons, are watching through the trap door. When the party appears and begins to ascend the spiral, they will roll heavy cylinders (old compressed-gas tanks) down the spiral. The cylinders will make a lot of noise, but will be hard to dodge. When total confusion reigns below, the attackers will descend from the trap door on ropes.

The corroded old gas tanks are labeled OXYGEN and ACETYLENE and EXPLOSIVE and other amusing things. If you're really in a fun-loving mood, have one or more of them actually contain gas.

If Oregon is being marched along at point, he will mention that this is a good place for an ambush, and try to subtly encourage the armed Troubleshooters to proceed in front up the spiral tunnel to seek out any ambushers. "I'm not armed, guys! How much help am I going to be?"

If forced up the tunnel in front, he will listen carefully for the sound of rolling objects, and run for his life when he hears anything, hoping that the less-well-prepared Troubleshooters will hesitate to see what's coming, and that their battered bodies will delay the descent of the offending heavy objects.

They're Coming to Get You, Jessica: Four ambushers with melee weapons and snorkels, stationed at a narrow, unrailed catwalk over a flooded area: when they hear the party approaching, they submerge and wait for the sound of boots overhead. Hands emerge from the dark water to grab ankles.

Oregon knows to flatten immediately on the catwalk and crawl ahead as fast as possible. When flat on the catwalk, one is protected somewhat from clubbing attacks (50% cover), and while prone, it is impossible to be pulled off into the dark, waist-deep water where Troubleshooters, with their armor and slug-thrower and laser weapons, will be at a serious disadvantage.

List Two: Unmapped Traps

Steam Ambush: Warm, opaque vapor fills the tunnel. Visibility, including with infrared goggles

(but not bot radar) is reduced to a meter or so. Lasers "bloom" and are useless beyond five meters; projectile weapons are unaffected.

A group of five Sierra Clubbers are waiting silently ahead of the foggy area, listening carefully for the sounds of the approaching PCs. When the PCs seem to be deep enough in the fog, the Sierra Clubbers will start lobbing substantial pieces of scrap metal into the fog toward the approximate position of the PCs. There is only a 5% chance per round that any PC will be hit, and even if hit, the damage is figured on column four of the damage chart.

Nonetheless, the rain of unidentified objects from unseen ambushers should induce some panic and aggression in the Troubleshooters. Oregon will scramble back the way he came, covering his head. If the PCs charge forward, the Sierra Clubbers withdraw immediately, and the advantage of darkness and familiarity with the territory permits them to escape without interference.

Collapsed Tunnel Ambush: A portion of roof and ancillary piping and conduits has fallen, or been pulled down, to block the tunnel. There is a narrow detour passage to one side; the characters must walk single file, and long weapons like cone rifles may not be held ready.

Fifty meters down this narrow passage is a small alcove where two truculent Defenders of Mother Nature are lurking. Once the PCs are heard to be well on their way along the passage, they will begin to yell threats, like "Hey, if you drones come any closer, you're history!" "Okay, back the way you came, or we blow the tunnel."

If the PCs aren't cowed by this bluff, the two fanatics will wait on either side of the narrow passage to jump the first one through. One fanatic will grapple while the other tries to delay the next one in line for a few rounds. The idea is to take a prisoner, then split. This is not a very clever idea, nor is it strikingly well planned by the fanatics. Let the PCs pound and laser these two into pulp.

Oregon will pull a variant of "Oh, Br'er Fox, please don't throw me in that briarpatch!" "Oh, please don't make me go first through here! I'll

do anything you want, but PLEASE don't make me go first down this narrow little passage!" He'll roll his eyes, howl — the whole bit. This is, of course, intended to goad the sadistic, paranoid Troubleshooters into forcing Oregon to proceed first "against his will."

However, if Oregon is forced whining and protesting ahead of the other Troubleshooters he will pretend to be completely terrified. When he reaches the alcove, he will give the password ("Remember Love Canal!") and he and the two fanatics will make a run for it. This will leave the party with only the jackobot as a guide. Oregon will be unable to resist taunting the PCs as he trots off into the darkness. "Born and bred in the briarpatch."

Plain Old Ambush: Four defenders of the faith jump the party. Two have melee weapons; two have ranged weapons not more devastating than laser pistols. They may be armed with Old Reckoning weapons — single-shot black powder slugthrowers, Colt revolvers with centuries-old ammunition, lethal-appearing exercise equipment, or Electroluxes.

Deadfall: An underwater tripwire causes a crate of junk to fall on the section of walkway where the victim is standing. The victim must make an easy agility check to jump clear. (Make sure the PC specifies which direction he jumps in.) Otherwise the victim takes damage on Column 6 of the Damage Table. If the victim explicitly braces himself against the object's fall ("I crouch and cover my head."), the damage is on Column 4.

Next-Man-in-Line Deadfall: As above, except the crate of junk falls 3-4 meters behind the one who trips the wire. Figure out who is 3-4 meters behind the point man and clobber him.

Now for the *piece de resistance*. Tell the PC who trips the wire that he felt the wire with his foot, and that he has time to jump. Ask him which way he jumps. If you are lucky, he will jump backward into the crate. This is a gamemaster sucker play. You will think you are so clever. Your player will be fitting you for a cement overcoat.

A Message to Garcia: Two ambushers are hidden in 90% cover. As the party approaches, one starts running back to warn the defenders at the exit; the other begins shooting down a 40-meter section where the passage widens considerably (slingshot, 20% to hit on Column 3) to cover the messenger's escape. The shooter stands for ten rounds of fire, then withdraws. The runner should evade the PCs unless they are a lot smarter than I am, or unless there is a real creative use of mutant powers.

List Three: Arbitrary Hazards

Batbots: A swarm of small airborne mini-flybots appears. These are minor-maintenance bots armed with pliers and screwdrivers. They are more a nuisance than a danger, though if a bunch of them land on an unguarded weapon, bot, or device, they can render it useless in seconds. They are extremely hard to hit in the air (count as 90% cover), but easy to bash while landed.

Steam: As the Steam Ambush above, except nothing comes out of the fog. No menace — just ominous echoes.

Unpleasant Puddle: The team is faced with a stretch of tunnel armpit-deep in some vile substance. The only way across without wading (and becoming semi-permanently slimed) is to hand-over-hand it along the ceiling pipes. This calls for one or more agility checks, which should be easy unless the character is heavily loaded, missing a hand, etc. The docbot has no trouble. The jackobot plows happily into the slime. And thenceforth exudes an odor that would make a ghoulish gag.

Really Nasty Puddle: As above, except the puddle is more than just obnoxious: the pool contains a plastic substance that hardens into a thick skin on an object when the plastic is exposed to the air. There is a thin skin on the pool that may warn the PCs of the nature of this substance.

Treat any object or character immersed in this substance as though it had been given a generous application of a sprayed plastic substance like Krylon. It has to be peeled carefully off any surface, and if it gets into the works of any machinery, electronics gear, or weaponry, the item will either malfunction dramatically or fail to function at all. The item must be dismantled and carefully cleaned before it can be used again.

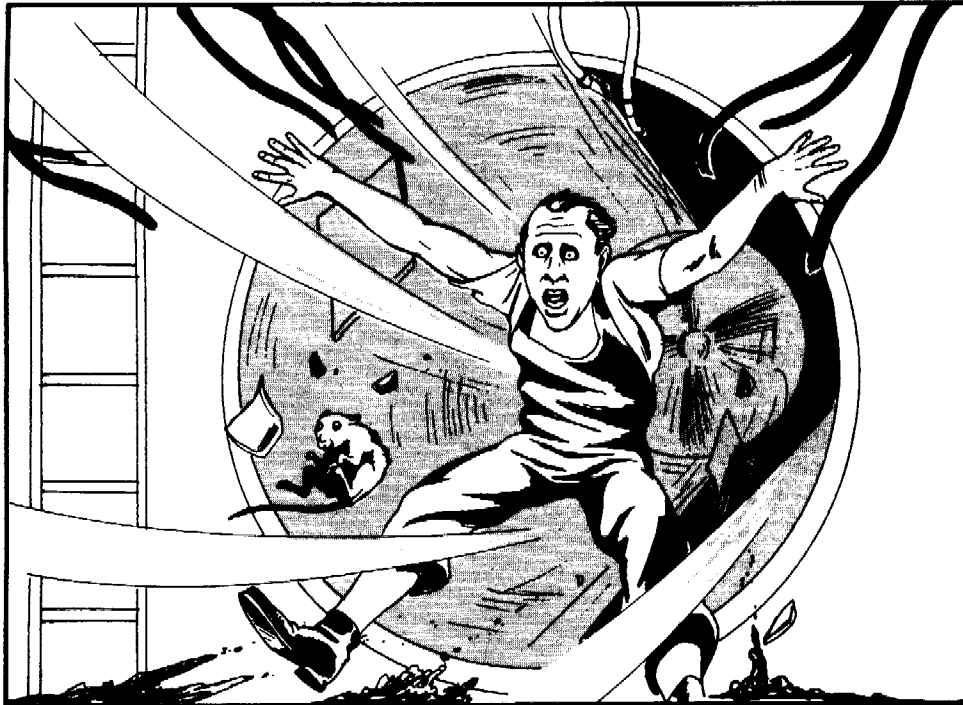
Collapsed Tunnel Section: As on list 2, except no ambush.

Pressure Venting: A 50-kph wind blows through the tunnel. Characters may be knocked down; light objects, like the map, may be blown away.

Wandering Botater: A docbot with deranged programming wanders the tunnels, looking for its designated operator (who has been dead for a long time). If ignored, it is harmless but annoying; if attacked, it charges in, screaming things like "Eat my gastroscope, Commie pathogens!" If not destroyed somehow, it will show up again. If disabled and salvaged, it is worth a commendation and cash credit award.

Evil High Priest: A crazed former High Programmer, who has been lost down here for years with no company but a tattered role-play ruleset. He spouts dialog straight out of a bad fantasy novel. He failed his insanity check. He may cast the Finger of Death spell once — that is, he has a sleeve-mounted ULTRAVIOLET laser pistol with one shot remaining. Weapons don't get any

"And away go Troubleshooters, down the drain."



more illegal than this. Finding him for The Computer is worth a commendation point. The ruleset, of course, is classified ULTRAVIOLET.

St. Schmo's Fire: A ball of light, looking very much like a plasma generator discharge, comes tumbling up the tunnel. It sparkles and sizzles, but is harmless. Further down the hall the PCs find the device that produced the ball of light. It weighs as much as a tugboat, and its function is totally obscure.

The Missing 18 Minutes: Someone spots a briefcase wedged into the piping. It is full of secrets somebody tried to sell to the Commies years ago.

The documents contain notes on a High Programmer named Menlo, and among other things contains secret society memos from Corpore Metal concerning an installation in CBI Sector. The investigator who seems to have amassed these notes is named Borron-I-EVC-6. (For further details, see the *PARANOIA ADVENTURE HANDBOOK*, page 101, section 21.1.6. This is called recycling narrative elements from earlier adventures. Sharp, eh?)

Weapons Cache: A bag of cherry bombs and bottle rockets. Warbler knows what these are; the PCs will have to study them to discover their function.

Wild Card: Anything you think you can put over on the players. The Flying Dutchman, Judge Crater, E.T., Killer Penguins, mad game designers, whatever.

3.3.5 The Exit

The secret exit is located some twenty-five kilometers from the fringes of Alpha Complex proper. This is beyond the range of Com I units, and due to all the water, wires and metal, Com IIs will begin having reception problems. This will make the bots very insecure; they will not actually mutiny, but they will whine a lot.

The exit route goes through an abandoned nuke plant (see the map "Mission Three: Abandoned Nuke Plant" on page 22).

The exit itself is inside the containment vessel of an ancient fission reactor. The reactor core was removed centuries ago, and there is no longer a radiation hazard; however, there are lots of warning signs, which the Sierra Clubbers who man the exit hope will scare off anyone who has accidentally wandered 25 clicks down a totally hostile tunnel. (Nobody said they were bright.)

The Defenders

The lower-level defenders include 10 RED-levels, called Boo-Boos, 5 intermediate levels, called Yogis, and the club leader, Mr. Ranger Sir. There are also two Outsiders similar to Oregon Warbler, any ambushers who escaped to return here, and Smokey the Bearbot.

Smokey is an old-model bot programmed for fire control. It carries a shovel (Melee weapon, uses column 9) and a cryochemical fire extinguisher (equivalent to an ice gun, with spray fire ability). Smokey's first priority is to put out fires. Its second priority is to put out people starting fires. After that it will take orders from Mr. Ranger Sir, but it is 1. profoundly slow and 2. profoundly stupid. It is very entertaining to watch in action, hacking with its shovel while growling "Only you! Only you!"

Entering the Complex

A short metal stairway leads from the tunnel up to a clean, dry, dimly-lit corridor. One end of the corridor is blocked by rubble. The other leads to the reactor facility lobby.

The lobby contains some potted plants (all near-dead from lack of sunlight), and a large steel desk mounting numerous switches and monitor screens. All of this equipment is long dead, but this is not immediately obvious, and the desk should be described as looking like the security stations all Alphans know so well.

If the team managed to slaughter every ambusher they encountered in the tunnel, they may surprise the defenders. If any ambushers escaped, there is still a 25% chance of surprise (some other hazard got them before they could report).

If the Complex has been alerted to the Troubleshooters' approach, there will be 3-6 defenders here, armed with truncheons, spears, and one or two laser pistols. If there is no alert, there will be one person present, reading an ancient copy of *CoEvolution Quarterly*, with an ORANGE laser pistol in easy reach. The only warning system is running around and yelling loud.

The original decor of the complex was Industrial Bland. The Clubbers have tried to dress things up with tattered posters, and plants and terraria; the cell leader even has his own aquarium, with a few neon tetras and a walking carp that gets loose now and then. Most of the nature projects are either dying from incompetent care or have gotten out of control (there is one room entirely controlled by an extended gerbil family). There is a fair amount of small disgusting wildlife at large in the walls and ventilating system. This does terrible things to the air quality. Some of the Clubbers burn incense, which doesn't really help.

The posters most likely to impress the Troubleshooters are — no, *not* Natassia Kinski wearing the snake (though that is quite impressive) — the ones left over from the reactor's active days, things like instructions for operation of the emergency showers and field amputation in case of plutonium-salt contamination, admonitions to check pocket dosimeters, etc.

A Cordial Reception

If present and alive, Oregon Warbler may be used as a hostage to get past the guards. The

only defenders who will attack Warbler are his fellow Outsiders, Mr. Ranger Sir, and Smokey (who doesn't know any better).

If the Troubleshooters arrive unannounced, they might be able to bluff their way inside. (Don't let them forget about all the radiation warnings.)

However they get in, you know it's going to turn into a gunfight before very long. Mr. Ranger Sir will detail half his troops to defend the Vault; he will lead the rest to the Dome entrance. Smokey will probably be on his own.

At the first sign of trouble, the Outsiders will go to the Vault; if the battle turns against them, they will snatch up as much tradable gear as they can, including *The Black Box*, and run for the Dome. The defenders will not stop them unless Mr. Ranger Sir orders them to. Oregon Warbler will do his best to escape from the PCs, join his fellow Outsiders, and get the hell out of here.

Lower Level: The Clubbers' Quarters

This is the sort of facility secret societies dream about: a self-contained headquarters free from Computer observation. The actual ambience is somewhere between a bomb shelter and a POW camp, but everyone has his own idea of heaven.

These rooms were originally the personnel areas of the reactor complex. They include a kitchen where the rare and exotic foods of Outside are prepared, an auditorium where Club meetings are held, and where visitors from Outside give instruction in Outside-world skills, a barracks for the staff, and apartments for high-ranking Club members and Outsiders. There is also the Vault, a blast- and radiation-shielded room originally intended for storage of radiation-sensitive equipment (and as an emergency refuge in case of an, er, "incident" at the reactor), which is now used to store the Club's most treasured possessions, including — you knew it was coming — *The Black Box*.

Upper Level: The Reactor Dome

Those of you who know something about reactor design, bear with me on the following: this is not a real reactor, it's a movie reactor. If the players complain, tell them "the Club made a lot

"Only you! Only you!"





A wise leader offering encouragement to eager young Troubleshooters.

of changes." Then give them treason points for possession of classified information.

An elevator and four flights of stairs lead to the lower Dome deck, which is circular, 3 meters wide, and runs entirely around the Dome interior. The walls are lined with monitoring equipment, which is kept brightly polished by the Clubbers; none of it has worked for three hundred years.

The inside edge of the deck looks down on a pit: ten meters below is a pool of dark and oily fluid, with pipes and brackets breaking the surface. From deep within comes a cool blue glow. Any PC who has served in Power Services is in for an Insanity check at the sight of what he thinks is an unshielded swimming-pool reactor. Actually it's bacterial luminescence. There used to be a handrail around the deck, but most of it is missing, and the remaining pieces will break 50% of the time under a character's weight, 100% under a bot's.

Two metal stairways, one on each side of the Dome, lead up 10 meters to an open grid platform in the center of the Dome. The platform has a 360-degree overlook on the deck below. There is no railing. There is some equipment up here, desks and consoles hauled in from other parts of the complex for decorative value — none of it works, though it could be hurled over the edge at those below.

Here are stationed the Dome Rangers, four loyal-unto-death defenders. They will not leave the platform unless physically thrown off, and if they survive they will do anything to come back and keep fighting. They have little contact with the Boo-Boos and Yogis, and may shoot them by accident, especially if they try to board the platform.

At the very center of the platform, a steel ladder leads straight up, a last ten meters to The Exit Itself — a chunk broken out of the containment dome. (One shudders to think how.) The hole is covered with an epoxy weather panel, but not locked or sealed. They're not afraid of attacks from Outside.

The Dome is illuminated by a band of light strips around the edge of the platform. Shooting

out these lights will leave no source of illumination except the blue glow from the pool — unless someone gets the exit panel open, in which case glorious sunlight will flood in, startling the heck out of everybody.

The Outsiders will be trying to get out. If things look really desperate, Mr. Ranger Sir will also take the exit. If Mr. Ranger Sir goes, the rest of the staff will follow, except for Smokey (who can't climb ladders) and the Dome Rangers (who fight to the death).

This is the climactic fight in the multilevel set, just like at the end of a James Bond movie. (Ken Adam's reactor for *Dr. No* is especially relevant here.) And just like those movies, we're going to trash the place. Make sure that lots of dramatic climbing up ladders and falling off balconies takes place. Throw equipment around. Crack the walls (see next section). Blast chunks out of the walkways, creating new hazards. Dump characters into the water and let them practice their Swimming skills. Wreck things; what the heck, they're paid for.

Should a Troubleshooter manage to get to the exit, he will see countryside and sky all around — the complex has been completely buried by some upheaval, and the exit is at ground level — and suffer an insanity check at the sight of Outside. Then he sees the Vultures coming (see 3.3.9 below). If not, you may wish to warn the team by having the attack theme music for the Squadron come over the Com units. A cassette player will provide an exciting counterpoint to events. Wagner is always popular, but you might also consider "Ghost Riders in the Sky," "Up in the Air, Junior Birdmen," or the legendary "Windy" by the Jefferson Airplane.

3.3.7 Sealing the Exit (or, Remember What You Came Here For?)

If the Troubleshooters kill all the defenders, they may take their time in destroying the complex. But who are we trying to kid? The practical question is, where may a large bundle of high explosive be detonated so as to cause a collapse?

In the Dome

The Dome is quite weak. As evidence of this, when a cone rifle round or a bot hits the wall, cracks should appear. It is still not a job for hand tools, but a couple of demo charges against the wall, or thrown into the central pool (water transmits shockwaves very, very well) will start the structure on the road to Humpty Dumpty. A tac-nuke detonated anywhere within the Dome will also collapse it, though no one will come away with an eyewitness report.

In the Complex

If both the elevator and the access stairs are blown up, the exit may be considered sealed. Nobody is likely to think of it, but demo charges applied to the wall of the Dome Access Corridor will send a blast through the pool, bringing about collapse. A tac-nuke detonation in this area will also do nicely.

In the Tunnel

If the team tries to avoid going to the end of the tunnel by using explosives to collapse it, it won't work. The tunnel will blow up real good — and then the debris will shift, opening up a usable passage. The Troubleshooters have tried to abort their mission without orders. They have wasted valuable equipment. They are guilty as hell.

(If they try this, the jackobot will warn them it won't work. Afterwards, it will say "I told you so" a lot.)

If they are chased out of the reactor complex, they may set explosives as a rear-guard action. This time, it will be messy but effective. Fate and The Computer rewards those who give it the old clonevat try.

3.3.8 The Black Box Again

The Box is not directly involved with this mission, except to drive the players crazy at the last minute. During the battle in the reactor complex, one or more Troubleshooters will spot the thing — maybe in the Vault, maybe being carried away by a fleeing Outsider.

The Troubleshooters may capture the Box. They may hang on to it for a little while. They may not open it. And they will eventually lose it, either to death, recapture, or . . .

3.3.9 Death From Above

Byre-B-WER does not trust the Troubleshooters any longer. They simply have not killed enough Commie traitor scum. This mission is too important to entrust to them. So he has taken



matters into his own hands, and scrambled a flight of Vulture 720 strike aircraft.

After the Troubleshooters seal the exit, give them just enough time to catch their breath — and maybe try to find the catch on The Black Box — before Squadron "Tobor the Great" unloads its ordnance. (If they didn't manage to seal the exit, the Squadron plays the role of *deus ex machina*.)

The Troubleshooters will not be injured. They will, however, find themselves looking out on open country, through a new hole half a click across blasted by the Vulture missiles. If they had The Black Box, it has disappeared in the explosion (though any other stuff they have picked up, either for honest or black-market purposes, is intact).

They will also notice that a few of the Vultures, flying nap-of-earth, failed to execute full-throttle breakaway maneuvers in time, and are now integral with the landscape. An object comes bouncing over the grass and rocks toward the team. It is a Vulture gunner's helmet, stenciled with the name of Byre-B-WER-6. A large and irregular piece is missing from it.

A Model 816 transport flybot lands nearby, and opens its doors. It is time to go home.

3.4 Debriefing

Only Doss-V is left in the Briefing Room. If the Troubleshooters achieved anything at all — even a high body count — Doss-V is warmly congratulatory. He is very impressed by all the after-action reports (actually he's asleep with his eyes open), and an exceptionally fine performance, whether real or just reported that way, will bring promises of imminent promotion to GREEN clearance. He hands sealed envelopes to each team member, without explanation, and tells them to go home and get plenty of rest.

Since The Computer, not Doss-V, keeps all records, assign points as always. Regardless of earlier threats, no treason points are assigned for losing Oregon Warbler; they are given for losing the map.

Five of the envelopes contain bonus pay vouchers. Two are for 100 credits; these may be cashed at once. Two are for 500 credits; these will be delayed in cashing until after Mission Four, and are not transferable to clones. The fifth is for 7,642,001 credits, and is worthless.

The sixth envelope contains a ticket to see Teela-O-MLY perform live; the performance will

take place sometime during Mission Four. Transferring the ticket is illegal, but may be done through Free Enterprise or other contacts. Depending on the seller's Con or Fast Talk ability, the ticket is worth about 500 credits in cash, as much as twice that in contraband items. A smart Troubleshooter will lay in some illegal weapons for Mission Four. Not that they'll help him much.





Alert Troubleshooters uncover a secret cache of weapons.

4. MISSION FOUR: WHY DON'T WE DO IT IN THE ROAD?

4.1 Mission Background

Once upon a time there were three High Programmers, all of them fascinated by Old Reckoning technology. There was Bette-U-LYF, who heard about The Black Box and tried to have the Troubleshooters get it. There was Philip-U-BIK-4, who heard about Bette-U's attempt. Philip-U, who like most ULTRAVIOLET citizens has more knowledge of the old world than is legal at any clearance, has deduced The Box must contain Old Reckoning music, which he collects. Philip-U wants The Box.

More importantly, Philip-U wants Bette-U. He is desperately infatuated with her (a situation only possible on the highest levels of society, where the food does not contain GNH-series drugs) and is convinced that The Box will help him woo Bette-U away from her current companion. . . who is our third player, Duke-U-ERL-5. Duke-U knows about Philip-U's interest, and would like to do something about it, preferably something fatal to Philip-U.

When The Black Box slipped through the fingers of everyone assigned to recover it (not just the players), Philip-U decided to go to the source: he set up a mission to the Outside, intended to track down the source of The Box, and ensure him a permanent supply of prerecorded music.

Duke-U, meanwhile, has a project of his own: the reconstruction of a pre-War automobile, piece by piece. Duke-U has a large contraband collection of car magazines, which have taught

him that no woman can resist a guy who drives the right car. Duke-U would sacrifice the lives of thousands of Troubleshooters to obtain an intact '63 Corvette convertible. As it is, some eighty have been lost recovering the parts of his current vehicle, which consists of a 427-c.i. stock Chevy block (cracked), one Cadillac tailfin, a Rolls-Royce grille Duke-U thinks is a primitive sonic shield, and a large number of Toyota and VW parts, on a Saab chassis.

Duke-U has been informed that his rival Philip-U is sending a team Outside for some dastardly romantic purpose. Duke-U retaliates by setting up a mission of his own, using one of his most precious possessions: an Old Reckoning service-station map.

Unfortunately for both of them, they sat down at their terminals and input their Troubleshooter Operations Request (External) almost simultaneously, and a faulty set of demultiplexing crosstalk separators caused the two requests to be combined into one. The result was an unusually incoherent mission assignment, even for the world of *PARANOIA*.

4.1.2 Mission Summary

The Troubleshooters are sent out, with somewhat contradictory orders, to recover Old Reckoning hardware. They will have a number of opportunities to do so, and even more opportunities not to make it back.

They meet two roving bands of Outsiders, the motorcycle-crazy Cyberpunks and the just-plain-crazy Nouvelle Vague. They may reach one or both of their intended targets, a well-preserved

Old Reckoning recording studio and a not-so-well-preserved auto dealership and service station. The recording studio is inhabited by the Studio Engineers, a money-mad crew who ritually serve the recorders and mixing boards. The gas station is home to HARV[E], an ancient self-aware military vehicle, and his only friend, the battle computer ELWOOD 3610.

Then The Computer decides that the returning Troubleshooter team and their entourage are the long dreaded Invasion of the Commies from Outer Space, and marshals its forces (in its endearingly psychotic fashion) to destroy them. Apocalypse Any Minute Now...

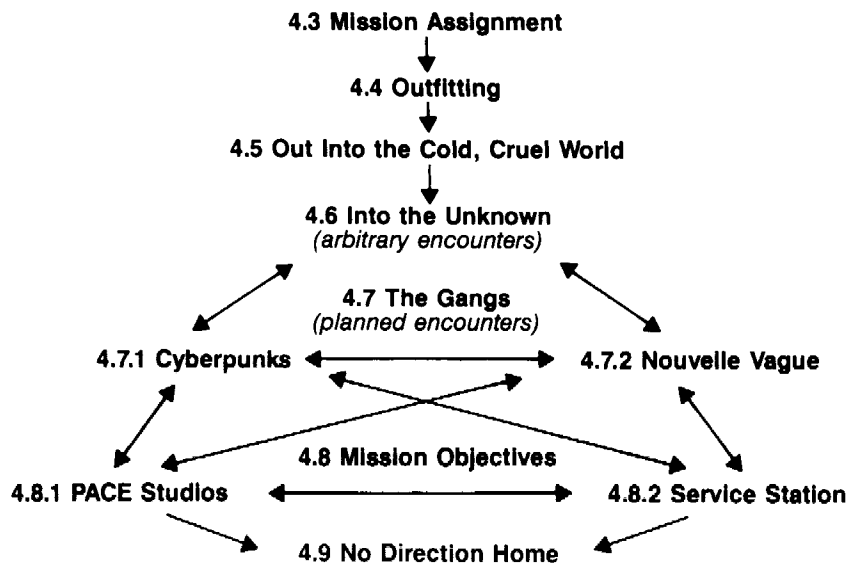
4.2 Gamemaster Briefing: Preparing the Narrative Sequence for Mission Four

Diagram 4.2.1 is a graphic representation of the possible sequences of events in Mission Four. From the "Mission Assignment" to "Into the Unknown", the sequence is linear — that is, the PCs are channeled from one event to the next in the pre-determined order.

Once the PCs leave Alpha Complex and enter the unknown (the Outdoors), however, there are a number of possible sequences of encounters. Look at the diagram. They can run around from place to place and encounter to encounter in zillions of ways. "EEEEEEK!" you say. "What is happening to the First Law of Gamemaster Control?" you whine.

Buck up, sport. It's not so bad as all that:

Diagram 4.2.1: Organizing Mission Four Events



The sequence will be partly determined by your pre-planned selection of events to be presented to the players, and partly determined by your players' choices and actions. For example, the PCs will need the assistance of one of the two gangs, the Cyberpunks or the Nouvelle Vague, to reach the locations where they can fulfill their mission objectives (get Black Boxes and a Corvette). You decide which gang the PCs will run into first.

But you can't know or control whether the PCs will gain the gang's cooperation, or whether the PCs will blow the opportunity by attacking the gang or by refusing to cooperate. Perhaps the PCs will need to get another gang's cooperation instead. Perhaps the PCs will have to return and apologize to the first gang before they can reach a mission objective. (Perhaps they'll get themselves conveniently killed before it becomes an issue, but that solves nothing. Here come the clone replacements.)

In preparing for the mission, read through the whole thing first to get the big picture, then decide which events you want to present, in what order, and how much time and detail you want to devote to each event. Use the diagram to help you visualize this process.

For example, first select a few encounters from "Into the Unknown" — say, "Road Badly Out," "Really Grim Weather," and "Encampment." The first two are really minor encounters, just to spook the PCs a little with the unpredictable problems of the Outdoors, and should take only a few minutes each. "Settlement" deserves a little more time so the PCs can speak with the primitives and learn a little about life outside Alpha Complex, but it is still a minor encounter.

Now have the PCs run into the Cyberpunks. This gives the PCs a chance to establish friendly terms with the gang and perhaps make an agreement that will bring the PCs to one of the two mission objectives. The probing for information and the negotiations will require a lot of in-character diplomacy and problem-solving, and plenty of session time must be allotted.

There are a number of possibilities at this point, and the players are in control of most of those possibilities. Can the PCs negotiate successfully, or will they offend the gang, or even start a gang war? And which will they choose

to visit first, the PACE Studio or the Service Station — each major sections of the mission, full of minor episodes and encounters.

Depending on the PC choices and actions, there are a lot of possible sequences of events. You must be prepared.

Here's what you must do to be prepared:

1. Read everything carefully first.
2. Figure out which parts of the mission you like the best, and how to steer the PCs for them. The gangs are the perfect tools for this purpose; they can show up and push the PCs where you want them to go, either by force or by offering information that leads the PCs where you want them.
3. Relax and be prepared to improvise if the PCs don't do exactly what you'd expect. They never do, anyway. That's the best part of role-playing adventures. Except maybe for the part where you fry traitors.



4.3 Mission Assignment

4.3.1 Mission Alert

The Troubleshooters have had a couple of days to recover from their last mission (visit Medical Division, scrub the muck off, etc.). Suddenly, they each receive urgent orders to make contact with their secret societies — notes slipped under doors, hidden in food, passed at training, and so forth. As soon as they have made their arrangements for contact (as per Mission

One) they receive Mission Alert: Reference YCBBB.4.3.1 (see page 28).

The PCs have to go to Briefing Room AA as before. Violators Will Be Prosecuted.

4.3.2 Checking In

The checkpoint is now dominated by a huge machine, a cross between a voting booth and a submarine conning tower, enclosing a barely-visible computer console. It is attended by a smug BLUE Technician in a sharply pressed jumpsuit, and his ORANGE assistant, a greasemonkey in soiled coveralls, plus the usual complement of bored-hostile guards.

If the Troubleshooters show any hesitation at all in going inside this monster, the Tech gets terribly annoyed, says "Yellow YELLOWS, eh? Well, it's quite safe, and simple enough even for you. I'll show you." He walks inside and pulls a lever.

The machine begins to tremble and grind. It closes around the Tech. Then it folds again, and again, collapsing on itself until it is a neat metal suitcase, with handle. The assistant sighs, picks up the case, and walks away. The PCs are admitted.

If the PCs *didn't* show any hesitation — serves 'em right.

4.3.3 Mission Briefing

The Briefing Room is dim. Doss-V-DAN is alone on the bench, a single spotlight shining down on him, like a bureaucrat's idea of what God looks like.

Doss-V speaks. This is your chance to really ham it up:

"Friend citizens, our friend The Computer wishes me to convey its unbounded joy at your performance. Would any one of us have expected you to return in triumph, nay, return alive, from such a mission? Surely none but a madman. Yet The Computer did. I think this tells us all something very important about our friend The Computer.

"With this in mind, our friend has selected you for a very unusual mission. You may never live to do your Alpha Complex any greater service than this.

"You are to execute this mission — Outside." [Pause for reaction.] "Yes, Outside, beyond The Computer's protection and safety. Why, you may ask? What does Alpha Complex, in which all our needs are provided for, want or need from Outside.

"The answer is that The Computer sees more than our everyday needs. It sees our wants, our hopes, our dreams — and then it sends Troubleshooters like you after them.

"You are to recover certain equipment of the Old Reckoning, which, once our wise and knowledgeable High Programmers have shaped it to The Computer's use, will make our daily life even better, safer, more completely controlled. Will help to ensure that this great Complex, of The Computer, by The Computer, and for The Computer, shall not perish from the earth. All the Complex — or nothing! Which shall it be, Troubleshooters? Which shall it be?"

Pause here for exclamations of enthusiasm and patriotic fervor. When the cheering has died down, Doss-V has the players elect a Team Leader. Byre-B reads aloud the mission equipment requisition, commenting proudly on the generosity of The Computer, and hands the leader a copy of the requisition (display Equipment List #4). The leader will be entrusted with the mission map, to be delivered later. The map

is cleared for all players, but it is Computer property, and the leader is responsible for it. Make an issue of how rare it is to actually give Troubleshooters maps of anything.

In a conspiratorial tone, Doss-V tells the players that he has heard rumors that no one ever returns from Outside. (If you can spook a PC who has also heard that rumor, good.) He points out that rumors are reasonable lies, but to help bolster the team's confidence, he has pulled strings to get them some special equipment. Yup, they're going to visit Victor-I-GOR in R&D again.

"I know you will succeed. Do not fail. If you fail, your successors will succeed. Remember, *dulce et decorum est pro grammis mori.*" He falls asleep.

He does not awaken. If the players try to rouse him, they will trigger the automatic gas guns. Eventually they are taken to R&D.

4.4 Outfitting

4.4.1 Back to the Drawing Board

Victor-I's lab is much the same as in Mission Two, except that Willis-G's luck lapsed briefly, and he has been succeeded by his clone. The clone does not remember the players, and will try to sell them on power holsters all over again.

Victor-I is pleased to hear that the group is going Outside, so they can test some of his devices less appropriate to confined spaces — that is, stuff that has never been tested in Victor-I's Danger Room.

In addition to the new goodies, all the old ones are still available, *unless* the players figured out some way to make them work advantageously, in which case the last working prototype was just dismantled for test/classified/blown up/dropped by an assistant so it looks all right but fails in use in some spectacular fashion (pick one).

New Goodies

Bi-Axial Levitation Frame (Neddy-G): A pair of jointed wings that buckle to the user's arms and shoulders. They are rocket-assisted on the downstroke, so the user really can hang in the air by flapping energetically. Until one wing

breaks, causing the user to spin in midair like a Catherine wheel.

Procognitron (Victor-I): A briefcase-sized portable computer programmed to extrapolate events. Victor can demonstrate simple entries (like, *push hard?* THING FALLS OVER). The device works. But it's slow, and becomes geometrically slower with the complexity of the question, making it effectively useless for anything nontrivial.

Constant-Wear Prophylactic Biostasis Garment (Willis-G): Elastic long underwear threaded with wires and tubes which connect delicately and intricately to a bulky backpack containing tanks of super-cooled gases, sensors and monitors, and complex automatic control systems. If the wearer is seriously hurt, the suit induces suspended animation, preserving life until medical aid is available. It works, after a fashion: if the wearer takes an Incapacitate or Kill result, the suit instantly freezes him solid. (Vaporized is still Vaporized.) A successful medical skill attempt (a docbot must perform or assist with this) thaws the character out in Wounded status. The suit may be reused, but it has a 25% cumulative chance of failure each time after the first. It may optionally be equipped with a manual On button in a highly exposed location. Note that frozen characters may break if dropped.

Probability Control Experiment (Neddy-G): This comes in a heavily sealed case about the size of a lunchbox, weighing five kilos. Everyone in the lab is somewhat in awe of it. The user is warned. "Don't *ever* look in the box! You'll break the mojo!" No explanation of this statement is available at YELLOW clearance. It is entirely up to you whether or not the box influences luck. It contains a horseshoe, a four-leaf clover, a frowzy rabbit's foot, and a pair of loaded dice (all of which might have black-market value).

Cis-9-Basosterol (Victor-I): Synthetic Charm pheromone, to be applied to the skin (bottle is labeled For External Use Only). It certainly smells funny (you decide what's "funny" in this context). It doesn't charm people. Outside,

however, it will charm the socks off one species of animal or insect life, gamemaster's choice. Chipmunks or pigeons are recommended.

Maxwell-Effect Moleculokinesis Field Device (Willis-G): This is a large and truly terrifying rifle-type weapon: it is a Pyrokinesis gun, and it can be demonstrated to incinerate targets at a distance, without the all-too-well-known hazards of flamethrowers. Its drawbacks:

1. It draws huge amounts of power. For demonstration purposes it is plugged into a main; it will suck a laser pack dry in one shot. It may be plugged into the crawler's power takeoff, taking all power from all other systems (including propulsion) when fired.
2. 50% of the time it fires at reverse polarity, freezing the target (see Biostasis suit above for effects on people). This might be used to impress the Studio Engineers (see 4.8.1).
3. The power cable is too light, and will burn through with pyrotechnic results after five shots (less if desired).

4.4.2 More Conventional Gear

The Req Room staff are back to their usual surly selves this time. Half of them wish that *they* were going on a mission Outside. The other half thinks that giving equipment to an Outside mission team is the Alpha Complex equivalent of an expensive funeral. However, this mission has been classified PRIORITY (because it is being run at High Programmer request), so they can't do much but grumble and stall.

Most "reasonable" requests for equipment not on the assignment list will be honored — but 50% of all extra items will be seriously defective or mislabeled. Tac-nuke and power armor requests will be met by polite laughter.

The team's docbot is an Old Reliable Model V. If asked about its programming, the bot says that it has been specially equipped with an Old Reckoning Environmental Medicine package. This is true. The bot can, *if somebody asks it*, identify edible food (and shrewdly assess such other environmental medical situations as "an avalanche has buried him"). It also is loaded with Old Reckoning medical cliches, making it

"...three trench pens, two purple guns, and a cartridge with a spare key."



a cross between Marcus Welby MD, Dr. Kildare, and "Bones" McCoy.

Remember that everyone has to sign for the crawler and trailer. There should be some mystery about the trailer: the staff wants to know what it's for. Of course, the players don't know yet, but for them to say anything is treason.

The Crawler

Picture a bright yellow Winnebago, about 8 meters long, sporting treads instead of tires. Add a laser cannon turret on top, and cover the windows with retractable metal shielding. Pretty natty, huh?

The crawler is powered by an alcohol-burning engine; there is enough fuel in the tank to get the Troubleshooters anywhere they have to go. (Unless you want them to have to barter with the natives for moonshine.) The top, bottom, and all sides of the crawler are protected by heavy metal armor that provides adequate shielding (see Robot Roster), but does little to improve pickup. At best it can zoom along at about 25 kilometers per hour.

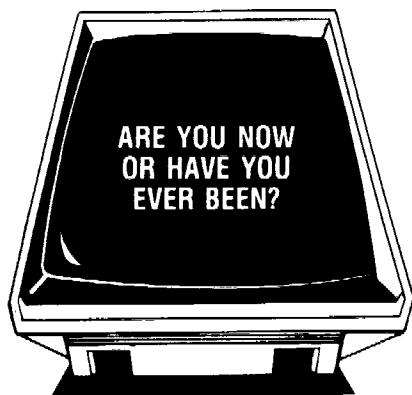
The vehicle can be controlled either manually or by autopilot. The autopilot is much too stupid to be considered a true bot brain, though it does respond to verbal commands, and can answer simple questions dealing with the operation or status of the crawler. (Troubleshooter: "What's happening now?" Pause. Autopilot: "We're on fire.")

The crawler easily holds the Troubleshooters and their gear; it not-so-easily holds the Docbot.

And Now the Bad News

If the PCs examine their gear (as any reasonably **PARANOID** Troubleshooters will) they find that most of it appears to match the Equipment list, with the exception of the case of HE grenades. When opened the case is found to contain exactly 21 brand new toilet floats. No grenades. Wouldn't it be funny if the Troubleshooters found this out *after* they had signed for the equipment?

What the Troubleshooters probably *won't* notice is that two of the eight cone rifle solid slugs are actually mislabelled hallucinogenic gas slugs. While these certainly could make their lives miserable (or very short), crafty Troubleshooters might be able to make a tidy profit selling the slugs to the Nouvelle Vaguers or Mystics.



4.5 Out Into the Cold, Cruel World

4.5.1 Secret Society Briefings

Those PCs who make contact with their societies or service groups find that all have the

same thing in mind: "While you're Out, will you bring me. . ." They see this mission as a trip to the pre-war supermarket.

There are two possible types of request:

1. Very general, for anything in keeping with the goals of the society or service group (weapons for the Armed Forces, consumer goods for the Romantics or Free Enterprisers).
2. Extremely specific ("A blue ribbed cylinder, stenciled GX-470-Detrick — and *don't touch the valve*"), implying that the society knows more about the mission than the player does; the player will of course never encounter the item he is ordered to retrieve.

4.5.2 The Sealed Orders

When the Troubleshooters arrive at the cavernous Vehicle Bay, there is a large fire merrily blazing. This creates much confusion, to say the least. The team is told that their vehicle has been consumed, and they will have to replace it. This proves to be incorrect; the crawler and trailer are in another part of the bay.

The Bay is a huge structure similar to an airplane hangar, but much larger and more crowded. Losing something the size of a crawler, or a Boeing 727, is no problem. The floor is covered with tire marks, hoses, cables, and meaningless colored stripes, and service vehicles race around madly. Overhead, cranes run along the girders, carrying vehicle parts and ordnance. Every so often they drop something, like an engine or a bomb.

A RED courier is waiting by the crawler (perhaps a clone of the courier from Mission Two), holding a sealed message pouch. He asks for a chit for the pouch. The players do not have this. He asks if they have fifty credits. If they do, he will hand over the pouch in exchange for the fifty, no questions asked. If they don't, he walks away. . . and a few minutes later, an IntSec trooper brings back the case, slightly battle-damaged.

The case contains Duke-U's map and a sheet of YELLOW Computer printout.

The Map

You are encouraged to actually fabricate the map: take a gas-station map (of any location, it doesn't matter and work it over, stomping on it, spilling coffee, tearing pieces off, until it looks like it's been in your glove compartment for three hundred years or so. Circle a couple of random locations in red ballpoint, mark a stretch of road with highlighter. If you can stamp it "COMPUTER PROPERTY — Unauthorized Possession Punishable by Summary Execution," all the better.

If you are too lazy to find a map and mutilate it, take a piece of blank paper and print across the top of it "EXTREMELY DETAILED AND USEFUL MAP!" You can scribble on it a bit if you have the energy. Then give it to the players and tell them, "Pretend this is an extremely detailed and useful map." They'll get the idea.

NOTE: Nowhere does The Computer or Doss-V suggest that the PCs' destinations are indicated on this map. The PCs are sent out to Investigate. Their methods are their own responsibility. Actually, even if The Computer knew anything, it would never divulge information about The Outdoors to lower security clearances.

The Yellow Computer Printout

Display the Yellow Computer Printout: Reference YCBBB.4.5.2 (page 27 of the pullout section) for the players to study.

Time to Hit the Road

Before the PCs get a chance to study the map or computer printout very carefully, a firebot wheels up, sprays them with a little water, then orders them to get the crawler and trailer out of here immediately, pointing a nozzle to the exit bay doors and guard checkpoint. Failure to follow orders will result in an improvised pitched battle with firebots, arrest for failure to follow orders, and a standard community execution.

When the PCs pull up to the exit bay doors and guard checkpoint, a kindly GREEN-clearance Vulture Squadron guard (sort of like a Boy Scout assisting an old lady across the street while waving a hand ax) steps out of his armored strongpoint and pleasantly asks to see the PCs' authorization for Outdoor Excursion.

The PCs will sit here until they show the guard the map and the computer printout. If they are good citizens, they'll call The Computer for clearance to show the guard the materials; otherwise, treason points are in order.

The sergeant will casually study the map and printout, revealing no sign of confusion at the obvious incoherence of the printout and the lack of correspondence between the map and the printout references. "Well, everything looks to be in order," he says, handing the materials back to the mission leader. "If you have any trouble finding your way around out there, just stop and ask the natives for directions." He steps back, slaps the side of the crawler, and says, "Okay, let's roll, and be careful out there."

He strolls back into the armored strongpoint and presses some buttons, and the exit bay doors open upon a Brave New World. The guard waves cheerily as the PCs motor off to meet their destiny.



4.6 Into the Unknown

4.6.1 The World Out There

To introduce your players to The Wonderful World of the Outdoors, read the following aloud:

Welcome to the Outside World, Troubleshooters! You're not going to like it here. Everything's made out of weird rough crumbly stuff, not nice clean plastic and metal. There aren't any pipes. There aren't any bathrooms (thank The Computer for the facility on your crawler)! The sky — it's not made of metal. Try not to think about that too much. And there are little alive things all over

the place, doing all sorts of strange awful allive-type things.

You really wanted to turn around and go back to the safe white Freudian curve of Alpha Complex. When you tried it, extremely large weapons were pointed at you. Sigh.

Fortunately you have your crawler, with its food supply and its weapons and its com link to The Computer. And you have the map that The Computer entrusted you with.

The first thing you notice about the map is that it does not show Alpha Complex. Eventually you notice that the countryside you are passing through bears no resemblance to the stuff on the map. Suddenly life on the Outside seems not so different from home, after all.

You have spoken to The Computer. Friend Computer has been very kind and understanding. Reading maps is a rare privilege for Troubleshooters, and you may be excused a few mistakes. The Computer points out that its very own data analysis routines prepared your order sheet. Surely any difficulties must be attributed to human error.

Well, as the nice Vulture Squadron guard said, maybe you should stop and ask the natives for directions. First, however, how to go about finding the natives. . .

This section describes a few arbitrary encounters the PCs might face in the process of wandering around the Outdoors in search of their mission objectives. You can probably imagine lots of others. Don't feel obligated to use ours just because you paid for them.

One nice touch is to take outdoor encounters from other fine *PARANOIA* products, particularly encounters that the players will recognize from earlier adventures. A little touch of the familiar will make the PCs feel right at home. For example, there is a lovely Outdoor Arbitrary Encounter Table in "Vapors Don't Shoot Back." That's a real swell *PARANOIA* adventure. Of course you have a copy. Or were planning to get one right away. We'll wait while you go get it from your local game merchant.

These encounters are just for fun and flavor. Don't get carried away. Don't spend too much time on them. And don't use them all at once. Save a few to spring on the PCs later in the adventure as they travel to the gangs or the mission objectives.

Don't wait too long to introduce the gangs. Too long is when the PCs get bored or frustrated wandering around aimlessly, trying to figure out what they're supposed to be doing. Poor things. They just need some guidance. And the gangs are just the ones to provide it. For the right price.

4.6.2 Life in the Fast Lane

The following is a menu of encounter possibilities while on the road. If the team decides to drive cross-country, see the list at 4.6.3.

Bad Weather: May slow the team's progress to a crawl, force them to stop, or cause them to run off the road (as in thick fog). Note that "weather" is broadly interpreted to mean all those environmental events the players are unfamiliar with, such as rain ("a pipe must have broken somewhere!") and nightfall ("The Comies are in Power Services!")

After reading the description of the Studio Engineers, below, you may wish to make it snow. You can. You are the Gamemaster. You can make it rain Swedish meatballs if you want. Just remember that Alpha citizens don't know snow from Swedish meatballs.

Road Out: Forces a period of off-road running. If they don't get the hint, broken road starts damaging the crawler's suspension, bruising passengers, etc.

Road Badly Out: A bridge is gone, pass blocked, or something else requiring a long detour and hunt for another piece of road. The team may fear becoming lost. This is foolish. They are already lost. The Computer will reassure them that it can broadcast a homing signal. It can, but it won't until it (or both of the two High Programmers) decides that mission objectives have been achieved.

Charge Attack: Between five and a dozen of the natives rush the vehicle. They are armed with pointed sticks and rocks, and present little real hazard.

Slightly More Intelligent Attack: This party of natives has some missile weapons — slings, bows, throwing spears — and uses them before charging the crawler (and being slaughtered anyway).

Wildlife Attack: It is hard to imagine what animals would charge the crawler (animals are much more sensible than people in this regard), but a bunch of crazy wolves or an eight-foot grizzly in a real bad mood are possibilities. Mutant wildlife, like gila monsters the size of Mack trucks, are another matter entirely.

Other Gang Attacks: If the party is traveling with the Cyberpunks or Nouvelle Vague (see below), the other gang swoops down. This is a Reasonably Intelligent Attack, i.e., the gangs use some crude tactics and retreat if they're getting badly stomped.

Really Grim Weather: From ice storms and flash floods up to tornadoes. (Speaking as an old Midwesterner, worse than tornadoes is probably not survivable.)

Barricade: Someone has piled junk on the road. It must be dodged around or blasted through. There may or may not be an accompanying ambush.

Boobytrap: A barricade with teeth: pits, snares, punji stakes, black-powder bombs. . . be creative. There will probably be ambushers unless: 1. something else ate them; or 2. they got careless setting the trap.

Wild Card: An Interstate cloverleaf to get lost in (Your Tax Dollars At Work). A fast-food stand stuffed with cannibals. Mel Gibson. Use your fiendish imagination.

4.6.3 Truckin'

Off the road, all the Weather and Attack encounters on the road are possible, plus the following:

Encampment: A humble native village, 20-50 inhabitants. They may be friendly. They may have a couple of heirloom anti-tank rockets. They probably carry weird diseases that Alpha Complex citizens have no immunity to.

Gang Encampment: Headquarters of one of the two major gangs (described below). Contact is possible, unless the team is traveling with the other gang, in which case a turf war is automatic.

Natural Hazard: Quicksand, rockslide, forest fire started by careless cleaning of laser weapons, small earthquake, explosion of a natural methane pocket, Costikyan Settling in the Icy Reaches of Montana.

Note: In adventure gaming, this is known as "an inside joke." Unfortunately, Costikyan Settling

in the Icy Reaches of Montana is so inside that even the editor has no idea to what it refers, and thus cannot explain it to you. We therefore humbly suggest that you replace it with some amusing "inside joke" of your own.

Reconbot: A small twin-copter observation bot, pretending to be on a secret mission for The Computer. Actually it has been "freed" by Corporate Metal, and spies on Vulture maneuvers and missions such as this one. It knows some Corporate Metal passwords, and could be helpful. Then again, maybe it's really a double agent for The Computer. You can't trust *anybody*.

4.7 The Gangs

These two groups are fairly large, upwards of 100 members total, and well-organized for Outside. (Actually, a prairie dog village is well-organized for Outside.) They are in a state of constant and total war, and roam the countryside on and off the roads, looking for enemy parties to bushwhack. They are distinctive enough that they will not mistake the Troubleshooters for the enemy gang; if the team is travelling with enemy gang members, that's another story.

The gangs are the devices you, Mr. Gamemaster, will use to draw the PCs to the two main mission objectives: the PACE Studio (where Black Boxes abound) and Uncle Ken's Super Service Station (where the fabled Corvette and even a Thunderbird may be found).

To get the cooperation of the gangs, the PCs must do two very important things: 1. ask the right questions, and 2. offer an appropriate payment for the gang's cooperation.

Asking the Right Questions

For each mission objective there is a series of key words which will be recognized by a few of the leaders or wise men of each gang.

"Acoustic readable data disks" or "black boxes" are the key words for the PACE Studio; the leaders will recall the jargon as typical phrases tossed about by The Engineers who staff PACE Studio.

For Uncle Ken's Super Service Station, the key words are "Corvette" or "Thunderbird"; the gang leaders and sages will recall that these names are written in shiny metal on two of the odd, autocar-like objects found at the service station.

Offering the Right Payment

The gangs are neither civic-minded, patriotically loyal to The Computer, nor subscribers to the Social Contract. They expect to be paid for information or assistance. No tickee, no shirtee.

Acceptable forms of payment include but are not necessarily limited to:

- **Alpha Complex trade goods:** anything manufactured in Alpha Complex — weapons, bots, experimental devices, routine Troubleshooter gear, household items, anything that is scarce in the primitive economy of the Outdoors.
- **Military assistance:** each gang has a grudge against the other, or covets something valuable at PACE Studio or the Service Station. Aiding the gang in pursuing such a grudge or covet could be fair payment for information or assistance.
- **A piece of the action:** the PCs might propose a raid or assault on a mission objective with gang assistance, with a percentage or specific reward promised.

Note also that mutant powers or persuasive skills (such as Charm or Con) may be used to

supplement or replace payment in some cases.

The PCs must also avoid two very serious mistakes: **1.** butchering the gang members who can lead them to their objectives, and **2.** getting themselves butchered by the gangs for rude and offensive behavior. This may be very difficult for trigger-happy **PARANOIDS**. If the PCs manage to alienate one gang, a hint from The Computer may be in order. "Hello, there, Troubleshooters! How's the mission going? Have you found any natives to assist you in locating the valuable equipment we sent you after?" If the PCs got wiped out, a hint to their clones will suffice.

4.7.1 The Cyberpunks

A post-everything cycle gang, the Punks wear leather and chrome and silicon chips, and like anything shiny and high-tech in appearance. They are armed with knives and swords, leaf-spring crossbows, and the occasional ancient gun.

The motorcycle is sacred in Cyberpunk mythology. Some of them have real derelict bikes; most of the rest have imitations cobbled together from junk. None of these function — the riders push them along with their feet. This looks very silly, and the Punks will kill you if you say so.

The Cyberpunks do have a vague sort of honor code: they fight duels one-on-one, and prefer shooting people in the front.

They will covet the Troubleshooters' hardware like mad, of course, and will try very hard to get hold of any motor that looks adaptable to powering a motorcycle. (If for some reason the team has a motorcycle, they will stop at nothing for it. A person with a working bike would automatically be Lord of the Punks.)

The current Cyberpunk leaders are a brother and sister named Jake and Elwood. (She's Jake.) They wear black leather blazers, snap-brim fedoras, and dark glasses. Jake carries a slugthrower (S&W .38 Police Positive, with four rounds in the cylinder and six more in her pocket; Troubleshooter ammo won't fit, but Jake

doesn't know that). Elwood packs a big smile and the Charm mutation.

The Cyberpunks know the location of the PACE Studio, and are on fairly good terms with the Studio Engineers, who play them heavy-metal music in exchange for stuff the Engineers think is "money." They know the location of Uncle Ken's Super Service Station very well indeed, and have been trying to loot it for years, but HARV[E] (see 4.8.2) always runs them off. It will certainly occur to Jake and Elwood to have the Troubleshooters destroy, or at least divert, HARV[E] while they rob Uncle Ken's.

If the Troubleshooters survive to go home, any surviving Cyberpunks will try to follow them back to Alpha Complex, which they imagine as a giant Harley-Davidson showroom. (More on this later.)

4.7.2 Nouvelle Vague

If the Punks are heavy-metal, the Vaguers are folk-rock. They think of themselves as "true people of the land," totally without justification. They wear clothing in earth colors, usually with a thick coating of the real thing. Nouvelle Vague pursues a sort of nature mysticism crossed with Gary Cooper-movie individualism: imagine a culture built entirely on readings of Timothy Leary, French movies, Hermann Hesse, and Ayn Rand.

The Vaguers will be friendly toward Sierra Clubbers and Mystics (real or claimed), and fascinated by any psionic mutations the players choose to reveal (or pretend to have). They will offer to share their humble but chemically sophisticated fare (anybody but a Mystic who does so takes an easy insanity check once the rush hits). They are not actually anti-technology, unless it reminds them of the Cyberpunks; they will find items like warm clothing, ice guns, and tangles fascinating.

The Vaguers are strongly anti-war. They think it is a much better idea to set traps and sneak up behind people. They may do this because they desire what the party has, or because party members infringed on their enlightened self-

interest, or because Mars is in the eleventh house and Scorpio is rising.

Nouvelle Vague has no organized leadership. ("We're an anarcho-sindicalist commune!") This means that if a particular Vaguer wants to kill somebody, no one will try to interfere with his Karma in doing so.

When the PCs ask to speak to leaders or knowledgeable folks, they will be directed to the Guru. The Guru is a bona fide Psionic with a complete repertoire of all the psionic mutations. He is Totally Aware, man, and Cosmic. Wow.

Initially, when out among the public, the Guru answers all the PCs' questions with obscure parables ("Ah, that reminds me of the story of the Grasshopper and the Microwave.") and bland homilies ("What, Me Worry?"). However, when the Guru gets the PCs in private, he turns into a wheeler-dealer. He drives a hard bargain, but he can deliver the information, and if the price is right, he can use his psionic powers and con skill to persuade the Nouvelle Vaguers to get together behind his trip.

The Vaguers are on slightly worse terms with the Studio Engineers than the Punks are, because they, like, can't get behind the money trip the Engineers are on. Still, they pay for concerts when they can, and can get the Troubleshooters to the PACE Studio. They know of the Service Station, but consider it a place of many negative waves and never touch anything there, so HARV[E] lets them alone.

They will also try to follow the team home, out of curiosity and to pick off the Cyberpunks one by one.

4.8 Mission Objectives

4.8.1 The PACE Studio

See "Pace Studio" layout on page 22.

Tucked away in a small valley is a smooth white dome, reminiscent of a tiny Alpha Complex. On its roof are a set of corroded microwave antennas, trained on long-decayed satellites. A weathered bronze plaque on the door reads **PACE Pilot Recording Studio**, and shows a record surrounded by orbiting electrons.

Promoters Allied for Cheap Energy built this place as the prototype of a totally self-contained, highly automated recording facility. Nuclear-powered and computer-controlled, it was to be the test site for exotic new equipment that would make unionized crews obsolete. Then they would go about replacing musicians. Alas, the Big Accident came before the project could be completed. The staff, living rather well in their self-sustaining quarters, passed on their knowledge to another generation. And another, and another. But as everybody knows, each later generation of a recording contains some new errors. So now there are...

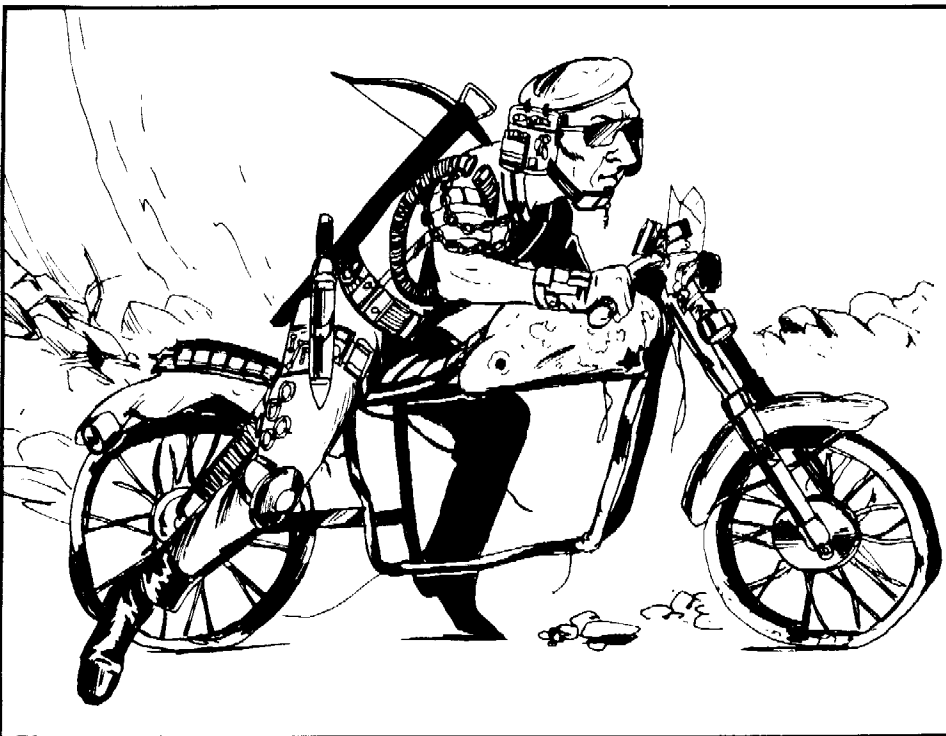
The Studio Engineers

These people wear jumpsuits with their names stenciled on the pockets. (That is to say, they take names to match those stenciled on the suits.) The jumpsuits are brand new: they are of a paper fiber that is broken down and reassembled by the automatic laundry.

The Engineers pay little attention to the service equipment, since it needs none. They spend their time on the video games in the Recreation Room, and on the Studio gear — the recorders, mikes, multitrack mixers, equalizers, etc., etc. It is almost an object of worship. But not quite. That role is reserved for money.

The Engineers are obsessed with money. They will offer to do just about anything for money, *except* sell any equipment from the

The Road Worrier.



Studio (including the Master Recordings). There is only one thing they want almost as much, and that's snow. Literally. Crystallized water. Its other meaning has been lost. They don't know what they want it for, but that's how tradition is.

They speak a rapid-fire *Variety*-style slang: "Sure, we'll lay you down a track, just ink your Hancock on the dotted line and we'll have the boys in Legal shoot you down a contract before you can say Hix Nix Stix Flix, have a cigar, after all you're gonna be spinning platinum soon, we must have lunch but don't quote me. . ." When recording matters are involved, this becomes an even less intelligible tech jargon: "So we got to use gated cardioids, drop it 4 dB and Dolbyize through the Revox, unless you're not afraid of the Nagras printing through. . ."

They have the language down cold, and they know every knob and button and capstan-drive in the Studio, all of which is in perfect working order. Unfortunately, they don't have the faintest idea what to do with any of that hardware. If promised enough money ("At least four percent over union scale, man.") they will promise to "cut a master, lay down some serious tracks, do a pressing that'll be Number 1 with a bullet," but all they can really do is make the equipment hum and rotate in an interesting fashion, and occasionally produce a deafening scream of acoustic feedback.

They can, however, operate the playback decks, if a Master Recording is loaded (an almost ritual act).

There are 20 Engineers of ordinary rank, 5 higher ranks called Producers, and the Studio Head. The Head (also called the Mogul, Boss Honcho, etc.) has four personal bodyguards called Goons. Goons wear mirrored sunglasses as badge of office. They are armed with brass knuckles.

Engineers refer to death as "going on the road." They believe that some day, a crew of Roadies will arrive to take them all out on a Concert Tour. This could give the Troubleshooters a way in; however, the Cyberpunks tried that trick once long ago, and the Engineers are wary.

Mission Objectives

The PCs are here for "Acoustic Readable Data Disks" or "Black Boxes." All the Engineers but the Head Honcho are so thoroughly divorced from reality that they will fail to catch the significance of the PCs' interest in the acoustic readable data disks — the Master Recordings. The Engineers just keep spouting encouraging talk of how big the PCs' next hit is going to be, and directing the PCs to talk with the Boss Honcho.

The Boss Honcho will catch on immediately that the PCs are looking to loot the Master Recordings. He will listen patiently to the PCs, then shrug his shoulders, grin cooperatively, say, "Well, I'm sure we can do business here. . ." Then he'll turn to his Goons, give a secret hand sign, and the Goons will open fire. From this point it is a to-the-death battle for the studio and the Master Recordings.

Entering the Studio

Just inside the Studio doors is a reception lobby, with kitschy vinyl furniture, plastic ferns and a terrarium with some dead lizards. The walls are hung with gold records and incomprehensible abstract paintings. This motif of very expensive bad taste is present throughout the Studio complex. Everything is very clean and well-maintained, thanks to the automatic maintenance systems. Most of these systems are invisible — special airflow vents that keep

things dust-free, for instance — but the occasional sweeperbot will appear to startle the players.

A desk in the lobby is manned by one of the low-rank Engineers. This person's purpose is to send people away politely but firmly. "I'm *sorry*-ree, but he's in conference and can't be disturbed until August. No, they're all in Gstaad. Are you representing investors, or yourselves? Requests for employment must go through the office in Marin County." And so on. The receptionist is really just an annoyance; any reasonable excuse will get the players past the front desk.

Once past the desk the PCs will have to wander around looking for someone official to talk to. All the Engineers are "just hanging out," chatting in obscure jargon and polishing the hardware. The PCs will consistently be given polite, encouraging, and unresponsive answers to their questions — "We're with you all the way, solid on your concept. Just need to finalize the contract wording and check with marketing. See the Boss Honcho and we'll be ready to go the limit. Awesome." The Boss Honcho is "around here somewhere," nobody is quite sure where.

The Boss Honcho will be in the last place the PCs look for him — that is, the PCs run into the Boss Honcho when you are tired of sending the PCs around through the studio after him, and when you are ready for a little shoot-'em-up.

The Engineers' Quarters

These apartments are well-equipped but rather plain; there are more decorations (album covers, concert posters, autographed 8x10 glossies) in the upper ranks' rooms. All rooms have telephone intercoms, and monitor speakers and video screens connected to the deck in the main equipment area; twice a day an Engineer, called the DJ, plays an hour of programming for the entire staff. (This means the players should have some chance to see the recordings and what they do.)

The Studio Head's apartment contains its own playback deck, and he alone may borrow recordings for his own entertainment.

The Studio Commissary serves synthesized meals considerably superior to Alpha Complex vat product. (Unfortunately the Commissary equipment is not portable.)

The Recreation Room contains video and other games, including an electronic skeet range (the guns look real but are harmless low-power lasers) and a full-size Bally Fireball pinball machine. The video game Berserk, with its laser-armed hero fleeing killer robots, is probably treasonous but should fascinate the Troubleshooters.

The Concert Hall is an auditorium to which paying customers are admitted to watch playbacks. It contains no equipment other than a holographic projection stage.

The Studio Itself

The Control Room is filled with electronic hardware: rack after rack of metal-fronted components, dangling patchcords, bouncing meter needles, green-glowing screens, whole galaxies of twinkling LEDs. Imagine the showroom of a huge and upscale electronics store, multiplied by at least ten. The most prominent feature is the 64-track mixer, a vast ocean of slide-pots and timbre controls.

On the other side of a soundproof window above the mixing board is the performance area, a stage big enough for a dozen musicians and their equipment. The walls are lined with sound-deadening material, surfaced with a shiny

silvery stuff. The walls can be used as projection screens in the production of video clips; there are hologram projectors and laser light-show generators mounted near the ceiling. The lasers are harmless but don't look it. Triggering the projectors during a battle could be very exciting, as images of flying saucers swoop to the attack, tanks roll, Mick Jagger struts. . .

Both parts of the Studio are off limits to all but Engineers, though a heavily escorted guest might be taken on a "backstage tour."

Twenty meters below the Control Room, accessible by a narrow service ladder, is the Studio's isotope power plant, which still has a decade or two of operation before internal neutron decay causes it to collapse into a lump of unbelievably radioactive butterscotch crunch, melting the bedrock and causing the Studio to relocate toward China. The reactor chamber is dramatically lit by colored displays and contains a number of confusing controls: tinkering with these could cause an early melt.



Storeroom A

This room is filled with musical instruments: synthesizers, horns, drums, lots of guitars. The Engineers can't play any of them, though sometimes they take them out and lip-synch.

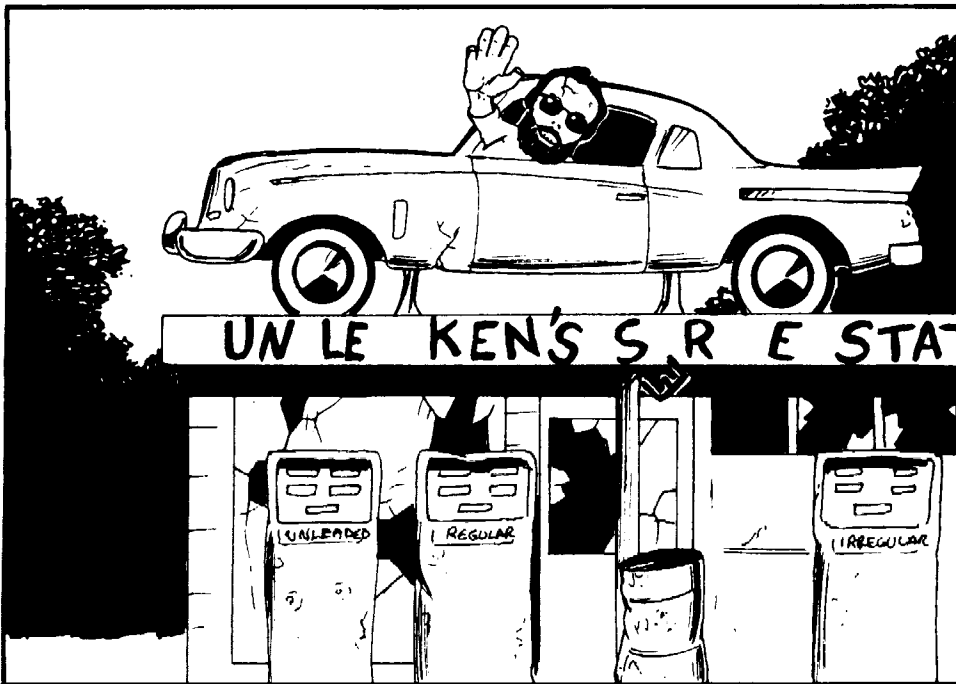
Troubleshooters do not know what musical instruments are, either. They should probably have this room described as a sort of armory: guitars are rifles, keyboards are computer terminals, mariachis are a kind of grenade.

Storeroom B

This is where the Master Recordings are kept, the Studio Engineers' greatest treasure. The room, which is carefully cleaned and maintained, is lined floor to ceiling with — how'd you guess — Black Boxes. They all used to say things like "Creedence Clearwater Revival Master Recording Set," but the Engineers have polished them so many times they're down to plain black wood.

There are over three hundred Boxes, each of which contains 24 hours' worth of audio or video disks (all play back on the same deck). This is more than the PCs' vehicle and trailer will hold, even if they should get a chance to take so many, which they shouldn't.

The Engineers will die to protect the Master Recordings. Every so often a box does get stolen by a visitor (without labels, it's hard to keep track), like the one that made its way to Alpha Complex. If the Engineers should all be killed, the Cyberpunks and Nouvelle Vague will be hot after the music. If The Computer finds out about the hoard, it will be a war between Philip-U trying to recover them all, and maybe the Studio equipment too, and Duke-U trying to steal them if he can and destroy them if he can't. The Computer itself will want the Studio and everything



Last services on this route before Armageddon.

in it obliterated, and will order a massive Vulture airstrike to do so, which will set a nice time limit on Troubleshooter actions.

4.8.2 Wouldn't You Really Rather Have a Bulck?

"Uncle Ken's Super Service Station" appears to be a vehicle sales and service facility. It is surrounded by what Troubleshooters should be able to recognize by their wheels, seats, and general configuration as vehicles of some kind, probably autocars. It appears to be deserted. Attentive players will notice two things that are odd about the Station:

1. it is a very long way from a road, and
2. the Cyberpunks have not looted it bare.

Uncle Ken's is actually a secret military experimental station. There is no road because the experiment was interrupted by the end of the world. (If it had been completed, they would have *built* a road. R&D logic is unchanging.) The Cyberpunks have not stripped the car lot because the experiment, Project Pooka, is operational.

HARV[E]

HARV[E] (Heuristic Automated Recon Vehicle [Evaluation model]) is an extremely sophisticated tank. Also a very powerful one. If HARV[E] had passed his evaluations, he and a team of units like him would be deployed in "militarily sensitive" areas, on constant silent vigil.

Silent — HARV[E] moves on a set of baffled hoverfans so quiet that he can sneak up to within a few meters of a person unheard. He can also hit 100 kph flat out, rather more noisily.

And invisible — the antiradiation coatings on HARV[E]'s smooth flanks, coupled with thermal and acoustic chameleon transducers beneath, make him undetectable by visible light or any sort of electronic sensing: radar, infrared, magnetic. He can only be detected if he breaks radio silence or fires his weapons. (Certain psionic powers might be able to detect him.)

HARV[E] is armed with a turreted Laser Cannon III, fore and aft Sonic Blasters, and an Anti-Missile Phalanx-Laser battery (intended most-

ly as an anti-personnel weapon, since no conventional missile can lock on to HARV[E]).

HARV[E]'s mind is that of an eager young recruit who has been told to "wait outside" while his test scores are processed. He has been waiting for two hundred and sixteen years now. But he is very patient (part of his scout programming). He has grown to like the little woodland creatures, the squirrels and grizzly bears and giant mutant wolf spiders. He will wait until someone comes (with the proper authorization, of course — HARV[E]'s sentry programming is very strong) to tell him whether or not he has passed his evaluations.

Until then, silent, deadly, but meaning well, HARV[E] patrols the countryside in a 10-km radius from his camouflaged base, allowing no one to damage Uncle Ken's, or hurt his one friend, ELWOOD.

ELWOOD

No, not the Cyberpunk leader. ELWOOD 3610 (Electronic Longterm Warfare Outpost Operations Device) is the other half of Project Pooka, an immobile self-aware tactical computer intended to coordinate the actions of ten HARV[E]s. ELWOOD knows that the war is over and the high command is dead and nobody's ever going to take HARV[E] home. But he hasn't told HARV[E], because then the tank would have no purpose in his life, and besides, if HARV[E] went away, soon the scavengers would be in to scrap ELWOOD — and HARV[E] would be all alone.

Sort of gets you right there, don't it?

ELWOOD 3610 completely fills the trunk of a 1967 Thunderbird convertible, parked in the Service Station garage area. ELWOOD weighs two metric tons (concealed supports hold up the car's back end). His power and external data bus cables run through the car and out the hood (where they look like battery-charge cables) to, respectively, a buried isotope generator like the one at the PACE Studio, and an antenna array on the roof, concealed inside a giant fiberglass Studebaker with a giant fiberglass Uncle Ken waving from behind the wheel.

He has an external speaker, which he uses to talk to HARV[E], or friendly passers-by.

ELWOOD is genial (if you want to make him sound like Jimmy Stewart, we have no way of stopping you). The machines also have a radio link which is not normally used (so the tank can "maintain radio silence") but which ELWOOD will not hesitate to use if threatened.

If ELWOOD or his car are moved more than a few centimeters, the aging cables will give way, and ELWOOD will "die." This will make HARV[E] very angry with whomever killed his friend. Simply reconnecting ELWOOD is not sufficient: he must be run through a coldstart procedure, requiring Computer Operation skill, to get his higher logic areas going again. ELWOOD can be operated off the crawler's power plant; the crawler may not fire its weapons during such operation.

HARV[E] and ELWOOD Vs. the PCs

"Oh, boy!" I hear you say. "An invisible, silent tank! Boy, am I going to have some fun with those poor Troubleshooters!"

Actually, the problem is going to be finding some excuse not to turn the PCs to apoplexy. What we have here is the equivalent of an invisible, silent, fire-breathing dragon. No way the PCs are going to walk away from that one.

Though HARV[E] and ELWOOD are a great idea, they are just too tough in game terms. So we have to make them psychologically whimpy pacifists, or your players are going to get a lot of practice role-playing vapors.

Use these principles to keep Project Pooka from crushing your players' morale:

1. HARV[E] is ALMOST silent and ALMOST invisible. His hoverfans make a barely-noticeable hum, and his designers never quite handled the problem of disguising his shadow — in poor light, the shadow is masked, but in strong light, like sunlight, the shadow is faint but noticeable.

Whenever the PCs are quiet and looking around, HARV[E] is probably right behind their backs, keeping an eye on them. Tell the PCs about an odd, faint buzzing that seems to come from no particular direction. And when they are looking over the station, tell one of the PCs by note that he caught a glimpse of something moving out of the corner of his eye, but that there was nothing there when he turned to look. This sort of thing will keep the PCs on their toes and paranoid, so they won't get careless and do something rash.

2. HARV[E] and ELWOOD always give a series of verbal and physical warnings before they unleash their main arsenals. For example, as the PCs approach the station, ELWOOD will address them through his external speaker, "Caution! This is a restricted area! Danger! Tactical weapons testing in progress! Warning!"

And if the PCs do something foolish like start shooting up the station, HARV[E] will politely warn the PCs by broadcasting over their com units, "I'm sorry, I have been directed to destroy you if you do not desist these actions. Please stop immediately." If the PCs don't desist, he turns their trailer into Swiss cheese. If that hint is insufficient. . .

Go ahead. Fry 'em.

Fill 'Er Up, Uncle Ken

Everything here is worth salvaging: the cars and the robots especially — even the ancient Motor's and Chilton's service manuals *might* not crumble into dust at a touch. Of course, if the players figure out a way to deactivate (lotsa luck) or distract HARV[E], the Cyberpunks will be on Uncle Ken's like locusts. And Nouvelle Vague will decide it's a real good time to ambush the Punks. As for the Folks Back Home, Duke-U will kill for cars, or even parts; Philip-U will kill to keep him from getting them; The Computer will

want ELWOOD captured or destroyed. Probably destroyed. The Computer has a big ego problem about other computers.

If a fight starts and ELWOOD is still connected, you might wish to throw in his perimeter defenses: a belt of mines around the Service Station, and a remote machinegun turret inside the dummy car on the roof. All but a few of the mines have deteriorated and merely make thick black smoke, and the sighting camera for the gun is broken, so ELWOOD must shoot blind.

You have probably noticed that the computer has the same name as one of the Cyberpunk leaders. This not only allows the designer to get in an extra pop-culture joke, but opens up lots of opportunities for further confusion. For instance, if the players talk about killing Elwood the Cyberpunk while HARV[E] can hear them, the tank will assume they mean ELWOOD 3610, and be very upset with them. Likewise if the Punks, especially Jake, should hear about grabbing ELWOOD and taking him back to Alpha Complex.



What you can't see can't hurt you.

4.9 No Direction Home

4.9.1 Off We Go...

By now the Troubleshooters should have **A.** assembled a load of loot to take home, or **B.** gotten involved in a gang war, or **C.** caused The Computer to order Vulture strikes on the Studio, the Service Station, and/or themselves (in any combination), or **D.** all of the above.

It is time to consider a strategic and orderly withdrawal (sample of Troubleshooter humor: "What do you call forty Troubleshooters hanging off the skid of a Flybot?"). The less The Computer knows about mission status, the easier this will be, because many fewer things will be hunting down the Troubleshooters.

However, the more things that are in fact breathing down their necks, the more effective the climax to this Mission (and with it, the Adventure) will be. This is the part of the narrative, familiar to all from movies and television, called The Chase. And as Mack Sennett knew, the more things in The Chase and the crazier they are — cops, firetrucks, steamrollers, roller skaters, baby carriages, and don't forget the truckload of custard pies — the better.

Imagine a long cone laid on the countryside. The point of the cone is the Troubleshooter team, trying to make their very slow crawler go very fast, without losing their trailer load of videodiscs and spare shock absorbers or the Nash

Rambler being towed from the trailer's rear hitch. If the crawler has konked out, it is being towed by a straining transport flybot, possibly using Troubleshooters as tow cables. Behind them come the Cyberpunks, pedaling their toy motorbikes like mad. (Feel free to insert a downslope here to help them out.) Behind the Punks come the Vaguers, laughing hysterically with murderous intent. Then the surviving Studio Engineers, in the Studio Head's BMW with the Goons on the running boards. Some miscellaneous natives for local color. Siberian Communist timberwolves. The Great Jihad. Sandworms of Dune. The Last Secret Weapon of the Third Reich. Emperor Ming's Death Squadron. You get the idea. Don't forget HARV[E]: ol' Gomer Pylebot certainly hasn't forgotten the bad men who killed his buddy Sergeant ELWOOD.

And above it all, just behind the Mothership and the Killer Bees, flies every Vulture The Computer has been able to get airborne, with orders to bomb, strafe, scatter, destroy, do *something* to the long-dreaded-and-finally-here Invasion of the Communist Mutants from Hell. (Hey, what a great title for an Adventure.)

4.9.2. . . Into the Wild Blue Yonder

So what happens when they reach Alpha Complex?

Consider the possibilities:

You could find some way to defuse the whole explosion, what us writers who want to show off our Latin call a *deus ex machina*:

1. One of the warring High Programmers shoots the other dead, and The Computer freezes all destruct orders until the contradictions are sorted out.
2. The Computer finds out about the High Programmer's treason and has them both shot. (Same results as #1.)
3. Another Alpha Complex, seeing the mass concentration of, well, stuff, thinks it is being invaded, and launches a counterstrike that exactly neutralizes this one. (Impressive, if a trifle desperate.)
4. Great Cithulhu rises from sunken R'lyeh and eats everybody, no saving roll. (Sorry, got carried away.)

The Anticlimactic Ending

If you take the easy way out and let Alpha Complex survive, there will, of course, be a Debriefing.

A squad of BLUE Vulture Squadron guards will take the characters to the doors of Briefing Room AA, and leave them there. There will be no security device barring the way: instead, a large, leatherette-bound book is sitting on a small table. Attached to the book by a chain is a ball-point pen. A small sign above the table reads: "Enter and sign-in, please."

The pen is almost out of ink; it will run out after the third Troubleshooter has signed-in. (Whether some or all of the Troubleshooters do not sign-in makes no difference; the information in the book is classified ULTRAVIOLET, and no one will ever read it.)

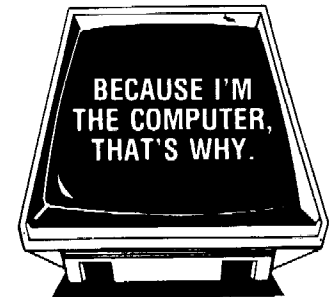
The PCs will probably enter the briefing room with trepidation, no doubt expecting to face a stern Doss-V ready to blame them for everything: destruction of Computer property, leading the Commie invasion to Alpha Complex, violating The Prime Directive, etc. However, when they do summon enough courage to enter, the room will be empty. The high bench is vacant: a single spotlight is focused on the chair that Doss-V used to occupy. Even The Computer's terminal in the room is deactivated.

After about ten minutes, the spotlight will go out. Time passes....

Eventually the Troubleshooters should get tired of standing around in the dark and will go home.

Actually, The Computer has decided that the Mission was a failure. Since this would imply a mistake on The Computer's part in okaying the Mission, and The Computer never makes mistakes, The Computer has decided that the Mission never occurred. Therefore no one has come to the briefing room to be debriefed, because there is no Mission to be debriefed from. Doss-V has been executed for wasting valuable Computer time requesting status reports on a Mission that never existed.

The Troubleshooters will earn no Treason or Commendation points for Mission 4. If they keep their mouths shut, they can keep everything they found Outside. No one will ever admit that anything ever happened, anywhere.



4.9.3 The Big Bang

Another option, one that is suitable to **PARANOIA** as to few other game systems, is to let nature take its course. Think about it. In fantasy, Cosmic Evil is never *really* allowed to overthrow the nice pastoral feudal autocracy. In space opera, the planetoid never *really* hits the inhabited planet. The villain *always* has a button that blows up his headquarters, and *always* shows Agent 007 where it is.

Haven't you always wanted to see the logical thing happen, the world *not* get saved at the last instant? Remember the first time you saw *Dr. Strangelove*? Well, now you can. Your players shouldn't mind. People who get upset when their characters don't reach 15th Level don't play **PARANOIA**. (Not twice, anyway.)

A suggested scenario to bring the adventure to a memorable socko finish:

The cross-country motorcade draws close to the walls of Alpha Complex. The doors show no sign of opening. The chase shows no sign of slowing down. The Vultures peel off, screaming, for attack runs. Everybody is shooting. Some of them are even hitting things, not that it's making any difference.

One of the Troubleshooters (perhaps remembering the Vulture Raid at the end of Mission Three) points out that the bombers are going to late-apex their dives again: wherever the bombs and beams hit, the Vultures are going to plow right into the city.

Every Com and Multicorder screen begins flashing:

:YOU ARE ALL TRAITORS EVERY ONE OF YOU I KNEW IT FROM THE FIRST BUT NOW I HAVE PROOF OF IT BY GEOMETRIC LOGIC

:IT WAS THE STRAWBERRIES

:ABSOLUTE PRIORITY ORDER 001

:ALL VEHICLES I SAY AGAIN ALL TRAITOR VEHICLES TERMINATE POWER INSTANTLY

:I, THE GREAT OZ, HAVE SPOKEN

The air is suddenly quiet as all the Vulture engines die. There is only an ominous whistling of wings.

Now, of course, the Vultures *can't* pull out of the dive, nor can they dump their ordnance loads.

By the hundreds, they punch through the walls and roof of Alpha Complex.

There is a moment of stillness, and then the bombs go off. Another pause (play it for all it's worth) and then secondary explosions occur in power plants, armories, chemical storage; *everywhere*. The earth heaves as all of Alpha goes up.

Everyone stares for a while. They start arguing about where to go next. There is supposed

to be another Alpha Complex only a couple hundred clicks away, not so bad if they can hot-wire the crawler, and figure out a hundred clicks *which* way.

HARV[E] noses up and levels his laser. "Are you going to take my friend ELWOOD home now, or do I have to get mean?"

You might ask them if they have any better ideas...



Citizen Sessil-B-DML's great epic.



West End Games, Inc.
251 West 30th St.
New York, NY 10001

THE YELLOW CLEARANCE BLACK BOX BLUES

A PARANOIA Adventure by John M. Ford



Friend Computer!

:AT YOUR SERVICE

What's in this adventure?

:WHAT IS YOUR SECURITY CLEARANCE PLEASE?

Clearance YELLOW, Friend.

:THIS ADVENTURE WILL GIVE YOU MANY EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE COMPUTER AND YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS OF ALPHA COMPLEX. AS A TROUBLESHOOTER, YOU WILL BATTLE AGAINST TRAITORS TO THE COMPUTER, INCLUDING A DEADLY CONSPIRACY OF COMMUNIST MUTANTS OF UNBELIEVABLE POWER, ARMED WITH WEAPONS ONE CAN HARDLY BEGIN TO IMAGINE.

But can I survive that?

:I'M SORRY. THAT INFORMATION IS NOT AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME

A new standard of excellence in role-playing adventures!

We got A REAL WRITER to compose this epic adventure: John M. Ford, winner of the World Fantasy Award for Best Novel and author of several REAL BOOKS. And a guy that hands in a 120-page manuscript with only *one* misspelled word. See? A REAL GENIUS. (And he's even funnier than us famous game designers.)

We can't tell you what this adventure is about (except that lots of confused and desperate people are killing each other over a mysterious black box), but we can tell you what it (the adventure, that is, not the box) contains:

- A 48-page illustrated gamemaster booklet containing a pullout section with maps, prepared player character cards, and other assorted props and displays
- A stand-up GM reference screen (cleverly disguised as the adventure cover) with player and non-player character statistics
- Many new and unusual ways to reduce your Troubleshooters to a thick, yellow spray

For 2-6 players and gamemaster

Recommended for ages 12 and up

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"PARANOIA" and "THE YELLOW CLEARANCE BLACK BOX BLUES" are West End's names for its science fantasy role-playing game and supplement. TM applied for.



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**YOU ARE IN ERROR.
NO ONE IS SCREAMING.
THANK YOU FOR
YOUR COOPERATION.**