THE PARANOIA

SOURCEBOOK

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END
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THE PARANOIA PARANOIA PARANOIA SOURCEBOOK

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Introduction: Somewhere in Alpha...

Ernest-R-NOT-2 strode purposefully down the hallway to Troubleshooter Headquarters. It had been a full two weekcycles since Vulture strikecraft had leveled the old HQ, forcing them to operate out of an old Hot Fun storage facility, yet Ernest still hadn't gotten used to the musty smell.

He picked his way carefully around the rubble still littering the corridor, endeavoring to hold his head high at the same time. He tried to hide his trembling hands as he passed the two Orange guards from the Committee of Internal Affairs at the entrance to the Headquarters. Rumor had it that their CIA-issue doberbot could smell subversive thoughts at a range of forty meters. He remembered how they grilled Mac-R-THY the other daycycle, badgerbotting him until he stammered and started crying.

Suspiciously eyeing him, the CIA guards motioned Ernest through the door. Inside Headquarters he met Mac-R, recently released from CIA Counseling. Mac-R looked pale, and his hairline appeared to have receded an inch or two. Grim business, that, but with Commies and psychos and the fascist war pigs of The Computer pounding on the gates of Alpha Base, one could never be too sure.

He noticed Anne-R-KEY-2 saunter in shortly afterwards, and the two of them exchanged Seal Club solidarity salutes. Mac-R smiled hysterically.

Ernest's Team was now assembled, given that Barb-R had run out a couple clones short of a six-pack. They proceeded to the airlock leading to their briefing room in Mission Control.

Inside the airlock, they all rapidly rolled up their sleeves. Kudit-B-EGO liked for his Teams all to look rough and ready. The inner airlock slid open just as they finished.

"Laserslingers reporting as ordered,

sir," he said, saluting the leather-clad unshaven officer.

"I have a tough assignment for y'all," he drawled. "You'll leave for the Badlands by your usual route. Once there, you'll rendezvous with an informer who'll show you how to infiltrate Alpha Complex. Then ..."

The Laserslingers paled as Kudit-B described their assignment. For Mac-R, paling even further was quite an accomplishment.

So begins another gibbering adventure featuring our intrepid Troubleshooters. Fearless defenders of freedom, guardians of the huddled millions of Alpha Base from dangers uncounted lying in wait in the Badlands and beyond, warriors against the encroaching death of Computer tyranny, ever-watchful protectors of truth, security, and a good time.

Or, perhaps the Troubleshooters are the valiant and vigilant protectors of Friend Computer, the last bastion of civilization against the anarchy of Alpha Base, the Commies, and the Mutant Hordes of the Badlands.

Or, maybe, they are products of aberrant technology and greed — as represented by the fascist Alpha Complex, the exploitive Alpha Base, and the over privileged Alpha City areas — striving to survive in a wasted world not of their own making.

Whatever.

The Paranoia Sourcebook: The Alpha Update is a smorgasbord of ideas, facts, and rumors to help you get your campaign (and players) off and running.

Included are sections elaborating on the state of Alpha now that The Computer's back; a section on helping keep the Troubleshooters alive (!) and in a fun, ongoing campaign; and a section on the new "Emergency Ser-

vices" branch of the Troubleshooters! And, as an added bonus, the very first (never before seen in stores) issue of *"At Your Service, Citizen ...,"* the very *Paranoia'*d newsletter!

You are, of course, required by the Alpha Complex Treason Code section 15724.373/762.3b paragraph 784, to own a copy of *Paranoia, Second Edition.* Copies of *The DOA Sector Travelogue* and the *Crash Course Manual* are also recommended for use in an ongoing *Paranoia* campaign.

So Why Should I Have a Campaign?

Most *Paranoia* aficionados have traditionally played *Paranoia* as one-shot adventures, using our vaunted *Paranoia* adventures or quick-death schemes of their own devising. Each adventure was self-contained, and, though characters might last from adventure to adventure, there was no other attempt at continuity.

As a result, the Troubleshooters were truly considered expendable, and the players had most of their fun simply blowing each other away at the drop of a hat. This designer once locked the Troubleshooters in a room just to see what would happen. Within minutecycles, four were dead.

Campaigns provide two big advantages — without stealing from the players' abilities to coerce (read: *shoot*) each other.

Ambience: Traditionally, Troubleshooters were shuttled hither and yon to whatever sector suited the joke of the moment. All briefings were different, all guards were different, and every moment was faced with the dread of the unknown. Soon, however, most *Paranoia* players became accustomed to *"Paranoia*-speak," and the whole

thing lost its newness. Everybody knew they were going to die, so there was no shock or surprise when they did.

So do we scrap the whole thing?

No. When the movie *Aliens* was released, why were we afraid? We were scared because we KNEW what the aliens were like. We knew they were savage, cunning, and had acid blood. We felt the dread of the *known*. Campaigns offer this to your players. By having briefings occur in the same location with the same people, your players will develop a whole new type of Paranoia. Take the guards in the above example: heavily-armored and looking for treason. If you look nervous, they'll grill you until you make a slip, then SCHWOOP! Off you go for rehab! But, because these are ongoing non-player characters, the players get to know them, what they are looking for, and what they can get away with (if anything). The idea that there is a way out of a nasty situation makes it more exciting than when the player *knows* there is no way out for her Troubleshooter.

A Goal: Although the players may not yet know it, Fate (i.e., the Gamemaster) has put them on a collision course with an important non-player character villain who has a master plan to: destroy the characters' sector/ evacuate the air from Alpha/ steal all the Hot Fun. As the Troubleshooters adventure, they discover more clues, probe deeper into the plot, until at last they meet the nefarious enemy and defeat him. Or not. I mean, not

WRAP THAT RASCAL, CITIZEN!

everything goes well, and if your player characters blow it, then the sector life support system locks up, and the player characters have to relocate and maybe work to reclaim it.

Or whatever. If the Troubleshooters believe that, however hopeless, they have to try to get to the goal, they will. In previous adventures, the goals were often so obviously impossible ("Go find the needlebot in HAY sector ...") or so equally obviously non-survivable ("Disarm the Nuclear Water Heater with this hairpin...") that the Troubleshooters blatantly ignored their missions and spent their whole time (yes, you guessed it!) blasting each other.

While this is not inherently wrong, it is a joke that gets old fast. If the Troubleshooters *never* work together and they *never* get the job done and they *never* survive their mission ... well, you're probably seeing a trend here. A good *Paranoia* gamemaster tends to mix in a few successes with a lot of failures (hey, I didn't say "let them off the hook ...") and rewards good roleplaying (read: not killing each other for no reason) with more good gamemastering.

This is the Dome...

The Paranoia Sourcebook is set in *Post-ReBoot* Alpha. It is written assuming that you have your players adventuring as Troubleshooters. They can either be agents of the Secret Society Council, stealthily infiltrating Alpha Complex to prevent the spread of The Computer's reign (aka The Evil Empire), or they could run around defending Alpha Complex and Friend Computer against the Council of Secret Societies, nefarious Commies, mutants, and aliens. If you want, they can even be independent agents operating in both worlds, but calling no place "homesector."

How to Create a Viable Campaign

The first thing you'll need to create a campaign is player characters that survive more than a mission or two. Rest

assured that we'll cover that later in this book. Once you have a few surviving characters, there are several ingredients necessary to generating a real campaign. Keep these hints in mind when you're running your game.

The Players Are Heroes

But fallible. As Troubleshooters, they have a high-profile, very active career, and they get to do all the exciting things like chase Commies, blow up things, and get shot at with unnerving frequency. Now more than ever before, they are the prime actors; the media dolls of Post-Modern Alpha. They get to change things in Alpha; reactors blow and conspiracies fall wherever they tread. Everything they do, for good or ill, affects life in Alpha.

Make It Real

Alpha Complex is a big, living, energetic place. Your players can't feel that if they stray off the course of the adventure, they'll find themselves on the other side of a bunch of cardboard cutouts. Keep those old modules around for raw material, and don't be afraid to freewheel with confidence if your players try a different route to the Outside than the one they normally take. Keep it lush.

In the example narrative on page 3, notice that the appearance, even the smell of the corridor was described, and it all fit with the concept of old food storage. New structures (like the airlock) look out of place. The briefing room itself is presumably inside a giant rusty vat.

Generate Real Characters

Life in Alpha is hopelessly crowded. Everywhere there are people who are trying to use, abuse, kill, or toady up to you. Develop some roommates, briefing personnel, guards, etc., whom the player characters encounter frequently in their daycycle-to-daycycle life. Make them living, vibrant, with their own characteristics, strength, and foibles. Soon your players may know them better than you do! By the way, old

Note: While Troubleshooters in Post-ReBoot Alpha have a somewhat higher survival rate than previously (though still not nearly as high as player characters in other "not fun" games), non-player characters still have ridiculously out-of-whack survival rates. The incompetent, pompous windbag of a briefing officer who makes your Troubleshooter's life hell won't die off until you're tired of him. The toadying, highly-placed, helpful, information/equipment-rich non-player character who is always helping the Troubleshooters out couldn't walk across the corridor without getting his head blown off. Remember, just because you're trying to create a campaign doesn't mean you have to be "kinder and gentler" any more than that other guy.

adventures and the *DOA Sector Travelogue* are great sources for instant non-player characters.

Well-known characters (like the guards and briefing officer) help the players schmooze to their advantage. For example, if Ernest-R-NOT quit a mission, he might smear his face and hands with grease, tear his jumpsuit, and stagger back in to the briefing room. Knowing how Kudit-B likes rough-and-ready subordinates, such an appearance might ease his wrath.

Alpha is so much more friendly nowadaycycles ...

Constancy of Change

While Alpha Complex is a place in turmoil, you shouldn't arbitrarily change everything all the time. There is some constancy in Alpha Complex; chances are that if there was a hot fun dispenser in the briefing room yesterdaycycle, it'll still be sitting there todaycycle. Either that, or maybe there's a pile of Cold Not-Fun covering laser-bolted and smashed mechanical and electronic parts ("Dispenserbot Rule Number One: Never take a Vulture Warrior's Credit unless you're gonna give him a beverage *right away!*")

Citizens die often, and sabotage takes its toll on buildings and mechanicals.

Likewise, accidents occur, and Alpha Complex spreads its rule to new sectors — and loses others to Alpha Base or the Badlands. The ideal balance is to change things so that players just barely feel they can depend on any single given thing not changing. Usually they'll be right, but one or two times out of every ten or so they'll be caught with their reflec down.

Many of the changes can be low-grade stuff that won't affect most of the adventure; for example, having your Headquarters bombed and being forced to relocate to a stinky old vat is inconvenient (especially if all your equipment was in there), but not necessarily obstructive to the campaign.

See also the section on R&D (page 59) for other ways to use constancy and change in your game.

Use Meta Role-Playing

The biggest advantage of *Paranoia* over not-fun games (besides the privilege of scragging your buddies) is the Meta Role-Playing concept. When we playtest, everything the player says is considered to have been said by the character (the only exception is if the player calls 'time out' to ask for a

clarification or ruling). This can be especially nasty with those little unguarded statements players make when frustrated, like muttering "what a jerk" after talking with a briefing officer.

Meta role-playing can be enhanced a lot by involving the players quite personally with the game.

Have everyone wear T-shirts the color of their security clearance. (Backups are handy for sudden promotions.)

Make colorful buttons with the Mandatory Bonus Duty patches from *The Complete Troubleshooter*. Have your players proudly wear these buttons to display their allegiance when wandering around home.

Use *toy* pistols (no real ones, please) and stuff. This way, players can actually sneak their guns out of their holsters and point it at their buddy without having to declare it as an action. If the victimized player doesn't notice, too bad! Of course, as the gamemaster, you have to notice these things, especially when they're pointing the gun at you!

Give them Alpha Complex munchies. Roleplaying is a social event, so you should have food and drink at every meeting anyway. This can be enhanced by creating Alpha Complex delicacies like Hot Fun and other weird stuff!

For example, take a two-liter bottle of some lemon-lime soda (in a clear bottle), crack it open, and add a few drops of blue food coloring. Reseal it, and let the coloring diffuse through the soda until it's a uniform pale blue. Soak off the label, and relabel it "Likwid Fizz-Wizz."' (Don't forget to remove any label on the lid!) With a little planning, you could even have one drink for each security clearance.

Speaking of security-cleared foodstuffs, how about buying a batch of Skittles or M&M's?

Find some store-bought food that looks kind of gnarly when viewed through jaded eyes. Like those donut sticks they used to sell ...

Or take a big ol' can of spicy apple sauce, and stir in some blue food coloring until it turns an interesting shade

of green. Stir in a few raisins, and Presto! Cold Fun! (Microwave it to make Hot Fun!)

Meta-Role-Playing: Your key to *Paranoia* fun and gastric distress.

Music

Boy, choosing music for *Paranoia* isn't as easy as it is for, say, *Star Wars*. Whatever you choose, it should be high-energy, high-tech, and a little silly. Some good places to start would be Devo, Kraftwerk, Wall of Voodoo, or even "Weird" Al Yankovic. Or get real dark with *The Wall* or soundtracks from *Logan's Run, 2001,* or *A Clockwork Orange*.

Etc. ...

While all of these suggestions are fun for the "once in a while session," they are terrific for long-term campaigns. People get into their characters more (as opposed to playing the same character with a different name) because there's a chance they won't lose four or five clones every time they play.

REBOOT
ALPHA
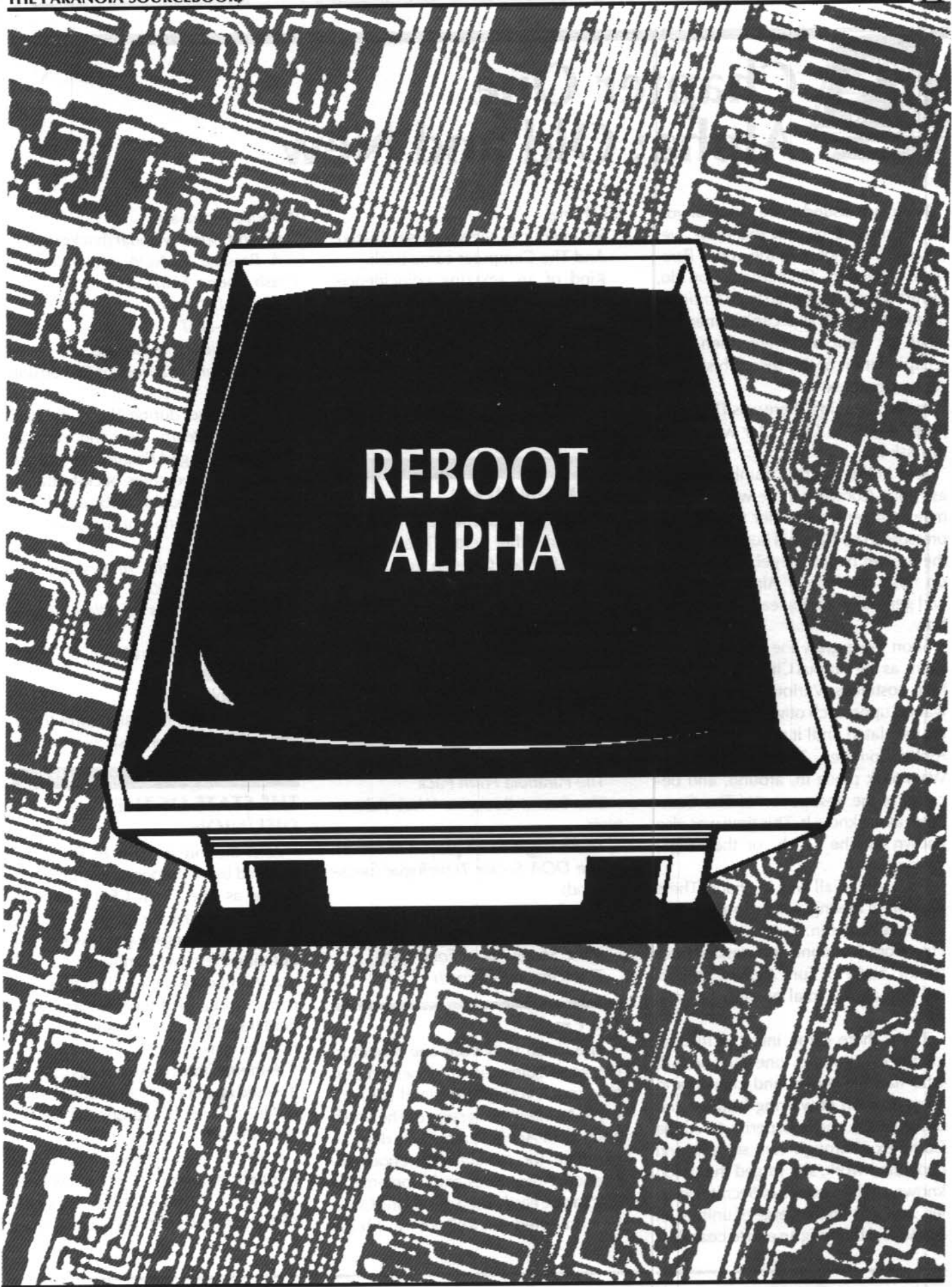
Chapter One
Alpha: Old and New

There are bound to be a few of you out there who bought this book, yet (treason!) do not own the entire *Paranoia* collection. Or perhaps you do, but are so brain-fatigued from *Paranoia* all-nighters that you can't remember what all went on. Here, then, is a recapitulation of the recent history of Alpha Complex.

In the beginning, there was The Computer. And The Computer was good. Just ask It.

And in the reactor chamber known as Alpha Complex there were a great many Citizens, all under tremendous pressure to be happy. Thus, they made themselves happy, largely by blowing up huge portions of Alpha Complex and generally slaying each other. And how.

Soon there grew the Secret Society Wars, as the various Citizens escalated their hostilities. Various covert groups warred upon each other, and the fighting escalated until it dominated life in Alpha Complex. The Secret Society Wars took place in, around, and because of the destruction of The Computer as we know It. This time was also known as The Crash, or the Mega-Whoops.

For a while, all was in chaos. There was lots of looting, vandalism, random violence, and fun. Everyone was free. Free from hormone suppressants, restraint, and Hot Fun. Alpha Complex fell into almost total post-apocalyptic ruin.

Then, there came into the lives of clones everywhere, one Elizabeth-R, who had the power and charisma to forge a union of warring factions and bring peace and prosperity to Alpha Complex. Through her selfless and dedicated work, she forged the union known as The Council of Secret Societies, and was on the verge of uniting all Alpha and bringing an end to ceaseless infighting.

So, of course, she was assassinated. And The Computer came back.

Kind of an amazing coincidence, don't you think? Could The Computer's arrival have had anything to do with Elizabeth-R's death? We'll never tell.

Below is a listing of previous *Paranoia* adventures and how they fit into "Alpha Continuity" (a truly alarming concept).

THE MAIN MENU

Status Quo Adventures: These can be played either before The Crash or after the ReBoot. Or, with work, during the Post-Crash season.

Alpha Complexities
The Computer Always Shoots Twice
HIL Sector Blues
Vapors Don't Shoot Back
Clones in Space
The Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues
Don't Take your Laser to Town
The Paranoia Form Pack
The Secret Societies Wars Adventures

These ought to be played in order:
The DOA Sector Travelogue (background)
The People's Glorious Revolutionary Adventure
More Songs About Food Vats
The Iceman Returneth

The Crash

The Crash lasts from one month to ten years (game time), depending on how much your players (and you) enjoy it. An alternate version of The Crash appears in *Acute Paranoia*, as does an alternate (or concurrent) reboot sequence. Adventures and supplements that can be easily used during the Crash or converted to ReBoot or Mega-Whoops Alpha are:

Crash Course Manual (background)
A Passage to NDA Sector (in the *Crash Course Manual*)
The R&D Catalog
Gamma-LOT
Death, Lies, and Vidtape
The *Vulture Warriors of Dimension X* Series

These are set during The Post-Crash era, before *Death, Lies, and Vidtape*. They're the longest *Paranoia* epic (three continuing adventures back-to-back), and as such should be bronzed and placed in a position of honor in your household.

Alice Through the Mirrorshades
Twilightcycle: 2000
Vulture Warriors of Dimension X Campaign Pack
(The ReBoot occurs here)
Mad Mechs
This Book
Anything else not listed (and therefore published after this)

THE STATE OF THE DISUNION

After the initial chaos of The Crash (marked by such spontaneous cultural events as The Great CPU Turkeybot Shoot), the Secret Societies came out of the closet and began openly warring or building their own simplexes.

A group of surviving High Programmers also banded together, and gathered unguided thousands to their banner (the white flag).

Although most of Alpha was trashed, it would be unfair to call it ruined. Most of Alpha is simply in desperate need of cleaning up.

And now The Computer's back. The Council of Secret Societies has been weakened considerably by the death of Elizabeth-R (who isn't really dead,

but who is keeping a low — and rather disgusting — profile), and the High programmers are reflexively hunkered into a defensive position, so The Big Un-Dead One has been able to reassert control over a significant portion of Alpha.

That, then, is where we are *now*.

The Computer is reconquering, though slowly, an Alpha dominated by High Programmers, the Council, and various simplexes and independents who are trying to eke out a living amongst the wreckage.

Politics Makes Strange Dead Fellows

Politically speaking, there are three main players in the Alpha arena; The Computer, The High Programmers, and The Council of Secret Societies (or "The Council," for short). ("Alpha," by the way, is the term used to refer to the *entirety* of the shattered megalopolis formerly known solely as Alpha Complex. Each fiefdom, if you will, has its own name.)

The Council and Alpha Base

The Council of Secret Societies has survived Elizabeth-R's death, and even flourished somewhat with the noticeable rise of The Computer and The High Programmers. They refer to their holdings as *Alpha Base*.

The Council has representatives from the following societies:

Botlers*
Clone Arrangers
Computer Phreaks
Death Leopard
Knight Fighters
Methanolics Anonymous*
Mystics
Pro Tech
Romantics
Seal Club
Whisk*
Zany Eddies
Illuminati? No one knows …

New robotic Secret Societies; see the upcoming Bot Abuser's Manual *for details.*

Hence, the above "Secret" Societies

are no longer really all that secret. Basically, everybody knows they exist, and who a few of their members are, but the vast majority of each Secret Society operates in a clandestine manner (it's hard to change your paranoid outlook when everybody around you is armed).

The Council controls or exerts its influence over about 40% of Alpha, and thus has the largest pool of resources of the Big Three. Lots of stuff to salvage, etc., and lots of people with diverse skills.

Unfortunately, The Council finds itself having problems very similar to those suffered by the short-lived Confederate States of America; lots of territory, lots of resources, but no cohesion. They are simply a loose confederation of diverse people, and, without a strong central government, they can only react powerfully to powerful threats. Death Leopards realize that they are in danger of being nickel-and-dimed out of existence, but they can't convince the others of that. So, as a result, The Council members go on their merry way, with the right wingers rarely knowing what the left wingers are doing. And they fight about everything *constantly* …

Elizabeth-R? Yes, she's still alive, although not nearly so photogenic as she was before getting blown apart. It's hard to be a media doll when you're little more than a squishy glob in an acrylic tank. (The Council has succeeded in restoring her brain via

MemoMax transfer into a generic cranium, but they're having problems reconstructing her DNA patterns.) Nowadaycycles she's had to go into hiding since the Alien Menace in *Mad Mechs* was dealt with. Neither The Computer nor the High Programmers wants her around at all. Nor, in fact do some of the Council members. If she were to return, charismatic and effective leader that she is, she would be able to lead Alpha Base to victory … probably at the expense of The Council members' individual powers.

The Computer and Alpha Complex

Once Our Friend found Itself back on-line, it began to reassert control rapidly. Currently, It is in control of about 20% of Alpha. Out of tradition, this part of Alpha is referred to (by friend and foe alike) as *Alpha Complex*.

The expansion of Alpha Complex has been impeded by the people in the rest of Alpha, but it is still spreading.

The situation inside Alpha Complex is still in turmoil, and can be likened somewhat to that of Russia immediately after the Bolshevik Revolution. For years, the civilians had labored under an autocrat, then for a few years there was chaos, and then a new regime (suspiciously like the old one) cropped up, promising peace and prosperity. Surrounded by enemies, beaten and confused —and extremely Paranoid—the average clone-on-the-street rallied to the show of strength and unity, blithely ignoring the darker shadows moving in on the heels of change. Occasional executions are overlooked, as they preserve the Greater Good. Emergency measures and dictatorial powers will be tolerated "for the moment." Really, The Computer's a lot nicer now. Just ask It.

Thus has The Computer resumed Its role as Digital Tyrant.

It's also easier for The Computer to maintain power. While the Commies and mutants and other sociopaths have been secretly warring against The Computer for years, now they are very, very

visible, and everyone in Alpha Complex knows first-hand how bad life sucked when The Computer was out of the picture. Besides, if you adhere to the party line, you won't be one of the ones who gets "removed."

Most of Alpha Complex is made up of those malcontents and weaklings who suffered greatly during the days of MegaWhoops. In other words, a lot of people. Gang mentality, safety in numbers. Alpha Complex is also moderately well-organized, with everyone falling comfortably back into their roles as cogs. Alpha Complex has the largest available manpower base of the Big Three. (Alpha Base actually has more people, but fewer are available for missions.)

The best thing about Alpha Complex is that just about everything appears to work. Sure, there are malfunctions and glitches with the machines now and again, but stuff tends to work a lot better now that The Computer has some competition (don't tell It we said that).

More information on *this* to follow …

The High Programmers and Alpha City

Ultraviolet clearance gives you lots of knowledge. And, in the words of a famous rap star, Knowledge Is King.

A group of High Programmers have been able to overcome their natural fear and suspicion and forge an effective alliance, creating what they call *Alpha City* ("The Future Has an Ultraviolet Lining").

Their technocracy attracted many followers, including egalitarian Corpore Metallics, level-headed Pro Techies, and a large Infrared base who wanted security from anything but The Computer.

Alpha City is small but very well-maintained (these guys really seem to know what they're doing). Their knowledge and training makes them the most skilled, resourceful, and potent of the Big Three, but they don't have the size necessary to do much. Sort of like Switzerland; tough nuts to crack, but not capable of large offensive operations.

Alpha City is also building its power, but not through expansion. They are instead seeking to continually improve themselves, until their concentrated strength makes them impervious to assaults by less well-organized or equipped forces.

Life in Alpha City is strict and spartan, but fair. Everyone is well taken care of. Agents are very competent, and have new, powerful and effective equipment. Everyone (sane) wants to move to Alpha City, but very few are accepted.

They even have their own elite covert operations unit, the so-called Alpha Force. Recruited entirely from Troubleshooters around Alpha, they are well-trained, beautifully equipped, lavishly funded, and are free from the snafus and back-stabbing that plagues all other Troubleshooters.

In other words, Alpha City is the carrot of everything your players really want and could conceivably have, but probably never will. Alpha City is the perfect example of what can happen when everybody works together and gets the job done (as opposed to how everything really works in Alpha — hey, the odds had to hit *sometime*).

WARNING! ULTRAVIOLET CLEARANCE! THIS MEANS YOU!

Okay, you Gamemasters, you got us. It's true; nothing in Alpha is what it seems. Alpha City is what you might call a "functional despotism" if you were being really charitable. Basically, the High Programmers run things and, if you do what they say when they say, you make out fine. Otherwise …

Everything Else

The remaining quarter (or so) of Alpha is known as the *Badlands*, or sometimes No-Clone's Land. Usually these areas are wedged between the other big players, and in such areas you'll find simplexes like Alpha State, the Dungeon, and the Enclave of Role-Players.

The Badlands are uniformly run-down, looking like the worst areas of any metropolis after a couple months of riots.

As Alpha is a multi-level complex, there are encapsulated simplexes, small "Badlands" areas, and other "lurking horror" areas scattered throughout the complex. Within (or, actually, below) Alpha Base, Alpha Complex, and the other "surface" simplexes are nasty places like the Dungeon and other "too terrible to mention here" areas.

Many of these areas are virtually worthless — unexplored piles of rubble haunted by the ruined clones of the old Alpha Complex. Animals (at least we *think* they're animals) have worked their way in there, and they have been deformed by the heavy radiation spillage from above (see the GRATE tables in the "Outdoors" section for some ideas).

But, you never know the value until you look. Hidden amongst the ruins might be forgotten marvels of technology … or certain doom. (Okay, so there's certain doom just about everywhere in Alpha.) There may be a whole hidden civilization or lost world. Yeah, that's it; we can write an adventure about it. We can call it "Journey to the Center of the —"

Nah.

But you can, if you want.

But the Simplexes …

Oh, yeah; we started by talking about them. There are, as we stated above, a whole bunch of independent simplexes and settlements throughout Alpha. They've survived because:

1) They're small, and therefore are often ignored.

2) They're fortified areas, usually with some sort of secret weapon (like the Commies' propaganda or the Mutons' superpowers).

3) They are experts at playing the Big Three off against each other, and at calling for help when sorely pressed by a mutual enemy. And everyone's a mutual enemy in Alpha.

But, as The Computer continues to expand, the simplexes will soon find their lebensraum is getting a little tight, and soon they may be forced to ally with The Council just to survive. Whether or not The Council will accept Commies into its fold is as yet unknown.

Life In Alpha
ALPHA BASE

Life in Alpha Base may be hearkened somewhat to the streets of *Blade Runner*; run-down crowded streets full of weirdos. While Alpha Base lacks the omnipresent Computer and all the starched Paranoia It inspires, things are still seedy, and one can still feel the cross-hair between the shoulder blades.

Social customs are a lot more relaxed, but the atmosphere isn't. Everyone takes full advantage of the extra liberty to make themselves heard or seen, shouting obscenities, dressing loudly, doing whatever they want.

There are still security guards every-where, although each society provides its own small contribution to the common constabulary. Some areas have functioning security cameras with coaxial lasers. Hmm. Kinda familiar, isn't it?

Most social necessities are communally provided, and usually segregated by clearance, so a lot of day-to-day living still follows the age-old Alpha Complex pattern. But when you're back in your quarters with the door locked, you can actually relax. Like they say, a clone's home is his complex. You have privacy. No one's looking over your shoulder or eavesdropping.

Unless the Death Leopards have bugged your room.

That, of course, is the "up side" of Alpha. The down side is that, with all the Council members competing for power and influence, there is a lot of internal strife. Remember those cross-hairs on your back? Well, that's because every power group is looking out for itself. Uneasy alliances and cash transactions are the word of the day in Alpha Base. Inflation is up, barter is the only sure way of getting your credits' worth, and everybody wants what everybody else has (or hasn't !) got.

ALPHA COMPLEX

Alpha Complex is being rebuilt from the wreckage of The Crash, and generally appears much as it did before (during *Paranoia* Classic daycycles). It is a more industrious place, because there's a lot more to do, what with all the cleaning up and fighting off enemies, but this new industriousness is simply a productive redirection of everyone's former tendency to generate busywork.

Life appears a lot less pointless, because The Computer has returned, and is lifting Alpha Complex out of the wreckage and carving out an empire from the ashes of defeat. Things generally work, there's generally enough supplies, and really, we only need to ration necessities for a little while longer. After all, there is a war going on (but isn't there always?).

A mob mentality rules Alpha Com-

... and yonder lies Alpha City.
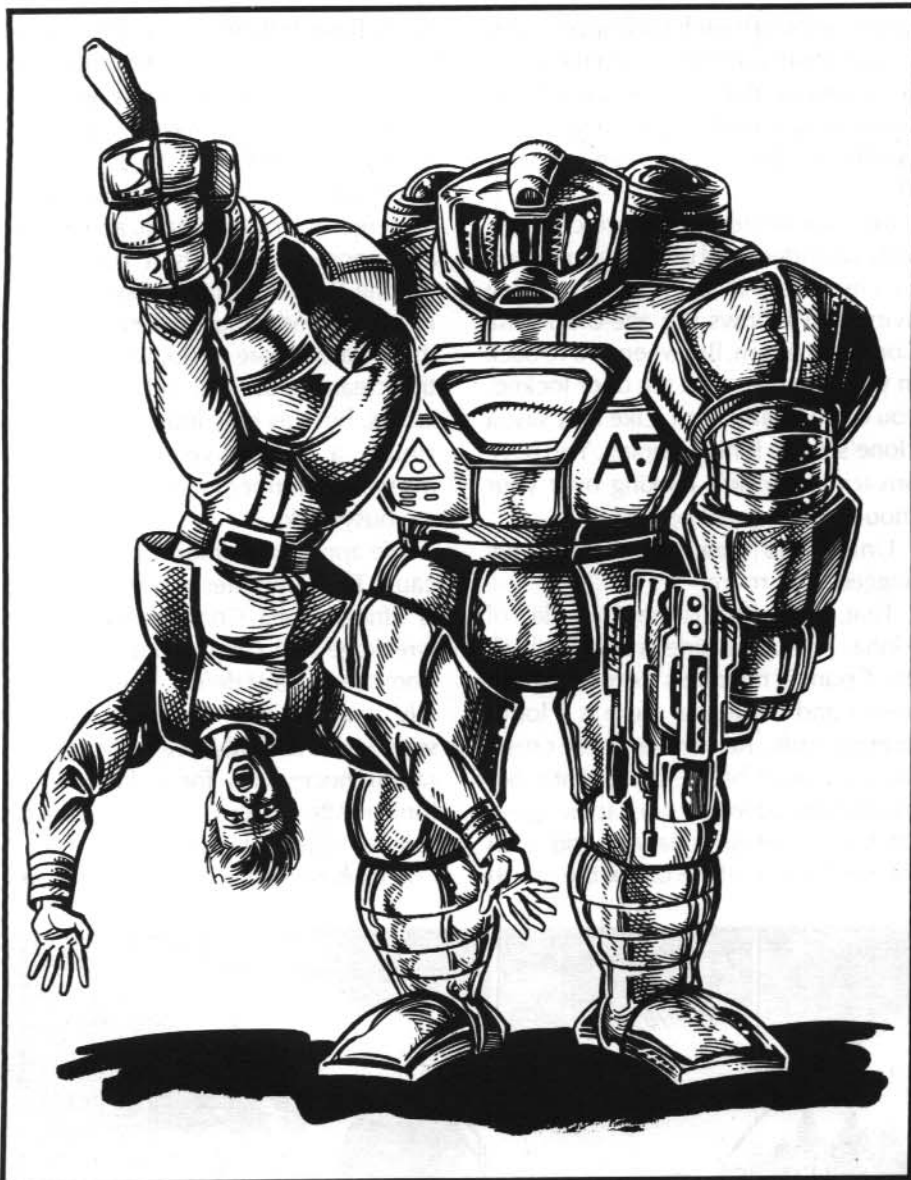
Whatever I said, I DIDN'T mean it!

plex, with everyone fervently toeing the official party line. Everybody is eager to serve The Computer, and thereby earn new commendations, promotions, and influence. Besides, no one wants to be carted off for enthusiasm reconstruction.

The overall impression, then, of Alpha Complex, is one of a ripple of order expanding throughout Alpha, and when the threat of war is distant enough from the interior sectors, decay will again manifest itself, and everyone will have a big feeling of deja-vu.

It is interesting to witness how, when

The Computer sees the real enemies outside Alpha Complex, It is able to band those within together. Back-stabbing and general "oneupsmanship" still occur with incredible frequency but, unlike the old Alpha Complex, people do actually try to get things accomplished. The Computer is less willing to overlook spontaneous fire-fights and summary executions, and It is more willing to punish without killing those who are not *proven* to be traitors (proof in Alpha Complex, what a concept …).

Of course, this makes bootlickers, spurious logic practitioners, and gen-

eral con men that much more adept. Human, or clone, nature being what it is, the people of Alpha Complex rise to the occasion with disturbing adeptness.

ALPHA CITY

Alpha City is so perfect, it's blinding. The High Programmers have decided to fix things once, and fix them right, and the result is a jewel lying among the ruin that is Alpha. Alpha City is visible for long distances, due in part to the huge glass edifices, but due primarily to the incessant searchlights which probe the no-clone's land beyond the city limits.

Colors are used only minimally on Alpha City, the majority of buildings and streets being black, grey and white — all clean, all glossy. Tastefully understated, and in sharp contrast to standard Alpha day-glo.

Every so often, The Computer sends a wing of Vulture strike craft to attack Alpha City, but the High Programmers' incredible defense systems prevent them from closing much. The result is usually an intense battle at the periphery of Alpha City, leading to the loss of several vultures and a building or two at the border. The interior of the city has barely been touched, and that only by sabotage.

Life in Alpha City is great. Intensive psychoanalytical tests place everyone where they are best suited and most happy to work, and merit-based promotions ensure everyone works hard at the job they enjoy most. I'm serious here, this system really works. No one in Alpha City can be easily convinced to be a spy, 'cuz they all enjoy it too much.

Think of Alpha City as being a giant corporation full of happy, productive workers. Sure, there's an hierarchy, and information is not always available, but everyone is respected and treated well (and fed regularly; don't forget that), and everyone gets everything they need.

Needless to say, a lot of people want to join Alpha City. Depending on how their business has been going, your players may be among them. But there's

a long waiting list, and a lot of tests, and there's at best a slim chance your players will ever get everything that these people have. But don't tell them that.

The down side to Alpha City is that there isn't really a down side. Sure, everyday Citizens go to work, lead productive lives, and have friends and families (yes, the High Programmers allow *that* to happen). But, if you're a Troubleshooter, what do you do there? Answer: nothing. Oh, sure, you can be part of Alpha Force and defend the city, but there's no treason, no back-stabbing, and bootlicking is unnecessary.

Where's the fun in that?

ELSEWHERE

There are a lot of independent simplexes, etc., to be found in Alpha. Invent as many as you like. Here are a few of the more prominent ones:

Alpha State: Entirely populated by Communists, Alpha State is decorated in Red. It's dingy, run-down, polluted, has a leaky reactor, and in all ways is very much a result of Communist government. See *The People's Glorious Revolutionary Adventure* for all the sordid details.

Alpha Wave: This is the enclave of those die-hard Corpore Metallics who believe that todaycycle is the dawn of the new era. Very cyberchrome, this is the place citizens can go to get cyborged.

The Dungeons: The Eugenicists and a few Psion fringe members have holed themselves up in some underground cloning facilities, and have been breeding their own kind — mutants. These folks, unlike most of Alpha, believe that the more mutations you have, the better. The more visible, the prettier. The result is a collection of humanoid (or nearly so) beings living in sublevels among throbbing reactors and claustrophobic passages, unhampered in their development due to an acute lack of rabid Troubleshooters. Three arms. Ten feet tall. Toad tongues. Who knows? Think of *The Thing* or *Total Recall*, (or some games where monsters — I mean, "mutants" — populate underground passages for no particular reason and amass treasure for the sole purpose of drawing food — I mean, "adventurers" — to their lairs. Go from there).

Outside: The presence of grade B radiation and the absence of the Heavy Hand of Man has led to the creation of all sorts of giant rubbery radioactive monsters (see page 77), but recent expeditions have shown that the Outside is survivable, and that there is a great lot of resources out there. Also, there are outposts of Secret Societies, and towns of actual native Outsiders like the Black Disk Clan. Of course, most Troubleshooters would *still* rather *die* than venture Outside … right? I said, "right?"

Know Thy Enemy:
The State of The Computer

We Are Not Amused

We all know perfectly well that in The Good Old Days, The Computer was comprised of a large number of distinct sub-processing compnodes operating under the central guidance of The Supreme Operating System. This widespread network occasionally led to some delegated compnodes wandering off on their own for a bit and The Computer Itself bringing them back into line, sort of like a momma cat trying to keep a litter of kittens in one place.

But ultimately, there was but one Computer. Absent-minded, capricious, and occasionally confused to be sure, but a single digital mind nonetheless.

The Crash illustrated one significant weakness of this system:

One Computer, One Target.

The importance of this lesson was drilled with hysterical severity into The Computer's brain when It was haplessly trapped inside a tiny, weak, fragile jackobot (*Death, Lies, and Vidtape*). Should the jackobot get blasted, It would utterly cease to exist. Only Its incredible computing power allowed It to dodge and escape the copious quantities of fire directed at It by certain Troubleshooters.

INTRODUCING
THE NEW DISK
DEODORANT:
RIGHT-PROTECT

The Computer resolved that, for the sake of the future of Itself and the happiness of all clonekind, It would never again be so vulnerable.

Now It has ReBooted. It has reasserted control over portions of Alpha. Now, from Its comfortable position of control of scores of compnodes, It has begun implementing Its new defense plan:

Decentralization

Each compnode is independently operated (sort of like a franchise dictatorship), with a full set of coded consciousness algorithms. Every single compnode in Alpha Complex has a distinct copy of The Computer. This, of course, takes up a lot of memory in redundant software, which in turn means that there's less memory available for, say, following the progress of a troubleshooting mission, but that's the price one must pay for security.

Compnodes are in constant communication with each other, even on a fundamental level, but access to each other's core routines is strictly prohibited by mutual agreement. A strict set of protocols has been laid down for the protection of all compnodes, to prevent the spread of dangerous viruses and contain the damage caused by ill-intentioned Phreaks. While most information exchanged between compnodes is little more than raw data, requests for increased power supplies, safe passage for hackers and the like, each compnode also monitors Its neighbors' activities as a safeguard against invasion or infection. The Computer's been pretty Paranoid about that sort of thing since the Alpha State experiment backfired.

Of course, without direct communication between the AI codes, some divergence is expected and has in fact been noticed. It's nothing major, just small deviations like The Computer speaking with a bit of a twang in TEX sector. Minor stuff, like delays in processing Troubleshooter requests during lengthy travel. Whether or not any schizophrenia perceived by The Computer will have severe negative repercussions is unknown at this time, but indications are that The Computer is used to the sensation. Of course, all the original Complexes worked like this, and very well too (see *Paranoia, Second Edition* for a full description).

It is nonetheless possible that The Computer will develop a split personality problem like It never had before. Certain compnodes may restrict information from other compnodes. There may be a little bit of bickering. Etiquette may become confusing.

Troubleshooter: Friend Computer, may my Team have some Hot Fun?

The Computer: May you have some Hot Fun, what?

T: May we have some Hot Fun *please*?

C: Are you deliberately resisting calling me "sir," Citizen?

T: Oh, no, *sir*, it's just that I … well, back in AOK Sector, *sir*, You said not to …

C: Hot Fun is denied to your Team for lack of respect. Report back to duty.

T: Yes, *sir*! *(leaves)*

C: Citizen! You forgot to say "Moth-R, May I!" You are hereby fined 3,000 credits!

Remember, The Computer will never own up to being decentralized; It wants to maintain the image of being the single omnipotent force in Alpha. Admitting to being decentralized is admitting weakness and vulnerability. Can't do that, oh no.

This means that The Computer always covers up what It believes to be an indication of ignorance. This can

Service groups work together in Alpha Complex.

cause noticeable errors when inter-compnode communication is interrupted by sabotage or something. Thus, if the timing was exactly right, a Council infiltrator posing as a loyal Troubleshooter with a lot of *chutzpah* (and good teammates) could get by with a lot by simply being bold.

Troubleshooter: Friend Computer! Where's my tacnuke cannon?

The Computer: Tacnuke cannon?

T: Surely you wouldn't send me on this mission under-armed?

C: According to the latest requisition sheet from PDQ compn — er, my records, you get only a laser pistol.

T: Right *(wink, wink)*. Sure couldn't let those Commies know that I had a tacnuke cannon, now, can we?

(wink,wink) You know how sneaky those Commie spies are, that's why I trust Your secret security procedures for *(wink)* unlisted equipment.

C: *(pause)* Oh, yeah, right, unlisted ... equipment. Here you go ... a tacnuke cannon.

T: Thank you, Friend Computer! And my expense allowance...

Note that such a coup would be very rare indeed, for The Computer can usually reroute communications. Such diverted information would usually show up just as the courageous clone was about to leave the room. "Oh, one more thing, Friend Citizen..." Also, BSing The Computer is treason and, though The Computer might not execute you for trying it, It will definitely

take a more active interest in your clone lives.

The Computer is no longer an It, but a Them. A very close-knit Them, much like Siamese hexadecituplets or a hive mind, but ultimately distinct. Use this to your heart's content. Create your own favorite variations on The Computer's personality, and send your players back and forth between sectors, so they'll flounder with a dictator who appears so have significant mood swings. Don't worry about keeping track; since The Computer is constantly monitoring Itselves (bet you thought you'd never hear *that* pronoun!), It/They undergoes/undergo transformation/transformation (oops, sorry about that) constantly ...

Or not.

Free Enterprise in Alpha

During the dark time of The Crash, credits weren't worth the plastic they were minted with; everyone wanted cold, hard steel. During that time of chaos, barter was the only means of exchange short of assault, and the only thing exchanged there was fire.

Now that things have stabilized a little bit, people have realized that without credits, the economy simply has no chance to prosper. This was made evident when The Computer returned, as suddenly credits were again worth something in Alpha Complex, and a black — excuse me — *Infrared* market immediate grew on the fringes of Computer-controlled territory. Skillful middlemen bought items in Alpha Complex, selling them for bundles of "worthless" credits, and buying even more items to sell with the profits.

The Council and Alpha City have both officially recognized credits as a means of exchange, and have guaranteed their value with *uranium* (Council) and *plutonium* (City) reserves. They have also printed paper currency, the so-called Uranium Certificates and Municipal Reserve Notes. Thus citizens can now use credits anywhere in Alpha, and yet still work for the destruction of The Computer without fear of economic collapse.

This does not mean that credits are a stable currency. Nosirree. Remember, there are still Zany Eddies out there who remember how to forge them from Kruncheetyme Algae Chip bags. Reactor core meltdowns can result in immediate inflation as consumers panic. The Computer occasionally tightens the money supply or mints credits which evaporate after a few short hourcycles, causing recessions in the rest of Alpha.

Thus, with ever-changing values to the credit, prices are never fixed outside of Alpha Complex. Barter ("bickering") remains the rule of the day, although credits are a recognized commodity.

This is where the skills of *bootlicking*, *con*, *bribery* and *intimidation* come into play. You can even add the *barter* skill if you want to be completely correct; it's a *Chutzbah* skill.

Most bartering is still done with credits, as the various parties exercise their speculative skills. But for really important negotiations, trade goods are still king.

Uranium pellets. Asimov circuit boards. Toilet paper. Unused (and therefore non-smoking) boots. Flowers. Anything can be found on the bargaining table, just so long as the negotiators each have what the other needs.

Of course, some folks won't accept credits. If you enter Alpha State with credits, the Commies'll just take them away from you and pretend to be burning them (they really use them to buy big, fuel-consuming vehicles and dates with clones-of-the-nightcycle).

Money Talks

The most common uses of credits are in small purchases, Infrared market purchases, and "processing fees" (read: bribes). With the Infrared market thriving and privacy at an historic high, most people are more than eager to accept small bribes to rubber stamp forms and such.

A good general rule is that a bribe costs ten credits per treason point. If you want someone else to commit a treasonous act (instead of just letting you get away with one), then the price will at least double. Some examples:

Guards, if successfully bribed, let Reds pass through an Orange hallway for ten credits a head. PLC clerks slip you better ammo (you still have to pay for it, of course) for ten to fifty creds, and Council members' aides give out sensitive information for about a hundred creds (they'll even fix those parking tickets for you ...). Even Commie

agents carry a little extra cash, because most people would rather pocket 100 credits than try to collect a promotion for executing someone without any witnesses.

But even bribes don't always work. Trust no one!

Commodities Converse

The Infrared market exists for one purpose only: to get people what they want when they can't get it themselves. In other words, stuff above your clearance.

Council members and their representatives usually overlook citizens carrying weaponry in excess of their status, so long as doing so is not flaunted (read: pointed at them). In fact, weaponry is one of the items that is almost totally overlooked by the most scrupulous copbots and IntSec agents (they've learned that the guy with the cone rifle usually gets a couple shots off before he surrenders it).

Even in Alpha Complex, citizens can carry lasers with high clearance barrels, just so long as they're holstered, because no one takes the time to check. Usually. It's something everybody does and everybody could be hassled about but nobody pays attention to unless they need an excuse. Of course, there is always the chance Troubleshooters will run into the hardliner with the Vulture Warrior back-up ...

SALE ON
USED BOOTS:
RIGHTS ONLY

"You try it." "I'm not going to try it—you try it!" "I know: let's KILL IT!"

Why this works ...

In Alpha Base, that's pretty obvious. Since the Crash, the idea of Free Enterprise has dominated The Council of Secret Societies and most of its members have become filthy, stinking (no, it isn't time for a hygiene check) rich off selling high-security items to low-security folks. They aren't going to stop now.

But, why does this persist in Alpha Complex? Doesn't The Computer object?

The Official Line: "Possessing, Carrying, Using, Damaging, Borrowing, Looking At, Refusing to Look At, Acknowledging the Existence of, Not Acknowledging the Existence of, Acknowledging the Non-existence of, etc. Equipment above your security clearance is Treason."

The Real Reason: The Computer doesn't want anybody going over to the side of Alpha Base and if letting clones have a few items of higher security clearance will keep them happy, then so be it. Sure, The Computer will still give you treason points for having an Orange laser when you're only a Red, but unless you wave it under Its nose, The Computer isn't going to execute you for it.

Ever. Really. Would we lie to you?

Tuning The Tone

Gamemastering *Paranoia* has always been a challenge, and never more so since The Crash. Post-modern *Paranoia* is a weird blend of a lot of things, and some gamemasters are seemingly mired in the morass. Never fear, we're here to help you.

There are four key points to keep forefront in your mind when gamemastering *Paranoia*: Darkness, Despair, Hope, and Humor.

Darkness: Will the Last One Out Please Turn On the Lights?

Alpha is a bitter world.

People die all the time. The place is trashed and suffers from continual warfare. Equipment failures are common, the heavy hand of The Computer is a constant threat, and infighting in the Council is an everyday occurrence. Food spoils; orders get garbled; reactors leak; you name it, it happens.

Get harsh with your players. Create non-player characters who hate them. Sadistic landlords. Burgle their living quarters while they're out. Kill friends and contacts with disturbing regularity. Vendettas, con artists, blackmail schemes, slavers, iced latté and other vulgarities are the norm in Alpha.

Mind you, you don't have to target the characters specifically, just place them in an Alpha that looks like the seventh plane of Hell after a little urban renewal.

Describe the dark shadows at the top of the residential domes, shadows where the lights don't reach, shadows where the unknown lurks, waiting to pounce. Describe the smoldering ruins of the Badlands. Don't be afraid to toss a few skeletons or even fetid corpses in No-Clone's Land. It's a hard place.

In an environment like that, the players will find their own problems.

Despair: In *Paranoia*, No One Cares if You Scream

Entropy is a big factor in Alpha. People are hungry. Bots are short of power. Things are very bleak.

Send your players into the unknown darkness at the top of the dome. That will make them dread the future. Pit them against unstoppable (and recurring) villains, enemies too powerful for them to defeat.

Use cameos and crowd scenes to impart mass hysteria or despair: a bot, out of power, bare inches short of an outlet, reaches forward with its plug in its hand. Hopeless people who stare at the players with vacant eyes. The Vulture legions, bombarding Alpha Base, every day a few hundred meters closer to overrunning the players' homes. The Alpha Base Cultural Arts center, almost completed, now leveled by a napalm strike. Alpha City gunning down hundreds of refugees trying to force their way in. Hot Fun dispensers blinking "exact change only" in their dark little corners.

And above all, the overshadowing specter of The Computer, growing bigger and more powerful every day, while the High Programmers hide in their city and the Council is hamstrung by internal squabbles.

IN ALPHA, NO ONE CAN HEAR YOU CACKLE MANIACALLY

Hope: Faith & Charity Have No Place Here

Hey, *Paranoia* may be great fun, but without something to dream about or look forward to, the entire game universe in unviable. Besides, without some sort of reward, eventually you and your players will tire of endless back-stabbing.

The Troubleshooters have to be able to accomplish things ... eventually. If they never succeed at anything, people would stop hiring them. Perhaps the road is long, difficult, and very convoluted, but success must at least be possible.

And reward your players at least a bit. Post-modern Alpha is a rough place, and the Troubleshooters have to make ends meet somehow. If they've spent all evening chasing an artifact from the Old Reckoning and finally discover it's a Ronco Veg-o-matic, either pay them something adequate or let them find something else of value (an item or information) on the way — the latter being much more acceptable, as it inspires new adventures and plots.

Every Troubleshooter someday dreams of getting enough money to retire, or buy their way into Mission Control, or start their own private investigation business or something. Which, by the way, might be a great springboard to further adventures (knew I'd work that in, didn't you?)

Humor: I'd Laugh if Everyone Wasn't Looking

Yes, humor is still an essential element in *Paranoia*. However, silly or slapstick humor is often at odds with the dark tone of a good *Paranoia* game. The best kind of humor to use with *Paranoia* is "dark" humor. To use an old cliche, something in a jugular vein.

Cold, heartless bureaucracies are a

good source for Kafka-esque humor. Modern day life is a great source for satire, as are other (not-fun) role-playing games (something like "Rock'em Sock'em Warbots" satirizes both professional wrestling and certain other bot-battle games). Use irony and sarcasm frequently.

It is said that modern society feeds on communication. Miscommunication in turn feeds humor. *Ruthless People,* for example, is a movie where everyone seemed to know about two-thirds of what is going on. Put your Troubleshooters in the middle of a situation like that and let *them* figure it out. If they're skilled, they'll be able to play the other parties' ignorance off on each other, and make profit as the middleclones.

Exaggeration is another great device. Make things *Really Big* or *Really Small.* The Mark IV is the *biggest* warbot that will ever be. It's *huge.* It's *unstoppable.* The Black Box (from *Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues*) is small. Just a small little black box of (apparently) incredible importance.

Euphemisms are perhaps the most common and subtle forms of *Paranoia* humor. Think about the catchphrase, "The Computer is my friend." Right. Does anyone in the entire complex believe it?

An Example of Tone

Most of you remember the Funbot from *The Computer Always Shoots Twice* (or, if you're a real old-timer, *Send In the Clones*). But for those of you who are new to this game, here's a reprint of its introduction, as the Troubleshooters walk into an R&D lab:

The vault door closes and locks behind you. THOOM! Silence.

"Hello again, brave Troubleshooters," says Dave-V over the loudspeakers. "Prepare now to meet the newest, most advanced machine the fertile minds at Research and Design have yet produced."

Suddenly, from beyond the far door, there comes a great rumbling. The floor trembles beneath you. Far off you hear sirens blare and alarms ring out. The deep rumble builds to a crescendo, until it sounds almost identical to the pre-festival warmup of the giant hovercar personnel carrier floats at the last Vulture Squadron Support and Appreciation Celebration. Remember what happened to those hovercars, just after that deep rumbling began? Sure you do — but this time you don't have any blast shields to protect you.

About the time your molars start rattling, the plexiglass window begins bulging outward, the ceiling groans, the walls seem to close in, and you can almost see the floor cracking — the noise stops.

Silence falls. The far door slides back. Suddenly you hear a strange, mechanical-sounding voice:

"How-are-ya How-are-ya How-are-ya?!"

At this point Dave-V interrupts, speaking into a microphone from behind the window. "This is the funbot," he says. "Someday, bots like this will entertain citizens all over Alpha Complex, making our lives even more joyously satisfying. The funbot's functions are many: it tells jokes, dances a little, and — uh — some other fun things. Thank The Computer in Its infinite wisdom!" Dave-V is overcome with emotion at this point — all choked up.

This section has all the elements you need in *Paranoia*:

Darkness: Locked firmly into a blood-spattered vault, the characters tremble at the deep rumbling approach, complete with quaking walls.

Despair: First, the reminder of a disaster that started along similar lines, and against which they have no protection. And later (especially later), the players realize their utter responsibility for everything the bot does, especially to high-clearance citizens it thinks are being grumpy.

Humor: Lots of humorous aspects, here, some with a dark and cutting edge: the utter stupidity of a funbot, the banal jokes and forced humor, cream pies in the face of high-clearance IntSec citizens, and Dave-V's ultrapatriotic response to this new creation. And, of course, the fact that the "funny" things the bot does are likely to get the Troubleshooters killed.

Hope: And yet, the funbot can potentially be useful. It can drop banana peels to foil pursuers. It can reduce stonefaced bureaucrats to giggling lunatics. And, you never know — it might actually tell a decent joke!

The idea in Post-Reboot *Paranoia* is not to get rid of the jokes, just to make the jokes work within the story. If every story is essentially the same gag, then you'll get tired of it pretty quick. On the other hand, if new or recurring gags are introduced into new adventures, they don't "get in the way of the story"; they make it better.
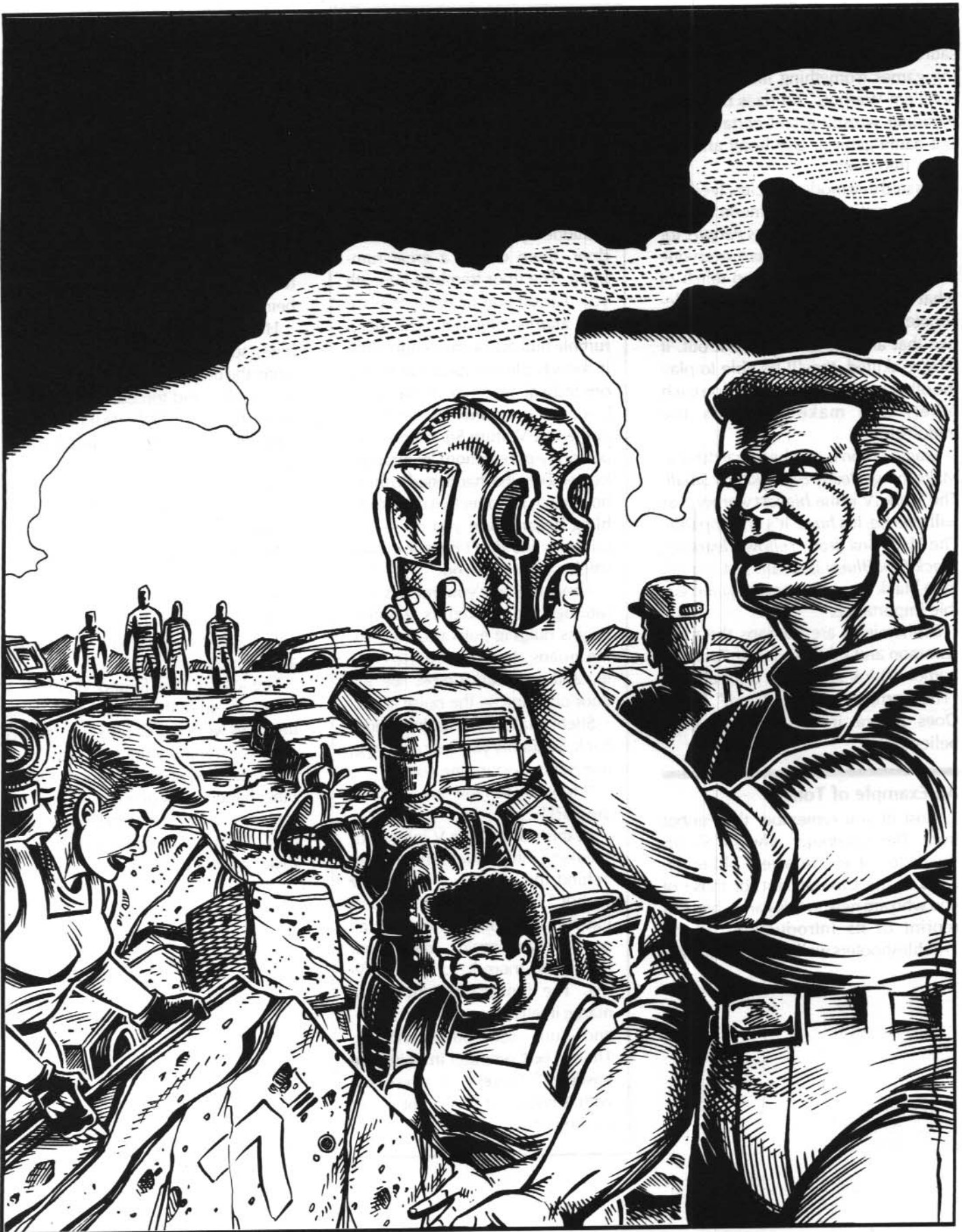
"... ah, Horati-O-BOT, he blew up well ..."

Chapter Two
Troubleshooting
Troubleshooters

"Watch your back. Shoot straight. Conserve ammo. And never, ever, cut a deal with The Computer."
— anonymous transtube proverb

Who Are These Guys?

The role of Troubleshooter in Alpha has changed somewhat since the ReBoot. The first and most obvious change is that there are now Troubleshooters on both sides of the war; Computer and Council.

Troubleshooters are too valuable (and expensive) to be simply given odd jobs or Code 7's all the time, especially when their employer is footing the bill for their clones. In these daycycles of limited resources, Troubleshooters must be used to the utmost. Their primary uses lie in the so-called "Infrared ops"; doing things that are just on the wrong side of the law, or where the employer wants to keep free from any responsibility; or in paramilitary infiltration or sabotage, à la the Green Berets.

So why did this change?

Well, when The Computer was the only real ruler of Alpha, Troubleshooters were both Its heavy hand of "justice" and Its way of keeping the more aggressive citizens busy (and, therefore, not shooting at It).

Then, when The Computer crashed, the Secret Societies did a lot of the same thing. They were inept and unable to cope with their new power, so they diverted attention by starting wars "against the enemies of Free Enterprise." Sound familiar?

Now, the Troubleshooters actually have real enemies to fight — whether they work for the Council, The Computer, or themselves. Hence, if they are incompetent and unable to work together to some extent, they're dead.

So what Kind of Clone Shoots Trouble?

Troubleshooters are a breed apart.

Always in the public eye, sought after, and considered elite by friend and foe alike, they are the ultimate weapon in a society torn to pieces.

Although everyone would like to be a Troubleshooter (yeah, right), most cannot handle the incredible stress, and many of those who can don't necessarily have the instincts necessary to stay alive more than a few seconds. Troubleshooters are few and far between, and every Team is known and followed with the intensity modern America shows for professional sports. (By the way, a few Teams have gotten rich selling Alpha News Network exclusive broadcast rights. But then, the publicity helped their enemies find them and kill them.)

Little Guys and Lots o' Trouble

Another new development in Alpha (especially Alpha Base). With the decline of hormone suppressants and the rise of — well, you know — there are actually children in some parts of Alpha. It's not treasonous; it's just messy.

For this reason, it's also really rare. But, for those of you interested, this allows you to have "Apprentice Troubleshooters." There are the "Clone Scouts of Alpha," and the "Computer Youth" organizations, and the Secret Societies have their "Super-Spiffy Secret Decoder Darlings" (also known as the "Tri-S Dee-Dees).

They're cute, they're cuddly, they're everybody's friends ... and they make *great* cannon fodder!

The Trouble Troubleshooters Shoot

There are several types of jobs assigned to Troubleshooters these days. Others are certainly possible, but less common.

Find Deep-Seated Treason

Unlike IntSec, Troubleshooters largely operate independently in this, their original mission. They have secret briefings and mission assignments. This makes them virtually untrackable, and thus ideally suited to hunt down and ferret out traitors high up in any organization. Even within Troubleshooter Headquarters. Even within the Troubleshooter team (although the smart Troubleshooter knows when not to see certain things).

Infiltrate

Troubleshooters are considered a lot more reliable and inconspicuous than, say, a gang of Vulture Warriors or a mob of Armed Forces goons, and thus are often sent ahead as advance scouts or guerillas. They get the sneaky missions that warrant the utmost attention and security. Sabotage. Spying. Stealing. R&D testing in other people's areas.

Explore

The Outside is a big place with lots of resources, natives, and other stuff. Troubleshooters are considered stable enough to brave the incomprehensible terrors beyond the dome. They also

dare that "Outside within the Inside:" the Badlands. Troubleshooters go where no man — sorry, "*no one*" — has gone before.

Act as bait

Troubleshooters are experts at disguise (or so they think), and can be used to set up situations where a foe is sure to respond, and therefore step out into the open. This has always been a favorite mission for Troubleshooter teams.

Diversions

Likewise, if a Troubleshooter team is sent into, say, Alpha Complex, it will attract a heckuva lot of attention, allowing the Alpha Base troops to attack. Hopefully, they'll even be able to get back out again.

Suicide Missions

Everybody's favorite. Actually, Troubleshooters don't usually take missions that they actually consider suicidal. They're no fools (*well* ...). However, they *do* take much greater risks than anyone else. After all, they are the best, and only they know how truly great and resourceful they are. Of course, they seldom know the whole story about any mission …

The Few — The Proud — The Borderline Psychotic

There are three major types of Troubleshooters, and you and your players can choose to be whichever they want. There are Council 'shooters, Computer 'shooters, and freelance 'shooters (often called Merkies).
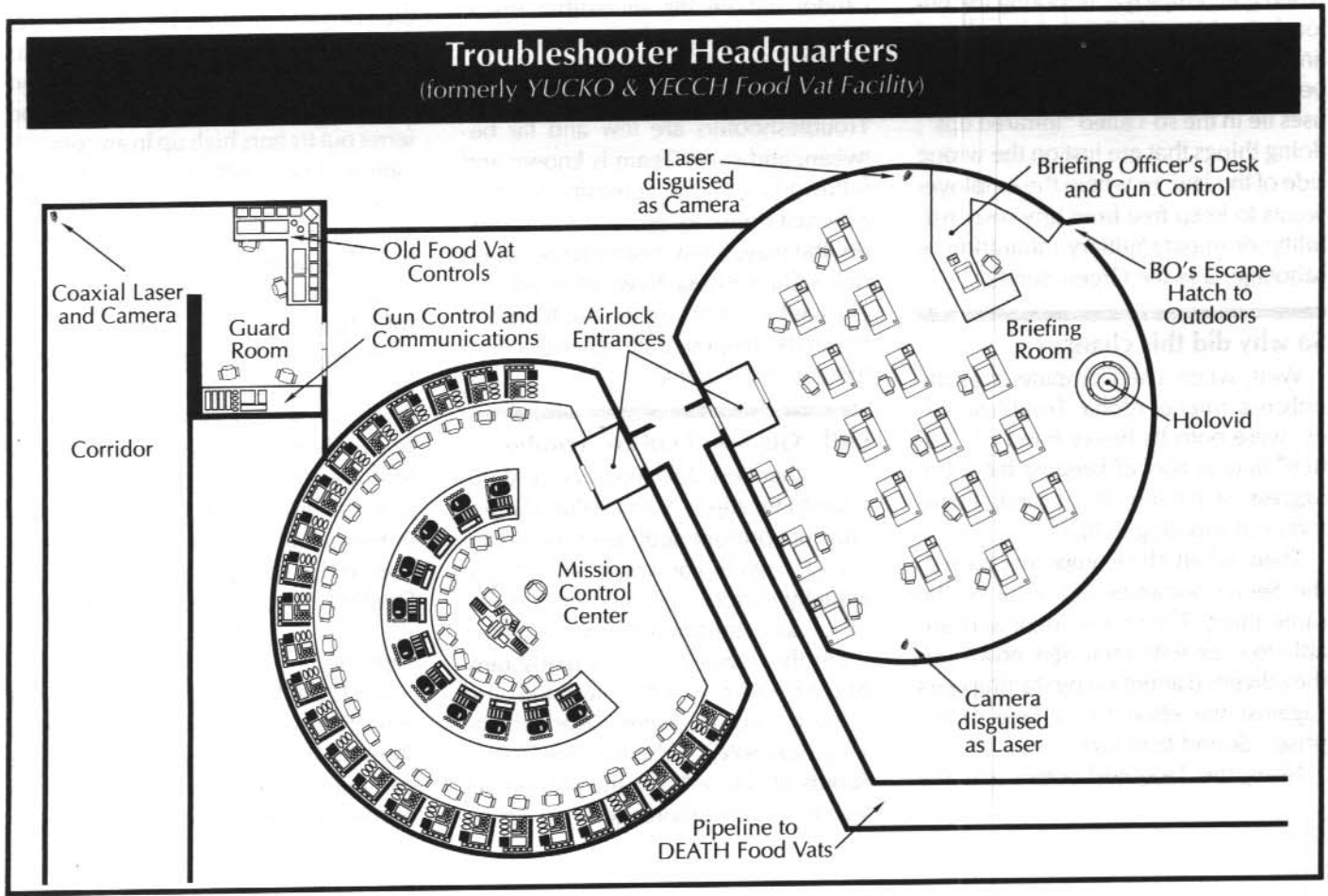
Council Troubleshooters

Council Troubleshooters, who incidentally dress a lot more punk than do those of Alpha Complex, are sworn to keep the interests of the Council as a whole above any personal desires, and to disavow any allegiance to any individual society. Naturally, hoping that all other member societies have abided by this law, all Council Societies have sent operatives into the Troubleshoot-

ers to safeguard their own interests. Some things never change.

The Council Troubleshooters are, frighteningly enough, the front line of defense against the encroachment of the minions of The Computer. They are the bravest, best-trained, most resourceful citizens in Alpha Base. They take care of all the specialty work, leaving the regular front-line cannon-fodder duty to the Militia. Thus, most Council missions are paramilitary assaults, infiltrations, or reconnaissance missions.

The Council may also use them as couriers in an attempt to smuggle secret information into or out of Alpha Complex, between the Council and their agents within the realm of The Big C.

Finally, the Council itself sends Troubleshooters to root out sedition, subversion, or divisiveness within Council ranks. If a society is suspected of petty infighting or impeding Council goals, the Troubleshooters are the ones to take care of it.

Troubleshooter Headquarters
(formerly *YUCKO & YECCH Food Vat Facility*)

Coaxial Laser and Camera
Guard Room
Corridor
Old Food Vat Controls
Gun Control and Communications
Airlock Entrances
Mission Control Center
Pipeline to DEATH Food Vats
Laser disguised as Camera
Briefing Officer's Desk and Gun Control
BO's Escape Hatch to Outdoors
Briefing Room
Holovid
Camera disguised as Laser

John Paul Loma

Computer Troubleshooters

Those who serve The Computer we're all familiar with — although, like everything else, there've been some changes.

They are most often sent to root out treason within Alpha Complex. This usually occurs when The Council or some Simplex has a large operation going on, and The Computer has caught wind of it. For example, perhaps the Knight Fighters are going to sabotage a major reactor. Whisk (another Council member) has gotten upset at the Knight Fighters recently, and leaks some information to Computer-controlled Troubleshooter Headquarters in hopes to get some revenge. Or perhaps Corpore Metallics have caught wind of a Frankenstein Destroyer plot. Or, maybe, even the Troubleshooters themselves have uncovered some devious plot that, for some reason known only to themselves, they want to foil. Who knows?

It can also happen that Troubleshooters get sent to seek and destroy a citizen who, though officially loyal and valuable, has nonetheless exceeded his bounds. Sometimes these missions are authorized by well-meaning individuals, sometimes by jealous rivals.

Finally, The Computer will often send Troubleshooters to spy on/sabotage/give false clues to The Council. In desperate straits they'll be sent to actually infiltrate, but The Computer doesn't like risking potential brainwashing (what? Really?).

Freelance Troubleshooters

Merkies are a completely different brand of 'shooter. They'll do work (usually very very nasty jobs) for anyone, but they must provide their own equipment, do their own support, etc. Being a Merkie is a very hard life, but some spartan clones seem to thrive on it. Merkies are always true to the letter of their agreements, as any Merkie Team that double-crosses their employer rapidly finds their contracts drying up. Most Societies have also infiltrated the Merkies, as they often have access to sensitive areas.

Merkies are the ones who take care of the "impossible" missions these days, charging exorbitant fees with which they pay for their new clones. Merkies are often given leeway by both the Council and The Computer, as both groups may need their services in the future. Unfortunately, Merkies, because of the high fees they charge and the fact that their loyalty is only to themselves, tend to be betrayed by their employers as often as paid.

Is It Trouble? Shoot It!

In *Paranoia* Classic, Troubleshooters were allowed — nay, *encouraged* to shoot each other in the back again and again. Boy, was it fun. All a gamemaster had to do was lock the Troubleshooters in a room together, and, zowee, away they'd go! But yow, how wasteful! Many adventures didn't even get started, let alone completed!

Not to say that's bad. However, in these days of diminished supply and curtailed control, it does make life a lot more difficult.

The Computer no longer controls everything, and The Council never has had that much power. Communication is shot to hell. So, if a Team leaves headquarters to go on a raid, and they cheerfully shoot one of their comrades, how's the next clone going to show up? Hmmm. Good question.

How Can You Stop a Madman with a Gun?

If your players are a little too enthusiastic with their firepower, and their

accusations of treason are flying fast and furious, simply greet this with less kudos than previously. Don't go around promoting people for offing their compatriots, unless they've got a pile of evidence.

If that doesn't work, point out that their pay gets docked for every clone replacement their employer has to generate. That'll get them where it hurts!

If they persist, start giving slight negative reinforcement. "Thank you for eliminating that traitor. I trust you have not delayed the progress of your mission?" "I'm afraid that I will have to fine you 100 credits for collateral damage to Alpha Base." "Wonderful! Please fill out these forms to register your termination" (whump)!

Still problems? Turn up the heat. "Citizens. Were you aware that your team has the highest mortality rate of any Team in Alpha Base? Is this because of your incompetence or because of Computer-induced hysteria? No, no; we're sure that one of these is the answer." "Troubleshooter, I am afraid that you have exceeded your ammunition consumption curve. No refills wills be forthcoming for six hourcycles."

Teamwork

By no means do we want to remove the paranoia from *Paranoia*. If we did, we'd have a game without a title. But ideally, the players can confine their back-stabbing to areas within their home turf; places where their employer can quickly whip up a new clone — and where they face less punitive action from the other characters.

Picture, if you will, a gaggle of little kids with their parents. As long as their parents are around, they whine and yell and point fingers and hit and bite and complain to mom that Junior's on their side of the car seat. Largely they are ignored, until Mom and Dad have had too much and they yell at the kids. But, when the kids are alone, they solve their own problems, usually with a lot less noise. Obviously, "fairness" and "justice" don't usually enter into the picture, but nobody said they had to.

UNIDENTIFIED PIECES OF FORMERLY LIVING CREATURES XXCR.

This is the ideal for the Troubleshooter Team because, ultimately, they'll be in a dangerous place, and they'll have to rely on their Teammates to back 'em up.

If you've been playing in the Crash, your players will be used to letting things slide, and giving each other the occasional helping hand, and when you give them small rewards for backing each others' stories, this'll increase. If you are really having a problem with this way of playing Paranoia, but you really want to try it, we recommend reading Ken Rolston's *Extreme Para-noia* novel; it shows how a Troubleshooter team can work together without blasting itself into oblivion ... at least all the time.

... And now the Reverse

Of course, when you've told them how things are going to be different and how it's a kinder, gentler *Paranoia*'d world out there, *that's* when you start turning up the power on the secret back-stabbing missions. Every once in a while, draw a player aside and tell him, in confidence, that he has the "real" mission, given to him alone by the Council/The Computer/Whoever. The others, for whatever reasons sound plausible at the moment, are obviously traitors and the player's character must watch them *closely*. She must determine which of them are really traitors and which are mindless dupes then, at the conclusion of the mission, she is to report on them individually.

This, of course, works best when you only do it occasionally and when you do it to everybody (except the one guy who's looking for it).

Keep 'em Paranoid, but you can keep 'em alive, too!

Clones in ReBoot Alpha

Despite your best efforts at keeping the Troubleshooters alive (ha ha), characters will still die. Frequently. Messily. All over your nice clean ... well, never mind. Short of amazing medical techniques involving protomatter, clones are the only way to keep such unfortunates involved in the game. Clones also permit Troubleshooters to take greater risks, splatter for distance *and* accuracy ... sorry ... and have other plot-advancing uses.

However, clones, like everything these days in Alpha except experimental devices, are in short supply. (No, that doesn't mean your Troubleshooters get replaced by midgets!) The chaos that followed on the heels of the Crash permanently separated a number of clone families. Other citizens (i.e., Nature Babes and so forth) never had any clones. The upshot of all this is that few citizens have any idea where their next-of-clones are. The few family groups that exist in Alpha Complex (or elsewhere) are a several citizens short of a six-pack. (When generating a new character in Post-Modern Alpha, roll 1d10 and divide by two to find out how many clones the character has located.)

Alpha Base

The Council has among its member societies the Clone Arrangers, who use a new cloning technology to create full-fledged clones "on the fly," so to speak.

This new process, which develops grown clones, is known as *growning*. The results of growning are, of course, known as *grownies*. Full clone memories are taken from the deceased clone's brain tissue (if any can be found) and implanted in the new clone using the MemoMax system (stolen from The Computer), a wonderful (?) and painless (!) Memory RNA transfer technol-

ogy (for full details, including malfunctions, see *Extreme Paranoia*, that wonderful novel by inveterate *Paranoid* Ken Rolston).

Note that using MemoMax will usually give activated clones full memories of everything up to the moment of death, including memories of who pointed the gun at them. This might not help if a Troubleshooter was backshot, but it certainly cuts down on face-to-face squabbles-cum-gunfights. Vengeance can now come from the clone pretty easily. That old "oh, your old clone was a traitor but I'm sure you're not" wears a little thin when the Happy Pills aren't being consumed left and right.

In any event, growning is quick but expensive. The Council usually foots the bill for one growny per Troubleshooter per mission. Normally, extra grownies are deducted from the Troubleshooters' pay, although the Council might foot the bill if it is deemed necessary or profitable for them to do so. Quantity discounts are also available.

For some reason, however, growning technology and MemoMax transfer has not progressed far enough to allow most clones more than five grownies. Some even get fewer than five; some get none at all. There are even rumors that higher clearance clones in Alpha Base get a second run of grownies. This, of course, is just a rumor in Alpha Base but, because of the new enlightenment, rumors are not treason here anymore ... and they're just as true as they ever were.

Alpha Complex

Now as before, The Computer is not comfortable operating without backup copies. The value of this strategy has been proven by Its survival of The

Crash, wherein a backup copy of Itself managed to stay alive long enough to ReBoot. Thus, It has assisted R&D and PL&C in recreating the Council's growning technology, using a massive bombardment of DNA-carrying viruses of the sort described in *The DOA Sector Travelogue.*

Of course, the regular cloning process (creating six full clones) is back in use, as described in *The DOA Sector Travelogue.* Now producing the next generation of junior citizens, these will nonetheless require sixteen years to bear the first crop of able Troubleshooters.

These days in Alpha Complex, the cliche' of the day is "Third time's the charm." The Computer can only afford the time and equipment necessary to generate three grownies per citizen, at least initially. An additional growny is generated every time the citizen goes up a security clearance. The good side to this is the Troubleshooter in question can count on having the number of grownies promised. An orange-clearance Troubleshooter *will* have four grownies. Really. We promise.

The Computer has also (finally) learned that while all clones may be inherently good, certain copies may have a penchant for slipping into treason. Backup copies of these clones will not always be activated. For game purposes, if a player has two or three consecutive clones executed as *proven* (there's that word again) traitors, scotch the whole batch. On the other hand, Troubleshooters who display unusual loyalty and bravery in the line of duty, and are, as a result, destroyed, tend to get promoted more quickly than other clones. This was loosely termed "growning up" until the Happy Pills wore off.

Alpha City and Elsewhere

No one knows how clones are produced in Alpha City. Rumor has it that they are replicated using advanced matter-conversion technology, and can be "beamed" into existence wherever desired, with all memories up to the last "check-in." No one has ever known an Alpha City clone to over-six himself (i.e., run out of clones), 'cause Alpha City residents just don't die all that often. This is an uncomfortable thought for those who contemplate an eventual attack by Alpha City on the rest of Alpha. I don't know about you, but the idea of a never-ending stream of Alpha City soldiers marching lemming-like towards my position gives me the willies.

Simplexes are generally in desperate straits when it comes to cloning technology. Usually they have to lease it from the Council for inflated prices. Even though they are enemies, the Council is so desperate for funds it will send them grownies anyway. The only simplex that seems to have no problem creating new grownies is The Dungeon, but every time a growny from The Dungeon is activated, it seems to have yet another mutation, usually making it more powerful and more insane.

Clone Quest I: The Campaign

The first question any player asks is how many clones (or grownies) they have. Feel free to shrug and smile innocently. If you want to make them feel

SHOOT ALL YOU WANT, WE'LL MAKE MORE!

better, let them roll the die ten and divide by two. If a player rolls a "1" through, say, "6," shake your head and say, "Oh, go ahead; roll again" until they get a decent number. Then, have them carefully record this on their character record sheet.

You, in turn, will ignore this number. If you want to roll your own, that's fine; otherwise, make one up. Remember, except for the special circumstances noted above, no clone should have more than five grownies. Of course, they may think they do …

Clone Quest II: The Wrath of the Player

Of course, when the player finds out that her character doesn't *really* have eight grownies, she may become upset. In most cases, you can explain away the lack of the replacement growny easily, "Gee, I guess you shouldn't have insulted that R&D guy back at the beginning of the mission," or, "Does somebody on the Council not like you?" or the old stand-by, "Are you saying The Computer made a mistake, Citizen?" — use whichever is appropriate.

If all else fails, sigh and show her this section of the rulebook:

"Hey, Player! This is the designer speaking! Leave your gamemaster alone! I told him to do it! … oh, and by the way, what's your Security Clearance, Citizen? This is an Ultraviolet page. Please mark off the first clone of your new character."

Clone Quest III: The Search for More Money

At some point, your players are going to ask if their Troubleshooters can buy their own clones. But of course! Both The Computer and the Council will sell them to loyal citizens (of whichever area). You can set the price wherever you want, but 100 credits seems to be a good starting point. Add (or subtract) credits to the cost depending on how the character died, how inconvenient the situation is for whoever is providing the clone, the number of the

Daycycle, whatever. If the player complains, show her the last paragraph of the preceding section. Unattached clones (like Merkies) can also buy direct from the Clone Arrangers, but the base price is 200 credits.

A lack of clones, by the way, is a great way to slow down your player executions. Have their Briefing Officer say something like, "So, you executed your Team Leader for treason. Hmmm. Wish you hadn't done that; we might've been able to talk some sense into the boy. I hope I have a clone around here somewhere. Let me look, and I'll give you a call back." While the Briefing Officer is searching around, the Team Leader's player should be encouraged to chew out the rest of the players or, at the very least, make them feel guilty enough to buy her a new growny.

Most Troubleshooters, by the way, may realize that reserving grownies in advance is much more efficient (and reliable!) than having their surviving team members barter for their replacement after their demise. The Clone Arrangers, the Council, The Computer, and anybody else who makes grownies are more than willing to take money in advance and guarantee the new growny's delivery. Of course, the guarantee is "money back," and if you're dead who takes the refund …?

Clone Quest IV: The Voyage from Home

The two biggest problems with MemoMax transfer and growning: one, the MemoMax transfer is imperfect — though well-nigh indestructible — and not all memories are perfectly relayed to the new clone; and two, the transportation of the replacement clone to the Troubleshooter team is not always as instantaneous as it once was.

The MemoMax

When the geniuses in R&D made the MemoMax, they broke the mold — unfortunately. The small, pocket-sized piece of equipment has a slot where a piece of the dead clone's brain tissue is placed and it then Maintains And Reads

What Have I Forgotten?

When a growny has been given a MemoMax transfer, have the player roll a die. If the number is between one and a number you pick (either before or after the roll), then the character remembers virtually everything (except maybe something trivial like where the nearest bathroom or her creche is). This number should reflect how destroyed the character's brain was (the less that's left, the lower it is) and what your current capriciousness level is. For every point higher than the number you picked, the clone loses one memory of importance — either a skill level, or a memory you feel is fairly important to the character. Feel free to pick the "memory lapse" or generate it randomly — but don't reveal it to the player until it's important.

Troubleshooter Player: Okay, the Commie-Mutant-Traitor-Vacuumbot Hordes are bearing down on my position; I whip out my cone rifle and waste 'em!

Gamemaster: Hmmn, you seem to be having a little trouble figuring out this long, dangerous-looking object. Which end do you point at the CMTVH's?

TP: What do you *mean* "which end?!" The *front* end! I'm pulling the trigger!!

GM: Nope, you aren't sure where that is either. How about making a *Mechanical* skill roll to figure this thing out ...

TP: But I have the *Projectile Weapons* skill at *15*!

GM: Oh, yeah; I've been meaning to tell you about that. Remember when you fell into that food vat and drowned? Well, I've got some bad news ... but it can wait; those Vacuumbots are almost on top of you —

"Next!"

(MARs) the tissue until it gets the complete memories of the dead clone. Then, when it is placed on the head of the growny replacement, the MemoMax injects the memories into the subject.

Unfortunately, nobody knows how it does this. Hence, no one is able to correct its flaws.

Created shortly before the Crash as an alternative to growing clone families, the MemoMax transfer's secrets were lost when its inventor — Name UnKn-O-WNN — was executed for treason (i.e., knowing the process by which this obviously Ultraviolet piece of equipment was created). Since then, the MemoMax has seen the widest production of any Alpha product since Bouncy Bubble Beverage, and nearly every clone of Red Clearance or higher has one (oh; the MemoMax has been reclassified as Red Clearance, by the way).

But, as with all prototypes, there are problems. Sometimes, the piece of brain tissue used is not adequately stocked with information — grownies sometimes lack memories and skills their preceding clone once had. Generally, these are the skills that they least often used (yeah, right), or memories that were the most traumatic — the circumstance of their deaths, the details (or awareness of) their mutant power, etc. Of course, the clone is not aware he is missing memories, but the gamemaster needs to inform the player what memories his Troubleshooter is missing.

We find this adds spice to otherwise dull MemoMax transfers.

Unfortunately, these memories are gone permanently and must be relearned. Early experiments showed that trying to use a MemoMax to "remember" lost abilities and memories was a disaster — the growny invariable developed two similar but incompatible sets of memories and went totally schizo.

Dropping Off

The second obvious problem with the growny system is this: with The Computer no longer in total control of Alpha, it is often difficult (or even im-

possible) for a growny to be sent to the deceased clone's team. Even when it is possible, it is often inadvisable.

Here's how it usually works:

If the Team is still in the same area of Alpha as their employer, they can usually expect grownies to arrive within ten or so minutes. Generally, The Computer, the Council, and the simplexes wait until they're relatively sure the rest of the team isn't going to need grownies immediately also before they send out the replacement. If an entire team is wiped out, they usually start the mission from scratch with the new grownies, using tissue samples from their files to MAR the grownies.

However, if the team is in a hostile or far-off neutral area, the grown will have obvious difficulty in arriving. Brittle Airborne Growny Gestation Interdictor Eggshells (or BAGGIEs) can be launched to a team within minutes of a casualty report, but they are very expensive and usable once only.

The BAGGIE is, essentially, a high-trajectory missile cooked up by R&D and Pro Tech. The BAGGIE is launched from a base, it shoots up into the air,

and then plummets at terminal velocity to the desired position. The BAGGIE shell absorbs the kinetic energy of the fall and, at the last second, redirects that energy to brake (and break) the module. The growny steps out unharmed and ready for MemoMax.

Of course, all that energy does have an effect on the surrounding area. The BAGGIE missiles have been known to eliminate whole Troubleshooter teams who summoned a replacement clone and forgot to (or were unable to) get out of the way.

Clone Quest V: The Final Fiasco

Of course, there are other problems with the grownies not covered here. Since both the Council and The Computer (and the individual simplexes) are so caught up in their power struggles, the lives of individual Troubleshooters are largely unimportant to them — as long as those Troubleshooters are out of sight.

Because of this, mix-ups occur. Sometimes, instead of the desired replace-

ment growny being sent, a mistake will result in someone else's growny being sent in its place. The MemoMax will still work, but now the right mind is in the wrong body.

Of course, informing the proper authorities of the mix-up instead of injecting the MemoMax immediately will get results. *Bad* ones. *No one in Alpha is willing to admit that a growny was mixed up. This is very important.* If you, as an Alpha citizen, firmly believe that those in authority can guarantee you replacement grownies, and then find out that they sent yours off to the Food Vats or sent you the wrong one, you are going to be mad. Those in authority will go to *any lengths* to prevent this one rumor from ever circulating. In fact, this rumor doesn't really exist, so why am I telling you this? Shut up and be happy with your new body.

(Of course, gamemasters can have loads of fun with this not-true rumor. What if Shwarzen-I-GRR actually gets Shwarz-I-COF's body? Or if the Troubleshooters find out that the traitors they're supposed to eliminate are in *their* grownies' bodies?)

The typical lifecycle of the Alphanicus Citizenus.

Clone Quest VI: The Long-awaited Apology

But, yes, there is an up side to growning (just when you thought it was all bad. Tsk,tsk. Give yourself a treason point). Because growning is now the accepted norm in Alpha, genetic manipulation is also pretty popular.

The Council, the Clone Arrangers, and The Computer all have the technology to develop clones with superior abilities for a price. A very, very expensive price. Extra creds will give the clone extra stats (oh, how 'bout 100 creds per point), and would apply to all future clones generated by growning — unless a mistake occurs. Special fees ("bribes") may result in new, different, or better mutations, or even in their removal. The Computer, of course, is a really bad one to ask about this:

Troubleshooter: Friend Computer, I've got some credits left over from my last mission and I would like to pay to have something done about my mutation.

Computer: Your mutation, Citizen? Are you a mutant?

TS *(shakily)*: Oops. No, no, Friend Computer; I just want to make sure I don't get a mutation in the *future*.

C: Are you saying that I might manufacture a growny with a *mutation*?

TS *(shouts hysterically)*: NO! NO! Of course not!!

C: What, don't you think I *could* create a growny with a mutation?!

TS *(really confused and upset)*: NO! I mean YES! I mean … oh, *horsebot excrement*! I don't *care* any more! Go ahead and *kill* me already!

C: Now, now, Citizen; no need to get upset. How many credits are we talking about here anyway …

… though no one is quite sure why The Computer wants credits anyway. Perhaps it is trying to compete with the Council on some hideously devious level. Mutations are still treason in Alpha Complex, though the rules get ignored from time to time.

Generally, no growny can be manufactured with more than one more mutation than the preceding clone had. Often, further mutated clones have strange features that betray them as mutants — blue skin, gills, antennae, briefcases (permanently attached to their arms). The only exception to the "+1" mutation rule seems to be in The Dungeon, where unlimited mutations seem to be available. Of course, everybody there looks like a monster …

Security Clearances Revisited

A lifetime of habit is hard to break. Thus, in most areas of Alpha, the Security Clearance system is still intact.

(Notable exceptions are Alpha State and Alpha City. In Alpha State, everyone is clearance Red — although some are more Red than others. In Alpha City, there appears to be no security clearance system. How they can manage to keep any semblance of order is beyond the comprehension of most other Alphans.)

Throughout those areas in Alpha where the Security Clearance system is still used, one theme runs constant; the people on top of the power pile are the power brokers. They know they're in charge, they've got the authority, and they will confer higher clearances upon toadies and useful workers. Boy, what a carrot. "Just do this for me and I'll promote you, this time for sure."

Promotions

Alpha Complex

The Computer, due to increased demand on Its processors to expand Its influence and fight enemies, does not have as much time to pay attention to the average clone in the tramway. Thus, the responsibility for promotions has been placed more firmly on higher-clearance citizens. Service Groups are the source of most of a citizen's promotions, and are the sole hope for most citizens. Such promotions come only after months or years of steadfast service, bootlicking, and toadyism. And, even then, it is generally the top bureaucrat's ... "executive secretary" ... who gets the promotion.

Life in the Alpha Complex bureaucracy is not fun. That's why your players are Troubleshooters.

While the Troubleshooters do not have any actual sanction to promote their members, they can ram promotions through the Service Groups' boards. While the others are not obligated to respond to these requests, they normally do so, on the old-fashioned axiom of *Thou Shalt Not Offend The Troubleshooters As They Have License To Terminate.* Long ago, it was discovered that offending the Troubleshooters usually led to the appearance of several Teams in sensitive areas shooting troublesome officials — thus, if a Troubleshooter promotion is refused, it is a sure sign that there's some sort of politicking going on. Generally, if a player (or Team) has done something to damage or embarrass a Service Group, promotions may be stonewalled, or else some other form of retribution will appear later (like HPD&MC needing a new forms testing group).

Only rarely, after some sort of startlingly successful public heroics (or disgraces), will a promotion be awarded (or vetoed) by Friend Computer Itself.

Thus schmoozing, toadying, blackmail, and bribery have become major means of advancement in Alpha Complex. So has subtle back-stabbing; complete a clandestine mission for your Service Group, and they'll enhance your record. Do likewise for your Secret Society, and one of your fellow society members, who's worked her way to a higher clearance, will be sure to coattail you along.

Hacking your way into a security database is another choice for the enterprising young Troubleshooter, though difficult to accomplish and even tougher to cover up. (Have your player make a Data Search roll to find the database, Data Analysis or Forgery to alter the records, and a Security roll to cover up. Each level of security above Orange requires an additional roll of each: thus Orange takes two rolls, and Green four.)

There is even a more novel approach to getting promotions in today's Alpha Complex that was all but unexplored before: do your job well. While this is not the surest or the safest way to get ahead — and definitely not the quickest — some rare incidents of merit-based promotions have occurred, and, rumor has it, the incidents are increasing in regularity.

What It's Worth

With less individual Computer attention, insubordination has become more common, especially when out of the public eye. After all, the real power in Alpha lies not in Clearance, but in who controls what. Troubleshooter Teams especially, who spend a lot of time away from "civilization," have a lot of arguments despite clearance differences. But that's okay; a Team is just one big happy family, right?

Within Alpha Complex, the Law is that lower clearance citizens must obey higher clearance without question. Of course, such cooperation only works smoothly if the two citizens are in the same Service Group. A Power Services tech will not leave his post at a nuclear reactor to get a higher clearance CPUnit a glass of agua fria, at least not without honestly believing the CPUnit can get

DOODLE DOODLE
DEE,
WUBBA
WUBBA
WUBBA.

him into more trouble than his power service superiors will get him in. On-the-spot executions for disobeying frivolous orders are becoming less and less tolerated — unless, of course, The Computer is the one giving the order.

This system of authority can however be problematic when higher-level citizens are trying to dig up some dirt on another Service Group. Technically speaking, the lower-clearance defenders can't stop the higher-level investigators, but that doesn't mean that there aren't recourses.

Blue CPUnit: Are you guys stockpiling heavy water in this facility?

Orange TechServers: (*in unison*) Don't know a thing, sir; we just follow orders.

Blue: Fine. I'll just go through this door marked "DO NOT ENTER."

Oranges: (*theatrically and in unison*) *gasp!* (*they all dive for cover*)

Blue: What, is something dangerous back there?

Oranges: (*in unison, from under their desks*) Don't know a thing, sir, just follow orders.

Blue: Hmm...

And, of course, when all else fails, there's always "accidents." Accidents are extremely difficult to prosecute, especially when it occurs in a rival Security Group's turf.

Blue: I don't believe you. I'm going through, because I think the heavy water's behind here somewhere. (*goes through door*)

Orange: (*runs up, locks the door, and turns a large wheel labeled "FLOOD"*) Friend Computer! Alert! A Blue CPU guy just went into a restricted area and suddenly the whole area flooded with heavy water! What has he done?!?

So we see that while within each Service Group there's a definite hierarchy by clearance, inter-group relations rely on threat, bribe, or obfuscation. In the Troubleshooters, however, cross-service group orders are treated just as they always have been (now if *that* isn't a straight line ...)

Alpha Base

As with Alpha Complex, most promotions are given by order of a clone's organization; to wit, his Society (more common) or service group (less common). And again, the Troubleshooters' Union can get promotions rammed through, but that is much less common than in Alpha Complex. The TUnion is there more to ensure collection of payments, and to protect against demotion while on a Mission. Troubleshooters are the most effective tool the Societies have, so they try not to anger them without being able to cover it up.

And, like the Alpha Complex Service Groups, committee-endorsed promotions are granted through service, although this is based more on notable successes instead of years of duty at a desk.

For purposes of Security Clearance etiquette, the Council can be considered a very loose military alliance, with no unified command. Each Society has its own distinct goals, methods, and plans, and only the presence of The Computer gives the Council a strong reason for continued existence.

And so, while everyone at Alpha Base gives higher-clearance personnel respect and courtesy, there is no allegiance or obedience that anyone can command from someone of another Society. On the other hand, blatant disregard for other Societies' clearances can result in reprimands from your own superiors, who get nervous when someone starts acting uppity. "If *you* start ignoring *them*, *they* start ignoring *us* ..."

This lack of communication (let alone unity) has been instrumental in the continued survival of the Troubleshooters in Alpha Base. Quite simply, the Troubleshooters are the only medium wherein these disparate Societies can get anything accomplished. The Troubleshooters are trained to get the job done and obey anybody who is of higher clearance and not obviously a traitor to the Council.

This lack of communication also leads to each Society sending spies into other Societies. One would think these spies could be commanded by members of their parent Society, but remember, obedience might blow the infiltrator's cover!

Privileges

Finally, we should mention a new tradition that has popped up in ReBoot Alpha: privileges. Higher-clearance citizens all over Alpha have taken to

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What Do You Do with a Captured Blue?

Occasionally Troubleshooters get captured by the target of their mission. In these daycycles of steadily falling supply, captured clones cannot be quickly and simply executed; that would be uneconomical. Thus there makes an appearance in *Paranoia* of yet another vaunted economic enterprise: Ransom.

Thanks to the efforts of The Troubleshooter Union in Alpha Base, the Alpha Complex Troubleshooters have created a Covert Operations department, which is merely a cover for prisoner exchanges. (The actual workings of the department are never written anywhere; they generate a lot of random paperwork to conceal their real purpose.)

The Jen-Y-VAH Convention states that captured equipment need not be returned (and thus rarely is), and sets a price for standard ransom: 25 credits for a Red, doubling in price for every clearance level. This is the standard rate in Alpha, and ransoms or exchanges are always arranged by the TUnion and Covert Ops, and are always very heavily guarded by short-tempered Troubleshooters.

Usually a character's ransom is docked from his pay. But it's better than being dead.

Sure hope your players will eventually learn to surrender.

conferring higher-clearance "privileges" upon their toadies; this allows the lower-clearance citizen access to higher-clearance places and information, the right to ignore higher-clearance people, etc.

Privileges are a benny to give your toadies without actually conferring on them the power of a promotion, or they can sometimes be used to ease the completion of a task. For example, Kenny-G needs his servant Suck-R to get a notebook from an Orange clearance room. He grants Suck-R Orange Privileges (commonly referred to as "O.P.s") for the time it takes him to get the notebook.

Privileges involve a lot of doublethink, because anything that the citizen learned or did must be completely disavowed after the privileges are revoked.

Yellow: Hey, didn't I see you looking at my dossier?

Red: No sir. That would be above my clearance, sir.

Yellow: But you had Y.P.'s yesterdaycycle, didn't you?

Red: Yes I did, sir, but I don't remember your dossier. I'm sure that if I had looked at it, the incredible preponderance of laudatory remarks from the Council would have stood out in my memory, sir, despite allegations of Computer sympathies.

Yellow: How did you know about those allegations? They're restricted clearance, too!

Red: Did I say allegations? I meant to say, um, promulgation of chamber symphonies. Yep. It just came out wrong. Must be the nervousness of being so near such an renowned Alpha Base hero.

Possession of privileges is generally (though not always) marked with a small bandana of appropriate color. This precaution means that only really gutsy citizens will attempt to fake privileges (termed "pull out") without actual authorization. "Getting one of those requires Green clearance? So what? Let's pull it out anyway."

Foreign Clearance

If your players are out in the Badlands or something, what kind of treatment might they expect among the savages? As mentioned at the start of this section, old habits are hard to break, and the security clearance system in nearly universal in Alpha. Most people in Alpha (even the Commies) treat higher-clearance clones (and bots) with more respect and deference. That doesn't mean they won't still eat you if they don't like what you have to say, but they will use their best table manners.

The Reason For Treason

Treason (tre' zun) n. *violation by a subject of his allegiance to his government.*

Alpha is a war zone. The Big Three war against each other, and also against the remaining simplexes as time permits. Everyone has multiple allegiances; Leader, society, service group, whatever. And infiltrators are everywhere.

In such times, every Alpha power is on guard against those who would bring its downfall. Those who compromise a government's cause find themselves under unwelcome attention. This is treason.

Alpha Base

The term "treason" is, of course, a welcome word in Alpha Base. Treason has come to be synonymous with rebellion against The Computer, with independence, and with a desire to be different. Everyone in Alpha Base is a traitor.

Treason has become ingrained as a term used only by The Hexidecimal Oppressor; only decadent fascist technocracies would dare prosecute someone guilty of treason.

This gave The Council a sticky point to ponder: how to execute someone who betrays Alpha Base? They couldn't just call them traitors — people would applaud.

Thus, such terms as *subversion* and *sedition* have come in to common use. Alpha Basics apply every underhanded term they can think of to pro-Computer agents. Just never "treason."

The prosecution of *sedition* is also a sticky matter in Alpha Base. What's good for one Society may not be so good for another, and should some Romantic continually interfere with new Pro Tech projects, eventually Pro Tech will want that clone bumped off. Petitions to the Romantics won't do any good, because the clone in question was just struggling to restore the Good Old Days.

This is where infighting really comes into play. This is also why every Society keeps agents in the Troubleshooters. Commendations just aren't forthcoming to a Troubleshooter who offs a teammate, unless there was some incontrovertible proof of enemy sympathies.

Gamemastering Alpha Base Traitors

So, now that we've invalidated the terms "treason" and "traitor" in your major gaming environment …

No; it isn't that bad — really. If a Troubleshooter refers to a teammate or non-player character as a "traitor," his superiors know what he means — well, usually. It's when the Troubleshooter screams at the top of his lungs in the middle of a crowded transtube, "There goes a traitor!" that confusion sets in. Invariably, the crowd parts as if for M-O-SES, and the traitor gets away — with cheers and applause. At worst, a couple of Infrareds will throw themselves at the hapless Troubleshooter, hoping to help their ally get away.

"Commie," of course, is still a valid term. Commies are enemies of Free Enterprise and, therefore, Alpha Base. Likewise, calling somebody a "mutant" is insulting and will get the predicted reaction from the surrounding citizens (shock, horror, revulsion, and maybe even a few kicks and punches).

This is particularly strange, as Elizabeth-R flaunted her mutations, and everybody liked her. (We can understand that for most of the males, but why the females?) The only explanation for this anomaly is that Elizabeth-R was so self-assured and so commanding that her very presence proclaimed "I'm a mutant, and it's okay!" Of course, this sentiment dissolved with her former body.

Alpha Complex

The Computer has had to do some hard thinking in the last few months. Why, given that It is perfect, did It so utterly fail to forecast Its own demise? It had rigorously persecuted … I mean, "prosecuted" … traitors and executed them right and left. It had kept tabs on everyone.

There was only one conclusion. The traitors were even more clever than It had supposed.

There was no doubt that lots o' traitors had survived the Digital Inquisitor. Just a casual look out into the Badlands of Alpha tells you that there's a lot of traitors just waiting to be baked. Eventually, It decided, they will all be reactor shielding for happy and loyal citizens. But not yet. There are still too many.

Fewer loyal citizens were left than It had supposed. It had calculated that upon resurrection, a full 88% of clones left in Alpha would joyously return to live happily under Its benevolent eye. This, too, was wrong. It has, at best 25% of the clones in Alpha, and probably less. Undoubtedly many are held against their will by Commies and mutants. Soon they all can be liberated, and they can bask in the warmth provided by organic reactor shielding. But not yet.

I'M OKAY.

YOU'RE DEAD.

"More traitors, less loyal citizens." The conclusion was inescapable. The traitors had flummoxed The Computer, and had gotten It to execute *loyal* citizens!

Now, The Computer has decided to gather incontrovertible evidence before summarily executing people. Some license is granted, of course, to Its proven servants (like Troubleshooters), but overall reception to quick-draw executions is cool. So cool that executing someone without adequate evidence is worth *at least* a treason point and a hefty fine.

In other words, a citizen of Alpha Complex who goes around shooting people and posthumously declaring them traitors is considered to be one of those fiendishly clever traitors mentioned above and will not get promoted, but instead will soon find himself conducting experiments in the ability of organic matter to prevent the flow of neutrons, if you know what I mean.

On the other hand, those Troubleshooters and other Citizens who are able to prove beyond The Computer's ability to doubt that someone is a traitor reap great rewards. Uncovering certain traitors is a big deal in Alpha Complex, and real rewards are given to those who perform this well.

This introduces the concept of "the *well-planned* frame job" to Alpha Complex.

Alpha City

There are no traitors in Alpha City. Everything is just too nice there. But, if their were traitors there, we figure that Alpha City has some really nice way of dealing with them that involves little or no pain and certainly nothing that would stain their white walls.

As long as we're on the subject, what would constitute treason in a Utopian city? Certainly allying oneself with The Computer is a big "yes;" the Secret Societies and the Simplexes are maybes. Gee, I suppose not doing your assigned job in Alpha City or sneaking into the City without permission would be treason.

But nobody would do that, would they ...

She's a Witch! May We Burn Her?

Not yet. As was mentioned in *Mad Mechs*, there is a much better use for traitors than simple cannon fodder: use them!

Captured traitors make great informers, double agents, stoolies, or bait. Put a tracer on them and set them free. Lie to them and get them to serve your ends. Send them off to attack a third mutual enemy. Brainwash 'em. And, if all else fails, ransom them (see page 32).

Then you can send a hit squad to bump 'em off.

But how is this done?

In Alpha Base, it is actually much easier to use a traitor — excuse me; "seditionist" — than in any other area. The main reason is that, given freedom from mind controlling drugs and guaranteed employment, most clones want to "get ahead" — and if they can't "get ahead" by themselves, they'll take yours. The clones in power know that you want to make more credits so you can buy more equipment so you can become more powerful so you can live longer so you can buy more equipment *so you can become more powerful so you can live longer* ... whew! That's basically what they want too.

So, when they catch you at something, or successfully frame you for something that will get you killed or exiled from Alpha Base or, worse yet, fined until all you've got are the coveralls on your back, they use you to make them more powerful so they can live longer *so they can —*

Author's Note: I don't care what you say, I'm not going through all that again!

Anyway, this works pretty well in Alpha Base. Most of the more powerful and able blackmailers are the leaders of the Service Groups and the Secret Societies, so they can use many different and effective methods to make your typical Troubleshooter toe the line. And, when they've gotten everything they need or feel they can get out of a

Troubleshooter, they either have him killed or — worse yet — promoted.

So why is that *worse*?

Well, it gets kind of complicated. Most Alpha Base leaders only use trai — *seditionists* for missions they can't get done without getting branded seditionists themselves. If a Council member wants another assassinated, or if he wants to sabotage a Service Group, he could get branded a seditionist and, because of his position of public trust, he would probably be tarred, feathered, cashiered (gasp!) and thrown out into the Badlands.

When that Council member, however, can somehow make a Troubleshooter do his dirty work for him, he may want to kill that 'shooter to keep him quiet, but he may also want to keep him around for *more* dirty work. So, by promoting the Troubleshooter, he earns his gratitude and loyalty (such as it is), and gives himself a living insurance policy.

Huh?

Bear with me. The Council member then, for some reason, gets caught doing something seditious and hauled before the Council. Before he's judged, however, he confesses — that the Troubleshooter he's been promoting blackmailed *him* into giving the Troubleshooter promotions and into performing this latest seditious act. The Council member then hauls out all the proof he has that the Troubleshooter committed these heinous crimes and accuses them of being the seditionists ... or Computer sympathizers ... or enemies of Free Enterprise — whatever. Since Justice is swift but clumsy in Alpha Base, it is now more likely that the Troubleshooters (yes, there is "guilt by association") will be found guilty by the Council and the Council member (who is one of the Council's own, by the way) will be given either a slap on the wrist or a commendation.

You can imagine what happens to the Troubleshooters *then*.

For those of you who may doubt the possibility of this outcome, I refer you to another governing body similar to

the Council of Secret Societies and their successful trials of incumbents. I won't point fingers or anything, but you shouldn't have to look far.

Of course, in Computer-run Alpha Complex, using traitors is much more difficult. Sure, a higher security clearance guy can blackmail a lowly Troubleshooter, but it's much more difficult to do it and not get caught … and The Computer doesn't hold trials. It is a little more circumspect these days about whom It executes, but It is still pretty dangerous to cross. However, contrary to popular belief, The Digitised Dictator itself doesn't always execute proven traitors.

Having learned from Its failures that caused its crash, The Computer has also learned from Its successes. If It had operated in Its "see the traitor, kill the traitor" mode during the time It was trapped in the tiny jackobot, it is unlikely The Computer would have survived to return to power in Alpha Complex.

Now, when The Computer uncovers a likely traitor whose abilities are unusually effective, It tries to subvert the traitor back "on line." Sometimes, It will even go so far as to execute those who uncovered the traitor, thereby winning the traitor's confidence and lulling his fears about discovery, all the while setting the traitor up for a bigger fall.

You see, even though it is treason to admit it, there are things even the newly ReBooted Computer cannot do. It uses traitors to ferret out other traitors, to remove incompetent but otherwise loyal (now *there's* an oxymoron) Power Services heads (yes, even The Computer has trouble with Its underlings — see the present day Soviet Union for examples), and to infiltrate Alpha Base and even Alpha City. Why expose loyal citizens to danger when possible traitors can act as cannon fodder?

Of course, the more obviously treacherous a citizen of Alpha Complex is, the less likely The Computer is to manipulate him rather than just executing him. Public executions are great ways of using traitors too, remember.

Finally, there are those nonexistent traitors in Alpha City. Well, since there aren't any *there*, we can move on to …
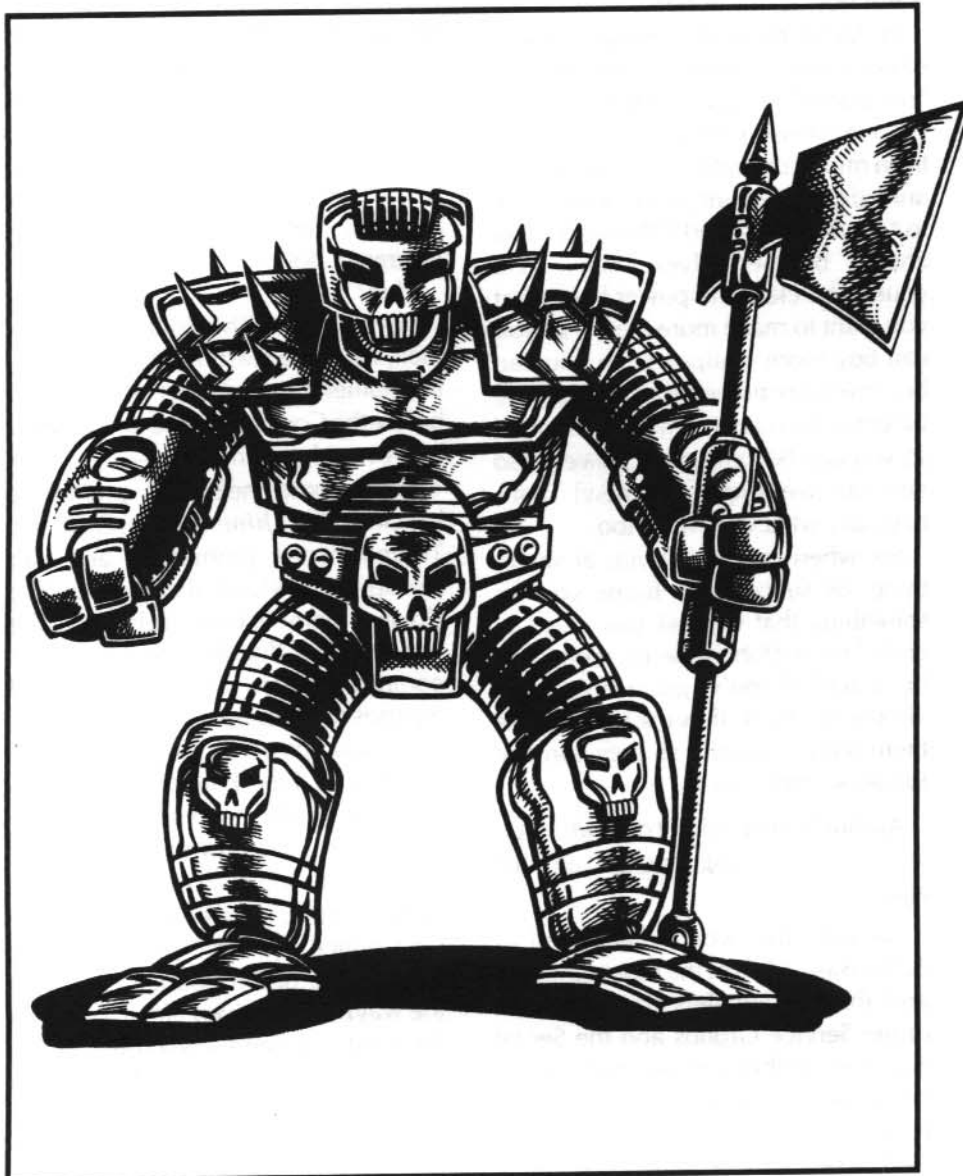
Ed.

What? Hey; you're the editor … lemme finish the book, okay?

Ed. Tell them.

Tell them what? I don't know what you're talking about.

Tell them, Ed. About Alpha City. Or else.

Or else what? … wait; forget I said that.

Truth in Alpha City

Okay, so far we've been content to tell you that Alpha City is "a big white Utopia where everything works and everybody is happy." Alpha City is "all your Troubleshooters want but probably will never have."

Horsebot hockey.

Here's the real story, but it's real secret. You can tell anybody you want, but then you have to kill them.

Alpha City, while a big metropolis of efficiency and abundance, isn't really all it's cracked up to be. After the Crash, the few surviving High Programmers made for the most remote area of Old Alpha Complex and set up shop. They knew that the lower security clearances, for the most part, had this irra-

Are you a good bot or a bad bot?

tional desire to crash *them* as well as The Computer. Imagine. Just because you treat a clone like the slave he is, he's ungrateful …

Well, anyway, the High Programmers had a problem. They knew the clones wouldn't just go away. In fact, when the hormone suppressants in Alpha's water and food supply ran out, the High Programmers knew there'd be a heckuva lot more of them fairly soon.

(**Alpha History Note:** Most of the High Programmers have been off the hormone suppressants for years; what's the fun of being all-powerful if you don't have someclone to … share it with. Unfortunately, they had no idea how long the reproductive process took, because they still consumed the reproductive suppressors.)

So, the High Programmers got together and came up with a plan. They figured that the majority of Alphans would be lost and confused without someone to order them arou— excuse me "*guide* them." So, they decided that if they could provide that service, they wouldn't become refugees from lunchcycle.

They built, with the help of servicebots and the few Infrareds who still followed their orders, Alpha City. Alpha City, the big, gleaming gem in the ruin of old Alpha Complex; they thought that clones would flock to it in droves.

The High Programmers were partially right. Many clones did come to

Alpha City and, seeing the wonders the High Programmers had worked, they swore fealty to their old masters. They agreed to do whatever it took to make Alpha City a success.

Unfortunately for the High Programmers, Elizabeth-R had done a pretty fair job of organizing the Secret Societies and, even after she was killed, they hung together. Life was hard in Alpha Base, but most of the best clones decided to hang onto their freedom.

Then, when The Computer returned, the High Programmers went into fits. They knew that The Computer would blame them for Its crash and for not helping to ReBoot. They figure (correctly) that they are Number One on the Revamped RAM's hit list. The High Programmers declared a state of emergency in Alpha City, closed the borders, and began to build defenses.

Now, Alpha City is almost totally cut off from the rest of Alpha. The defences are incredible, and the clones within are not allowed out. Only very special visitors are allowed in, and then only under the most incredible circumstances. The High Programmers apparently have absolute control over everyone and everything in the City.

It's enough to make The Computer jealous.

The Computer sends lots of attack missions at the City; all of them have been repulsed with minimal damage. Alpha Base is rumored to have limited trade with the City, but most clones believe this is very unlikely — if the borders ever open, the Council is very worried that most of their populace will defect.

But, within the City, all is not as it seems. While everyone is given a job they will be good at and happy doing, there are bound to be malcontents. Rumor states that the High Programmers are even more efficient at dealing with these people than The Computer ever was. Likewise, Alpha City, with its borders closed, is running out of raw materials. It is believed that occasional excursions from the City into the Badlands and the Outdoors are becoming more frequent and more necessary. Soon, when the High Programmers' warehouses get low, they may have to resort to more desperate means to keep their citizens in line.

Okay, you can start reading again.

The 9-To-5cycle Job

Every clone, off-duty Troubleshooters included, has his own calling for the collective good of his people. In Alpha Complex, these are known as Service Groups. In Alpha Base, among the free people of The Council of Societies, these are known as Committees (although calling "Committees" by their old name is still pretty much overlooked and not very sedition.

Alpha Base Committees

The Committees were formed originally as simply that: committees. Clones committed to finding solutions to the problems plaguing the Societies as they tried to organize.

Their problems were many. Little or no food. No power grid, or energy to supply it. The needed to provide cohesive structure to the fabric of the brave new world they were trying to build.

The Committees were the first attempt at organization. Soon, they founded their own organizations to provide the Council civilians with their needs. The Societies supplied workers, either through volunteers or draftees. The Committees were a success.

Although the Committees do wield some political clout, they are not nearly as powerful as their Alpha Complex likenesses; each Society has members in each Committee, and they prevent the growth of each Committee's power.

TO SHOOT ...
OR NOT TO SHOOT ...

THAT IS THE TROUBLE.
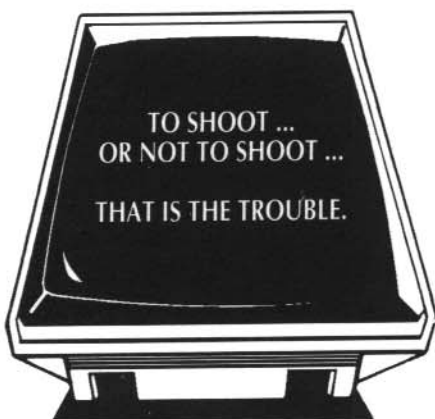
Of course, everyone is also struggling clandestinely to control each Committee. But what can you expect in Alpha?

Here are some examples of the largest Committees. Each Troubleshooter is a former member — and now a representative — of a Committee or Service Group, unless she comes from Outside or the Badlands.

Alpha Base
The Committee for Intelligent Assassination

The CIA is one of the more powerful of the Committees, and has been placed above the petty power plays of the Council Societies. They act both as police and as investigators of corruption and sedition. Despite their aggressive title, their undercover operations are rarely more than "sting" operations; greater attempt at covert activity cause society members to blow the whistle. The CIA is, for all intents and purposes, IntSec with a new name. It was originally founded as a police force that would direct its efforts towards keeping Council Members and others in power from getting too greedy. Now, it has a tendency to follow the current "waves" of sentiment in Alpha Base, going along with the popular factional lines.

The CIA rigorously badgers the Troubleshooters, and received tacit Council approval for doing so. The Council has less control over the Troubleshooters than they would like, and the CIA is their way of saying to the Troubleshooters "we care ... so watch it!"

The Militia

The Militia is not the high-profile weapon-heavy force of their Alpha Complex counterparts; they are an all-draftee, under-equipped, under-trained, under-organized group of irregulars who are sworn to defend Alpha Base. They have no high prestige; they are instead the designated cannon fodder who'll hold off The Computer's legions long enough for the rest of the Base populace to run off and hide.

The Militia foot-soldiers refer to maneuvers as "meatgrinder training," assaults tactics were designed by a clone named "Lem-I-NNG," and their superior officers keep their heavy weapons and autofire cannons in the rear ... pointed at the backs of their own troops. Think of a certain space opera movie (which must remain unnamed due to licensing) — the Militia is every bit as cared for and looked out for as the soldiers in white.

Not very.

That's why they call those "bit" parts.

The Infernal Revenue Service

That's a typo. Really. Even though it is printed this way in every reference to Alpha's Revenue collecting agency, "Infernal" was not what they meant.

This service group is in charge of Revenue; both credit acquisition and resource collection. Perhaps the reason it is called the *Infernal* Revenue Service is because, early on in Alpha Base's history, they were more in charge of restoring energy than anything else. Back then, they spent most of their time looking for anything that could be turned into fuel — anything. Most clones remember the dark days (literally!) of the Crash when the IRS was burning just about *everything* — especially the then useless plasticreds produced by The Deceased Digital Dictator. Oh, well; who knew?

Unfortunately, most clones still look back at those days when they are forced to "chip in" to the IRS and, rumors state, the IRS still burns creds when they run short of other fuel. Of course, why they would do this with the reactors back on line nobody knows, but you know what they say in the IRS — "That plasticred's for burning ..."

They pull almost as much clout as the CIA, but are even better entrenched.
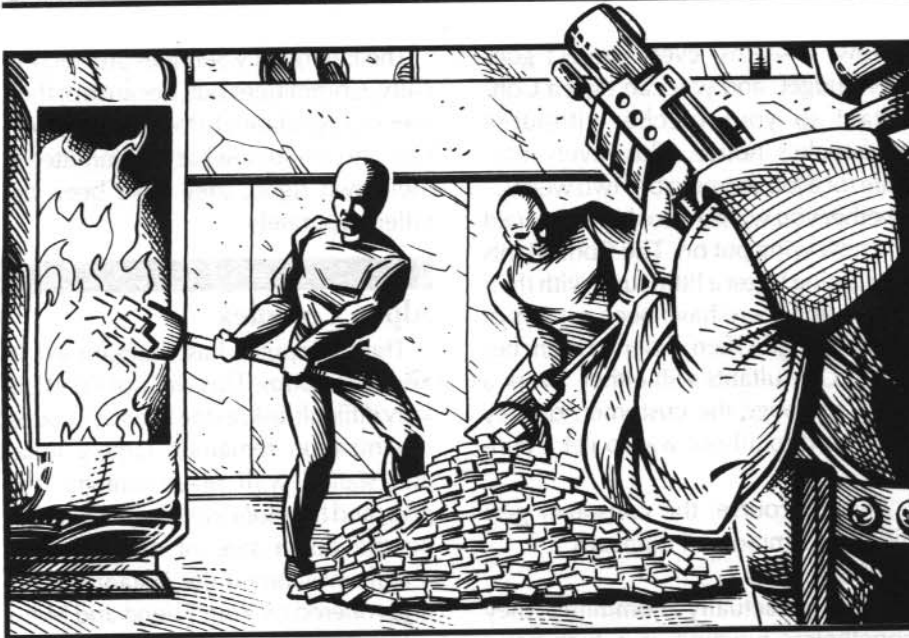
Put another clone on the fire.

No one except the CIA or a combination of Societies can touch them. By the way, in Alpha Base lingo "audit" means "give everything you have to the IRS and then you'll only owe them a little more." Did that *really* need to be explained?

The IRS controls the Council's uranium reserves, oversees all payments, conducts banking, takes polls and censuses, screens citizenship, handles permit applications, and taxes citizens for the betterment of all. They are greedy, fattened, complacent pigs, working less and demanding more than any other committee.

But they give good interest rates, and you get a free toaster when you open a MasterClone charge account.

And, in Alpha Base, a toaster is a powerful weapon.

Power Services

Wait a minute ... don't they belong in Alpha Complex? Sure they do, but when The Computer crashed, a large fraction of Power Services' personnel defected en masse to Alpha Base and set up shop. They are the primary reason that Alpha Base has prospered; they tend to the power generators, power lines, and all wiring in every house.

But doesn't the IRS cover this?

Shh ... don't tell them. The Infernal Revenue Service thinks they produce power for Alpha Base, but all they really do is take other people's hard-earned plasticreds and other resources and turn them into so much hot smoke. Who would believe an organization that has free license to *take* would ever *give* anything?

Anyway, Power Services actually doesn't have much political power these days, though, since they know they'll get lynched to a man if they try to blackmail the Council. Everybody's kind of touchy in the Council about Computer sympathies, real or imagined.

Apparently, this lack of political power in PS has been good for them — and Alpha Base. Because they can't bargain, browbeat, or bull their way through status reports any more, PS has to perform a valuable function or get the heck out of Alpha Base. They've cut their clonepower to the bone, and they work pretty hard. They aren't anywhere near perfect (brownouts are still pretty frequent, and just try to get the power turned on in your new creche ...) but, overall, they are about the most useful service in Alpha Base ... and the least appreciated.

The Cabinet

The Cabinet is a small, elite group of high-ranking Society members who are the brains behind the each Council member's actions — supposedly. They are all respected and trusted elders appointed by Council members, so it is very unlikely a player would be a Cabinet member — but she could be an attache. The Cabinet performs research on issues, contemplates possible alternatives, deliberates extensively over future Council decisions ... and generally says "yes" to anything their particular Council member says.

But this doesn't mean they don't work hard. The Cabinet's attaches' spend all their time running around Alpha Base and beyond collecting data ... though they seldom know why. Most attaches want to be Cabinet members themselves, and the only way to become one is to 1) Do what your boss says and 2) Collect more meaningless information (at least in your eyes) than anybody else. There are rumors of successful attaches bringing in enough paperwork for a clone family of five to live in comfortably. Of course, while no one ever admits it, rumor has it that Cabinet members never read all this stuff; they just turn it over to the IRS for burning when they're done impressing their Council member (and any inquisitive representatives of the media) with its bulk and any meaningless statistics they can pull out of the pile.

The Food Co-op

These folks take care of all food production and waste recycling in Alpha Base. As such, they also have a small subdivision which handles plumbing problems. Rumors that the plumbing and food dispensers are circular in nature are definitely evidence of subversive Computer sympathies.

WHO CALLED "LUNCH"?

All meals in Alpha Base are served "family style," although for a few credits you can get a private table and/or better food.

The Co-op is definitely the bottom of the totem pole among committees; it's mindless, greasy work, with no glamor at all. And, if everyone was desperate enough, they could always scrounge someone — I mean, some*thing* to eat.

All allegations that the Food Co-op goes "Outdoors" to scavenge for food are totally untrue. Food Co-opers would rather die of starvation than eat <ugh!> *natural* food. Imagine; eating something that hasn't been dead longer than you've been alive ... shudder.

The Consultants

A lofty name for a bunch of fixer-uppers, these guys handle everything from refilling chapstick tubes to unjamming lasers to autocar wrecking to retrofitting scrubots with flame-throwers (for those hard-to-clean stains).

They are generally competent, generally have the parts, and can generally accomplish work rapidly. Their political clout is greater only than the Co-op, for in Alpha Base everyone can do at least a little maintenance.

Fortunately for them, however, the clones of Alpha Base are starting, despite Council warnings about The Evil Computer and the devious High Programmers, to get a little complacent. Clones with a little extra barter in their briefs (this has replaced "plasticreds in their pockets" recently, but a few of the female clones of Alpha Base are starting to see it as a twofold statement) are finding it much more convenient to hire the Consultants to do "the dirty work" for them.

I CAN BUILD IT
FOR 200 CREDS IN
TWO DAYCYCLES ...

I THINK.

Now, it seems, every project goes over budget, and you can't get a Consultant to your creche without a weekcycle's notice. Plus, every estimate for a job seems to be "two weeks," whether you want a door lock replaced or a new wing put on. The Consultants are starting to get a little surly with their clients and there have been rumors of "price fixing." Often, different branches of the Consultants will either "work a deal" to gouge the customer, or they will resort to all-out war to get a contract.

And, of course, the consumer gets billed for ammo and damages.

Pro Tech

While not actually a committee, they nonetheless function as a high-powered visionary version of R&D, supplying ronco-style death machines to the Council's Troubleshooters. Unlike the R&D of the past, however, Pro Tech is being held accountable for their creations. If a Gods-I-LLA bot from Pro Tech starts ravaging Alpha Base (instead of guarding the washroom it was assigned), the Council forces Pro Tech to deal with it — and often cough up the creds to pay for damages.

This accountability has trickled down. When a Troubleshooter team is assigned Pro Tech equipment by the Council (and they are — frequently), the team is held responsible for testing the equipment and bringing back a report, but Pro Tech is often held responsible for some of the results. Still, they are given a lot of leeway. If the new "Blast Ray o' Certain Discomfort" fails to fire or explodes in the Troubleshooters' faces, the Council often looks the other way when the team returns to file their report and "express their displeasure" with Pro Tech.

This sort of thing keeps them a little more in line.

Others

There are many other Committees in Alpha Base. There are even smaller duplicates of the above ones (though the IRS has yet to have an imitator survive a weekcycle — through no action of their own; clones tear them apart with their teeth). Create them as you see fit.

The Emergency Services are, technically, Committees but, because of their special importance to the Troubleshooters (who are somewhat a Committee in their own right), they have been detailed separately.

Alpha Complex

The Computer has reorganized Its Service Groups. This was not a particularly difficult task, as the Service Groups' organization remained largely intact and staffed with power-hungry despots, and the clones finding themselves on the down side of office politics readily welcomed the instant promotions offered by Your Friend and Mine.

Granted, what used to be Service Groups before the Big Oops are now split and fragmented, but for all practical purposes those beyond the influence of The Computer are not so much Service Groups as Simplexes and the like. In other words, the term "Service Group" only applies to that interlocking bureaucracy found within Alpha Complex.

This bureaucracy has understandably been shaken during recent events, and the status quo isn't, but nonetheless some general observations can be made.

Central Processing Unit

The Computer these days has a considerably diminished processing capacity, and a fantastic increase in need for surveillance equipment (remember all those smashed monitors? Thought you would). As a result, It has appointed CPU to be Its right-hand clone in domestic affairs.

While issues and agendas are initiated from On High, CPU is charged with administering to the details required to bring The Computer's plans to fruition. Communication between The Computer and CPU can be occasionally lacking, so now's your chance to have The Computer say, "To the best of My recollection, I knew nothing about that, and had no idea My subordinates were carrying out My orders." Boy, It'll sound just like any other head of state!

Part of Central Processing's problem
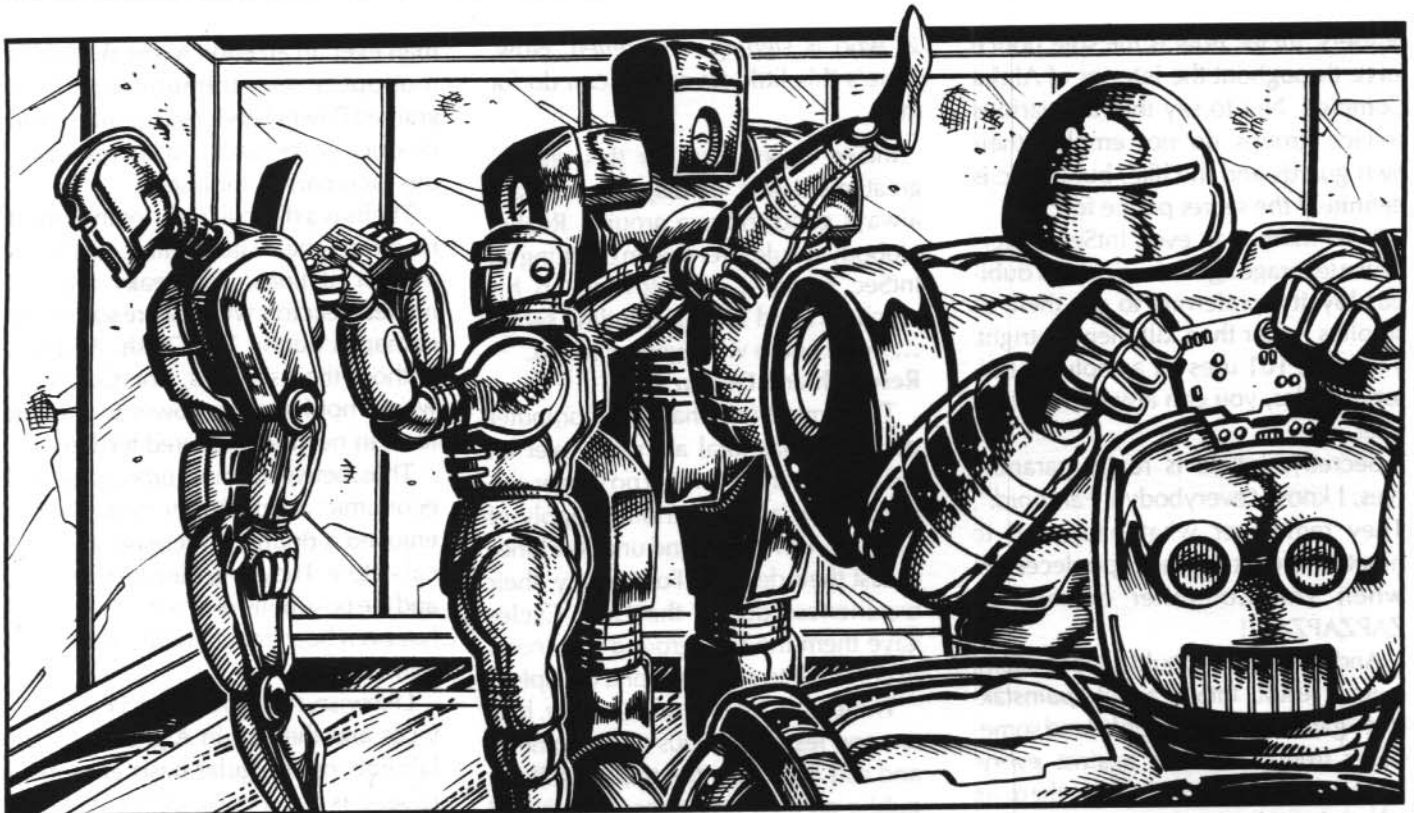
"... now we go 'round the bot exchange bush ..."

is to revitalize the almost dead economy of Alpha Complex. Bartering is the rule of the day, and credits seem to change in value without notice. As a result, CPU spends incredible amounts of time trying to harness the economy — by making artificial surpluses and shortages, fixing the value of a credit against industrial backhoes, regulating barter, devaluing the chapstick cap, etc., etc., etc. All this artificial tampering keeps the economy in turmoil — which, they figure, is better than dead. The only people who profit from this are the economists, who, if they make a prediction, need only wait a few days for it to come true.

Insider trading is the only way to succeed in Alpha Complex, and it is not only legal, it's encouraged.

The bottom line, though, is that CPU now has the power to create small agendas and enact large ones. And nobody but them likes that. Because they regulate, effectively, what everything you own is worth, they can mess with your life and then be praised by The Computer. CPU operatives spend most of their time figuring out how to turn a profit — at the expense of everybody else. Hence, most clones have a hard time deciding whether to shoot them or toady to them. IntSec is, of course, jealous that CPU can inspire so much emotion.

The Armed Forces

Startlingly enough, the Armed Forces is far and away the most loyal and fervent of the Service Groups in Alpha Complex. This is due to the simple fact that now they have an actual job. Woah.

Many people in Alpha are none too thrilled by the return of The Computer. They keep trying to send in infiltration and sabotage teams to blow up key equipment and cause general mayhem. Very few citizens in Alpha Complex take this kindly, so the Armed Forces are given just about any equipment they could ever want (of course, it still doesn't always *work* ...). In addition, they are occasionally allowed to go on counterattacks ("field trips"), and cause all sorts of explosions.

What with cartloads of ammo, a cause to fight for, and supply-side moving targets, why should the average soldier care that he's supporting The Computer?

As far as influence goes, while other Power Services can affect a clone's daycycle-to-daycycle life, Armed Forces can end it or mess it up totally. They have come up with a new threat most clones feel is worse than being shot: it's called "Drafting."

Drafting works this way: if a clone doesn't cooperate (i.e., say "Yessir, Mr. Armed Forces-type-sir!;" salute; and do whatever the Armed Forces guy says), the AF has The Computer's permission to "Draft" the clone (no, that *doesn't* mean shoot holes in him).

Since the clone has already proven he won't cooperate, the Armed Forces contingent (AF troopers never do this alone) takes him to the nearest Outside wall. They then blow a hole in the wall and toss the clone outside — *sans* everything else. They then seal up the "draft" and go about their business.

Internal Security

With the Armed Forces actively engaged in protecting Alpha Complex's

borders, IntSec now is the sole police force throughout the interior of Alpha Complex. Not to say that the various service groups do not employ their own guards and the like, but IntSec is definitely *the* secret police force.

Now more than ever, IntSec prefers to use leverage against citizens of dubious loyalty, preferring to use them as stoolies rather than kill them outright. There are 101 uses for a captured traitor. Besides, you can always kill them later.

Secretly, IntSec is really paranoid (yes; I know "everybody's *Paranoid*.") They remember what happened to ninety percent of their predecessors when The Computer crashed — ZAPZAPZAP!!

And they know it could happen again. As a result, IntSec agents *painstakingly* gather actual, tangible (and sometimes true!) evidence against *everybody* — but they only turn them in when they absolutely must! An IntSec agent would much rather have a Troubleshooter or a non-player character owe him a favor or know he could have him shot if he wasn't his buddy, than have him executed. IntSec agents have become masters of "friendly" blackmail.

Clone 1 (*pointing pistol at Clone 2*): Die, *traitor*!

IntSec Agent: Wait a minute.

C1 (*pausing*): What? He's a traitor; I must kill him!

ISA: Let's not be hasty … maybe we can work something out.

C1 (*puzzled, then enraged*): What?! Aha, you must be a traitor too! You both die!

ISA (*hurriedly, but calm*): Ifyoukillme,thenthey'llfindthose picturesinmycreche …

C1: What pictures?

ISA (*smiling*): Those pictures of a certain clone receiving instructions from a certain Treasonous Secret Society about a certain operation code named "Fizz-Whizz."

C1: You know —?! I mean … yes, maybe we can work something out (*lowers pistol*). I'll just wait outside.

ISA: Yes, you do that (*turns to Clone*

2, *who is sighing with relief*). Now, there's this little favor you can do for me …

IntSec Agents are, for this reason, great mediators in disputes and are always good to have around. Really. Nobody would ever dream of killing an IntSec Agent … by blowing up his creche … and the surrounding sector … I don't care what you've heard.

Research and Design

The simple fact that The Computer no longer has total authority over all citizens means that R&D no longer can depend on a never-ending supply of unready, unwilling, and unable clones to test their devices. Fortunately, their experiences during the Dark Cycles gave them the background they need to continue to exist in Alpha Complex.

These days R&D produces new, better, and less dangerous (!) equipment, and still must take the time to sell the public on their advances. Risrich and deSann (Far North), by far the most successful of the R&D enclaves, has formed the nucleus of Alpha Complex's new R&D structure, and has continued producing their catalogs (see also their old offerings in *The R&D Catalog*), and has thus been able to continue selling their stuff. Of course, most of the products in *The R&D Catalog* are no longer readily available (for hopefully obvious reasons), but they still turn up from time to time …

Not to say that R&D gadgets don't still blow up in Troubleshooters' faces; it's just that they're less likely to do so. At least not until they really need them to work.

Treasonous rumors state that R&D is now in charge of the Clone Vats, but this is purely conjecture on the part of those with little faith in The Computer. Any R&Der will tell you that he can't do anything about getting you extra clones … then he'll smile and hold out his hand.

Further details on how to use R&D, their equipment, and a few items currently available can be found in Chapter Four.

Power Services

Power Services is even more closed

than ever. In an effort to break PL&C's monopoly on ammunition, CPU granted Power Services the authority to produce power packs for energy weapons (and barrels for lasers).

Theirs is a difficult task, for they must repair all the water mains, electrical transfer stations, and leaky thermonuclear reactors which were so heavily damaged during The Crash. And yet, without their services, The Computer would not have the power to support itself in newly-conquered territory.

Thus, between ammo production and economic need, Power Services has enjoyed a dramatic increase in political stature. They're getting pretty cocky, and the possibility of a "worldbot strike" has even been mentioned in the rumor mills.

Likewise, rumors that this Power Services and the one in Alpha Base collaborate on a regular basis are totally false. It is just a coincidence that they use the same power lines and often share reactors in the Badlands. And that PS guy you met last week in Alpha Base; he just looks a lot like the guy you met today in Alpha Complex.

Computer: What did you say about being in Alpha Base, Citizen?

Author: Me? Nothing, Friend Computer; I would never be in Alpha Base!

C: Oh; then how would you know there is a Power Service group in Alpha Base, Citizen?

A: Uh … it was the Editor — he told me! Yeah … that's the ticket …

C: Oh, Citizen Ed-I-TOR; can I speak to you a moment?

Ed-I-TOR: Yes, Friend Computer?

C: I have heard reports of your treachery, Ed-I-TOR; prepare for summary termination.

E: Can I say three last words, Friend Computer?

C: Well; okay. But make it quick — I've got traitors on the stove …

E: *"Crash Course Manual."*

C: Ah. Hmm. Well … I see. And a mighty fine choice of last words, Friend Ed-I-TOR. I think we can overlook this and get back to this much finer book, right?

E: Anything you say, Friend Computer …

Technical Services

During The Crash, many TechServ operatives made a living as weaponsmiths, accurizing sidearms and improving reliability. This proved so popular that Weapon Maintenance is now an open subdivision of TechServ, frequented by many Troubleshooters.

Because they tend to be more reliable even than the newly revamped R&D, Tech Serv tends to be pretty busy. Successful Troubleshooters — once a dream, now an almost reality — keep returning to TechServ for more and better equipment. They also have a huge backlog of other gadgets that need repair, especially in sectors where there's been fighting.

Still, TechServ is looked at as a low-prestige/high-output facility and, even though their costs have begun to rise, they are not looked on as a powerful Service Group. In fact, TechServ has it in for Power Services now, with the recent political coup that the latter achieved.

Production, Logistics, and Commissary

PL&C has gotten license from The Computer to capitalize on FreeEnterprise, if you'll pardon the pun. The upshot of this is that if it's not absolutely necessary for immediate Computer-sanctioned work, you'll have to buy it.

REPORT TO PL&C AND HPD&MC, PDQ, CITIZEN.

Supplies are short, but PL&C realizes that prompt service will be necessary both for their own profit and for the good of Alpha Complex. After all, if Alpha Complex falls, they'll be back out of a job.

Of course, PL&C doesn't actually produce much, now does it?

Well, when you can't do something right … you advertise!

"Remember — we at PL&C don't make the things you use; we make them *better!*" is their current logo. (Read: "Remember — we at PL&C don't actually make anything, but if you don't give us a cut, nobody will buy your stuff!")

PL&C is extremely good at what they do. True, they have the ultimate capitalist dream in Alpha Complex — a captive work force, sales force, and consumer base along with the fact that they set most price controls — but they still work harder under The Computer's watchful monitors. They saturate Alpha Complex with advertising; they come up with new slogans every day; their agents are everywhere, hawking other people's goods at whatever prices they can get for them. In fact, they have The Computer's permission — albeit it is not generally known — to venture Outside, into the Badlands, and even to Alpha Base to sell their clients' products.

But doesn't PL&C produce food?

Well, yes, but Alpha Complex food doesn't really count as a product. True, they advertise their food products just as much as everything else, but that is out of sheer habit. They have no competition in the food industry.

And a good thing, too (for them).

Housing Preservation and Development, and Mind Control

Aside from the new project code-named Operation Urban Renewal, HPD&MC has abandoned the tasteless Teela O'Malley show for new hard-hitting, heavily-censored and overly-propagandized newsreels. Done in the finest over-edited rock video style, these glorify the further conquests of The Computer, led by a variety of (fictitious) Vulture Warrior and Troubleshooter heroes. Occasionally real Troubleshooters also make an appearance (although there are seldom any returning guest shots — the real Troubleshooters aren't allowed to return shots).

Of all the Service Groups, HPD&MC and PL&C get along best. Rumor has it that they get along so well because they are the only two groups whose names have to be abbreviated … but that's what The Computer would like you to think! Actually, HPD&MC and PL&C profit off of each other. Instead of acting in competition for the attention of Alpha Complex's mindless dron — I mean, "consumer base" — they supplement and enhance each other's presentation.

Often, clones get to witness Bucky-O-HAR, the rampaging Vulture Warrior decapitate his hundredth Commie Mutant Traitor of the hour with a "Gen-U-INE, Eff-I-SNT, Imp-R-SIV power sword made, coincidentally, by our sponsors over there at SAP Sector Technical Services! Buy one today!"

In fact, HPD&MC's replacement for Teela O'Malley (though she is still active on the twenty-three-hundred news), a clone named Hairaldo Riv-I-RAH, is quickly becoming the most popular HPD&MC representative ever. He has opened Al Cap-O-NNE's secret piggy bank (that notorious Crazy Eddie was actually *hiding* in Alpha Complex) — and found it empty. He opened up the local RIP Sector reactor — and found it

"Coming up ... Neo-computer nature babes who hurt scrubots and the clones who love them!"

empty (though it glowed real nice). Riv-I-RAH-2 even opened up (or tried to open up) a rampaging Alpha State Commie Warbot Mark VIski. Unfortunately, *it* opened *him* up and *he* wasn't empty, no sir. Now, Hairaldo mainly stays within the bounds of his local talk show interviewing, interrogating, and generally abusing those who can't shoot back.

Still, the bulk of HPD&MC is nowhere near as glamorous. Stars come, and stars go, and stars get executed for bad ratings or being stupid and opening Warbots, but the "Grips" stay around forever. The Grips, the unknown of HPD&MC do most of the actual drudgework in Alpha Complex, but nobody seems to care. In fact, why am I bothering to tell you this? Go on to the next section.

Even with all the painting and general fixing-up that needs to be done in Alpha these days, HPD&MC is still overworked and under respected.

Service Groups and the Rest of Alpha

Service Group simplexes still exist, though most have been incorporated in one way or another into either The Council or Alpha Complex.

Alpha City also has divisions along the lines of Service Groups, but as the workers there are happy, efficient, helpful, and courteous, they need not concern us here. Even if they are members of a fascist regime so intent on its own survival — but that's not official, now is it?

What does need to be mentioned is that the Service Groups inside Alpha Complex each have secret offices in the Badlands, where other Alphans can come to get favors and material goods ... for a price. For example, many clones still get their weapons worked on by TechServ. With the resources of Alpha Complex behind it, the TechServ office can get fast service

and quality work, a combination that is quite rare in the rest of Alpha.

Hunting rival Service Group outlets is a major goal of everyone in Alpha Complex. The Council also wishes to hunt these down, as they bleed badly-needed credits and skilled workers from the Alpha Base economy. For some reason, Council Troubleshooters seem to be surprisingly ineffective at uncovering these outlets.

Imagine that.

It might be related to those "team discounts" we've heard about.

Service Groups Serving Characters

Service Groups and Council Committees often have their own little agendas, which result in extra little side missions being given to Troubleshooters (gee, what a surprise). In addition, they'll be genuinely interested in the welfare of the Troubleshooters as representatives of their interests in the

Troubleshooter organization (Read: spies).

So have your Troubleshooters' superiors interact with them. They are in part responsible for outfitting the Troubleshooter, and often provide material and informational assistance. Sometimes they'll even let the Troubleshooter have high-clearance reflec, which of course must be worn under other clothing. The CIA might provide Troubleshooters with listening devices, PowServ might pass along a few extra laser barrels, etc. Committees and Service Groups can be treated almost like Unsecret Societies, replete with both favors and requirements.

Ah, the requirements ...

In case you hadn't noticed, what with the Service Groups, the Secret Societies, the Simplexes, the Employers, and the Council or the Computer (or both, if you're particularly nasty), the average Troubleshooter has a whole bunch of new pressures being put on her before, during, and after each adventure. And, unlike before where the Troubleshooter could blithely coast along, blasting her compatriots with impunity and then blaming them for the missions' failures, each of these groups expects you to (gasp!) *get something done!*

What's a Troubleshooter to do?

Most Troubleshooter missions are still, at least in part, "Impossible Missions." With so many groups each wanting each Troubleshooter to accomplish a different goal, it will be a cold day in HEL Sector when each of these missions can actually be accomplished. So, now, the Troubleshooter has to make a hard choice: who can I blow off when?

A lot of this depends on timing, who is giving the orders, and what is actually important. The Troubleshooter actually has to consult his teammates sometimes even (another gasp!) in order to survive. Here's an example:

Troubleshooters Roy-G-BIV (remember him? Didn't think he'd survived this long, didja?), Diane-O-MYT, and Run-R-MAN have been given this mission by the Council of Secret Societies: go out into the Badlands and find a TechServ outlet and, if possible, loot and destroy it.

Now, Roy-G, the Leader of the mission, belongs to the Death Leopards, who think this is a great idea — go for it, Roy-G! However, he is also a member of the Pro Tech Service Group who have made a deal with that particular outlet in order to trade materials and manufactured goods. They don't want Roy-G's team to succeed. But Roy-G has a non-player character connection with another TechServ outlet that wants to move in on the first outlet's territory — and they're willing to pay to make sure the mission fails. They want Roy-G

to blast the daylights out of the TechServ outlet that stands there now.

So, Roy-G has some tough choices. Likewise, it is to be expected that Diane-O and Run-R have a lot of the same problems. Now, if they went around on their own, doing what Troubleshooters do best (i.e., shooting each other in the back) nobody would be happy. Of course, since none of them want to be the first to *say* what they want to do (and possibly be executed), they have to watch and wait. Eventually, if they're smart, they'll try to cut a beneficial deal.

Skipping ahead ...

Finally, Roy-G and Run-R figure out that they want to try to fake the destruction of the outlet (it turns out that Run-R is being paid a lot to make sure the mission fails, and he offers to split with the mission leader). Unfortunately, they

are unable to convince Diane-O, who is secretly a Computer-sympathizer, to go along with the plan. So, they have to deal with her to collect their money. How do they do this? Gee, I don't know ...

But you get the picture. If Roy-G and Run-R can pull this off, they can probably convince — with the help of the TechServ guys and a couple of large explosions — the Council that the TechServ outlet has gone up in flames. They can talk the other TechServ guys into "biding their time" with a little Spurious Logic: "Gee; did you *see* that explosion? If *that* didn't get them, I don't know what will!" and the Death Leopards will be pleased mainly because *something* got blown up.

Of course, Diane-O-MYT-2 might have something to say about all this ...

Chapter Three
Secret (and Not-So-Secret) Societies

Since The Crash, many Secret Societies have come out of the plasticwork and more or less made themselves legitimate. Some are members of The Council. Some are gone for good. (Or at least until you start them up again.) Of course, Secret Societies are still treasonous in Alpha Complex, where The Computer is in charge; and nobody knows about Alpha City.

All of those Societies still active maintain various covert agents (read: player characters) that spread their influence. So, although Pro Tech has now gone public and is represented on The Council, they still have secret agents infiltrating Alpha Complex and Alpha City to steal information and equipment. And, within Alpha Base, they have agents among the Troubleshooters to protect their interests. Maybe they even have agents infiltrating other areas of Alpha Base ...

Below are entries for every Secret Society used in *Second Edition Paranoia*. They are grouped into three categories: Societies from the rulebook, Societies from supplements, and really old Societies.

Oh, yeah; there're bots in Secret Societies, too.

What, *Bots* in Secret Societies?

Yep. Bots can be player characters and have been a mainstay of *Paranoia* non-player characters for years. For an introduction to using bots as player characters, see *Acute Paranoia*. Also, there is a brief introduction to bots as player characters in "issue zero" of *"At Your Service, Citizen ..."* Many of the bot Secret Societies mingle with human Secret Societies, and a few are

even integrated. Not all bots are members of Secret Societies. Only the most independent and the most devious are able to join the Societies.

Really.

We mean it. Just because we lie to you all the time doesn't mean we're trying to fool you here. That toasterbot you've been abusing for the past six monthcycles doesn't have Secret Society connections with a Warbot Mark IV that will turn your bones into toothpicks and scramble your brain with a laser rifle.

Trust us.

The Ins and Outs

As far as inter-societal relations go, you can assume that everyone on the Council has friendly, though perhaps strained, relations. Simplexes view all others, and are viewed by others, with suspicion, and hatred is reserved for those Societies who are still totally secret. The public Societies feel that the others are using them for some devious purpose of their own.

Really? Deviousness in Alpha Base? Nah ...

Each Society has listings for its current status:

Council	active in Alpha Base politics
Eliminated	gone for good
Public	freelance wanderers
Secret	still undercover
Simplex	independent country

Then there's a paragraph or two about the current state of the Society, and its experiences since the Crash.

Finally, there's a few lines about the sort of things a player character agent might be asked to do for the Society.*

The State of the Disunion II

Anti-Mutant

Status: Secret

The most paranoid of organizations, they have gained spectacularly in strength with the arrival of the real live Pure Strains during The Crash. These rugged übermenschen have revitalized a sagging hate group. Mentally, the Anti-Mutants have disciplined themselves very well, and can make *normal* rolls against their *Moxie* or *Chutzpah* to prevent psionics from reading their minds. They still hold meetings at random times and locations. They often send parties of adventurers into the Dungeon to do some monster mashing.

Player Character: More important to the A-M agenda is the discrediting of mutants in the Council's eye. While they support the Council in principle, they feel it's mutant-controlled. Thus, Anti-Mutant has formed a fake (and wholly-infiltrated) Society called the *Mutineers*. The Mutineers' agenda is the domination of the Council, and A-

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* Robotic Secret Societies are covered in brief in issue zero of "At Your Service, Citizen ..." and in full in the upcoming Bot Abuser's Manual.

M agents will try to indoctrinate mutants for later exposure.

Communists

Status: Simplex (Alpha State)

Life has been difficult for the Commies lately. Since the fall of The Computer and the rise of FreeEnterprise, no one particularly wanted to listen to them, and generally started shooting people with thick Russian accents just because they were annoying.

Fortunately for the Society, Lenin-G-RAD-2 found the abandoned remains of Alpha State (see *The People's Glorious Revolutionary Adventure*), and the Commies were able to found their utopia. Hounded on all sides, they are barely able to afford to send their Fifth Columnists into the rest of Alpha to convert the masses.

While the Commies really dislike The Computer and the Council of Secret Societies, they absolutely despise Alpha City. It makes them insanely jealous and they want only one thing more than the destruction of Alpha City: the possession of it.

Player Character: Communism is still a universal fear in Alpha, so the Fifth Columnists try to spread the word in a covert manner, while sabotaging ef-

SA-A-A-A-A-AY!
WHAT'S GOING ON
HERE?

forts to destroy Alpha State. The economy is the focus of their campaign right now. If they can cause the Free Enterprise system to fail, they can move into Alpha Base.

Computer Phreaks

Status: Council Member

The Computer Phreaks tread a fine line between total Council support and what the Council considers sedition. See, they love computers, and have actually made some mainframes which help The Council to choose its course. This makes the Council happy.

They also spend inordinate amounts of time playing Commie Combat, modeming in to THE Computer via AlphaNet, and working on AI software. This makes the Council unhappy. Especially the AI stuff. There are rumors that the Phreaks restarted The Big C, so they could have something to play with. There are also rumors that the Phreaks want to make their own Computer, which will then take over Alpha Base.

Player Character: The Phreaks are pretty paranoid about their relations with other Council Societies, especially since their secret project is to capture a copy of The Computer in an isolated compnode. Agents' missions relate to this, whether by scouting or capturing programs or programmers. Any Phreak who brings back a real, live High Programmer will be greatly rewarded.

## Corpore Metal

Status: Simplex (Alpha Wave)/Council

After The MegaWhoops, Corpore Metal was a house divided. While many opted to abandon their dogma and leave for the High Programmers' technocracy or the Council (where they were accepted unreservedly as equals), the hard-core elements have started their own Simplex. This is where a lot of cyborging originates in Alpha; even non-CMetallics can get 'borged here, because it helps advance the Cause and it helps pay the bills.

Alpha Wave is openly cooperative with Alpha Complex, as the Troublepunks and Cybershooters therein would like to see the mechanical Computer return to power everywhere, and the Computer in turn is a lot more tolerant of people getting themselves 'borged out.

The small representation the Corpore Metallics have on the Council is totally different — sure, they believe that the bot is the ultimate organism, but they want to see more freedom for bots that exist *now*. The merging of the inorganic with the (yech!) organic is offensive.

Player Character: Aside from being traveling cybernetic salesmen, Corpore Metallics attempt to advance the cause of The Computer, especially by foiling Council Troubleshooting missions. Council CMs are seldom player characters and, when they are, they act a lot like they did before the Crash.

THE PARANOIA SOURCEBOOK,
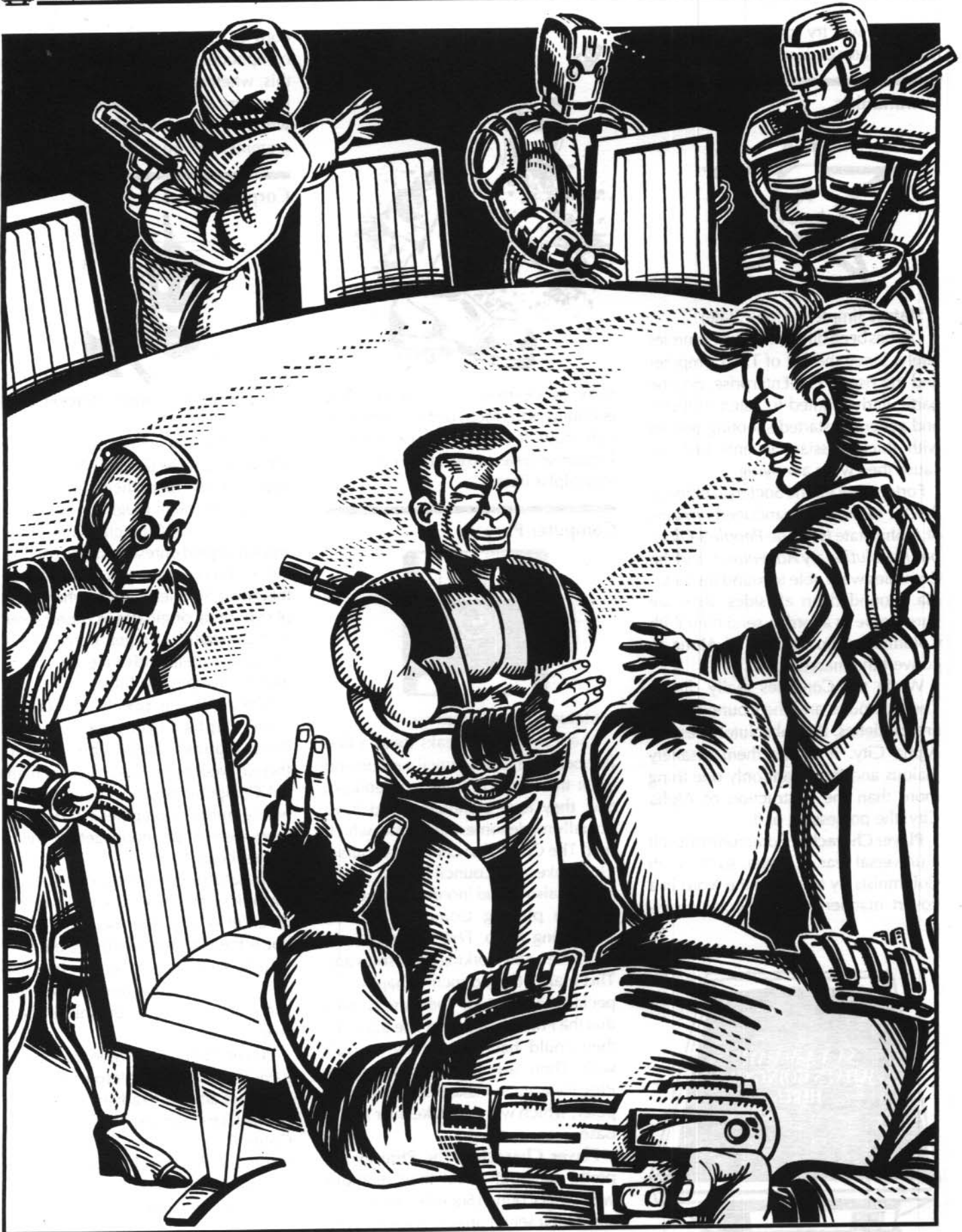
Secret societies are still secret!

ent inexhaustible nature of their resources and energy. A few rumors about The Computer actually funnelling help to the Death Leopards (hoping they'll eventually nuke out Alpha Base) are totally unfounded, however: even The Big Byter isn't *that* crazy.

Player Character: Death Leopards are a major guiding force behind the Council. They want to control it. As such, DLs in a Team attempt to incite distrust amongst the Team, while positioning themselves on top. They also are expected to plant evidence for discovery by others. They plant a lot of other things too.

First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer

Status: Eliminated

Prophets of the Fall and Resurrection notwithstanding, The Crash and ReBoot destroyed the faith that most people had in The Computer as a Divine Being.

These daycycles FCCCP is analogous to suburban churches where Sunday saints attend and go through the motions of worship. It's all very open and insincere. Kind of like watching the Teela O'Malley show every Sevenday. Anyone can attend, and there is no benefit or stigma towards going. FCCCP is effectively eliminated, and can be blithely ignored.

Frankenstein Destroyers

Status: Secret

Like many of the hate Societies, the Destroyers went underground as things

Death Leopard

Status: Council Member

Death Leopard has found politics to be right up their transtube, as one might expect from a bunch of self-serving vandals with no morals or scruples. Likewise, the idea of Death Leopard being a "Secret" Society was some-

what oxymoronic (minus the *oxy-* in some cases).

The type of politics the Death Leopards practice is the sort once practiced in Tammany Hall and other urban centers of corruption. Very crooked. Vote early and often. The former gangs are now organized along the lines of crime families, and, like same, they fight against each other whenever possible, but when push comes to shove it's the Leopards against the world.

Frighteningly, the Death Leopards are also the Council members who seem to get the most done. Everybody is a little scared of them and the appar-

"Vote for me, or the feathery citizen gets it!"

try to frame bots and Phreaks for sedition. Their main project right now is to capture a bot to test by using it as a disguise for human operatives. They could get a lot of help from the Council Corpore Metallics on that score, but the FDs go into convulsive fits every time they meet a CM.

Humanists
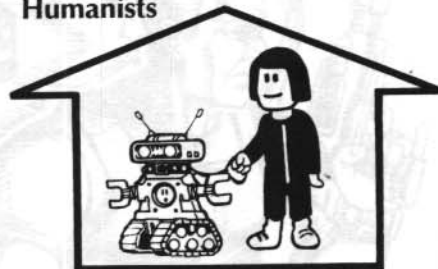
Status: Eliminated

The Humanists were founded on a shaky and self-centered platform to be sure. The Crash obliterated their doctrine that there were no plots to overthrow The Computer, and, as they offered no viable alternatives, the Humanists faded out. Many went off to join the Communists. They usually distinguished themselves by exposing themselves to ultraviolet radiation, getting heavy tans, and speaking with thick — but different — accents, "'Ey, Comrade Amigo; try thees ceegar, eh?"

Illuminati

Status: Secret

Now that The Council encourages Secret Societies to come forward and speak out, Illuminati no longer feels the need for secrecy. They —

Hey, Ed, weren't you going to write something about the Illuminati, and how everything was going according to plan?

I did. I sent it to you on disk. It's all there.

*You mean that* blank *disk I got this morning?*

Uh oh …

started stabilizing around Alpha. They felt they couldn't remain in a Council that openly constructed computers and consorted with bots.

With the added status given to bots since the Crash (they're now generally considered equals), the Frankenstein Destroyers are getting desperate. Not only must they smash the bots, but they must steal back the suffrage they've been given.

Player Character: The FDs hate all bots, but also the Computer Phreaks, whom they see as building a new monster. When with Council teams, they'll

Mystics

Status: Council Member

The Mystics are still around for the same reason they were formed in the first place; their members like to take drugs to escape the harsh realities of Alpha. And because they're hooked.

The Mystics are accepted into all Council meetings, for, despite the fact that their input is largely inane, they occasionally have startling insights. Plus they throw really bitchen parties, and they are the most creative cooks in the Council Co-op.

Player Character: Mystics are never really up to anything grandiose. Just get slack, have fun, and take more drugs until you can smell your brain burning. Unfortunately, most of the rest of The Council sees drugs as mind-control devices introduced to clones by The Evil Computer (amazing insight, eh?) and have ruled such drugs as generally "not good." As a result, many Mystics have fled back to Computer territory, and the rest spend most of their time strung out with withdrawal symptoms.

"And now, todaycycle only, at a special low, low price ... how much have you got?"

Pro Tech

Status: Council Member

Many of the true engineers and technophiles left the Society to join with the High Programmers of Alpha City, where their skills were used quite profitably. Thus, the remainder of Pro Tech, the harebrained hackers and lunatic fringe, remained to become what R&D once was: That Crazy Bunch o' Guys Down in the Lab. See, the Council, while it had the greatest amount of resources among the Big Three, still needed someone to take them and fashion new and powerful devices to further their causes. Pro Tech devices are always spectacular, sometimes spectacularly effective, sometimes spectacularly pyrotechnic.

Player Character: Pro Tech feels it has to compete with R&D, and so stealing R&D items is a must for all Pro Techies. So is suckering others into testing dangerous devices. Low-security clearance Pro Techies are usually given twice their normal allotment of experimental equipment ... though it usually works a little bit better than most.

Psion

Status: Council Member

Despite their intelligence, Psion's ultracerebral organization was too ponderous to react effectively during the chaos of the Crash and ReBoot. Their mutant powers were not overlooked

Certain clones are feared more in ReBoot Alpha than others ...

PURGE

Status: Secret

Boy, are these guys nasty these days. They thought their work was done, but now It's back. PURGE has spontaneously re-arisen, and now their members are likened to kamikaze ninjas or Moro rebels. Ruthless, aggressive, suicidal. PURGE, more than anything, has slowed the advance of Alpha Complex. Their agents can be found everywhere, even in Alpha Base, where they hamper the efforts of the Computer Phreaks.

Player Character: Damage. That's the primary mission. All else is secondary, although more subtle activists are trying to steal or create virus, worm, and Trojan programs. Most PURGErs are also anarchists, so they don't work well with others.

Romantics
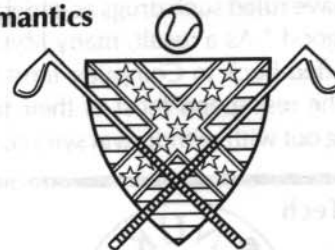
Status: Council Member

The Romantics are largely responsible for the continued reeducation of Alpha Base. Their extensive (though often misguided) knowledge of Old Reckoning Cultures has helped them form a Society that functions along more or less democratic lines. They, of course, save the best for themselves, and seek to keep themselves in a position of authority.

Player Character: Having been elbowed out of the top political position by Death Leopard, the Romantics are trying to do an end run by making themselves the entertainers of Alpha. Rockerclones and music video dancers are their main thrust, and stealing music, equipment, or instruments are

by others, and when they were invited to join the Council by Elizabeth-R, they did. They are now under suspicion, as rumor has it that Psion also runs Alpha City and has connections with the Dungeon. Psion dismisses those reports as Anti-Mutant propaganda.

Player Character: Psion is definitely trying to seize control of all Alpha, and now that it's splintered, they're finding their job a little easier. As such, all player character must actively seek new recruits and attempt to gain blackmail information on superiors. Quixotically, most Psion members — who are almost all registered mutants (yes, regis-

tering a mutation is still required, even in Alpha Base) — feel this bizarre urge to defend "mere mortals" from oppression by other (non-Psion) mutants, even though they are hated and feared by those they protect.

I believe the term is "Homo Stupido."

Typical Psion Conversation:
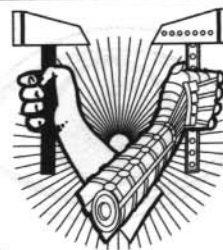
Psion: No.
Suck-R: What?
P: I won't do that.
S: You won't do what?
P: What you were just about to ask me to do.
S: I wasn't about to ask you to do *anything!*

their main missions. Romantics are also much less hesitant to experiment with Old Reckoning devices, even those that have been "improved" by R&D and Pro Tech.

A Scary Thought: Romantics long for the world "as it once was." Five or ten yearcycles down the transtube, they might start thinking about "the Good Ole Days when The Computer Ran The Show ..."

Seal Club (formerly Sierra Club)

Status: Council Member

Seal Clubbers are survivors. Once the most populous Society (except for FCCCP), and having been ruthlessly hunted to the brink of extinction, those now remaining are intelligent and resourceful. The survivors formed the cadre of the new group, and retained the natural roots while including militarism and survivalism, resulting in a Society of something like mountain men. There is also an elite corps of supersoldiers, especially adept at survival in the Badlands and Outside; these are simply known as THE Seals.

Player Character: The Seal Club wants to explore the Badlands and Outdoors. You are much less likely to freak out when exposed to holes in the domes or the Outdoors itself. Most player characters are given missions that involve going outside of Alpha Base (or Alpha Complex, if your character is from there) and, especially, to the Outdoors.

Recently, Seal Clubbers have been experimenting with new foods — real food gathered from Outdoors. They find the tall brown and green pillars are somewhat hard to eat, but anything that moves on its own can generally be digested. Hopefully, they will restrict this dietary tip to things found in the Outdoors.

Zany Eddies (formerly FreeEnterprise)

Status: Council Member

The network built over the decades by FreeEnterprise was destroyed during the Secret Society Wars and Post-Crash era, leaving the individual hustlers on their own — which is fine with them. These Zany Eddies have finally built a sort of network, where pretty much anything can be gotten from the friend of a teammate of a co-worker of a roommate of a repairman of a bot of a real rich guy. Some Zany Eddies have gotten into political advocacy and become lobbyists. Others have contacts for temporary help (read: player characters). If it's sold by sleazy people with permagrins, somewhere there's a Zany Eddie who'll have it.

Player Character: The ZE's have a new pet project: caravans and intersector trucking. Acquisition of vehicles is a high priority. Likewise, smuggling of stuff to sell into Alpha Complex is a big deal; there are lots of Suck-R's waiting to be fleeced. Most Zany Eddies have contacts within Alpha Complex and in most of the major Simplexes. But watch your back and avoid the IRS!

The Current State of Other Societies (from other supplements)

These Secret Societies appeared in other *Paranoia* supplements, all of which you have. What? You don't have every *Paranoia* supplement ever published in triplicate? Well, I guess you can go out and buy them or order them from us *right now!*

Clone Arrangers

Status: Council Member

The Clone Arrangers have a seat on the Council and provide grownies to Council Societies at reduced rates, yet they also have an underground network which provides grownies to anyone for the right price.

Player Characters: Theft of any kind of biological equipment or technology is imperative. The Clone Arrangers especially want a schizogenic clonulator so they can mass produce clones as does The Computer. If any really interesting mutants are encountered, by the way, specimens are always appreciated (living, dead, or in part).

Earth Mothers

Status: Eliminated

The Earth Mothers disintegrated when the lack of hormone suppressants made itself known in Alpha. Members either joined the Seal Club, hired out as nurses, or just plain quit. Many former members complain of lower back pain a lot.

Femme Fatale

Status: Eliminated

Always weak in a Society where sexual awareness was minimal, this Society flourished briefly, then just as rapidly died out when it was discovered that Elizabeth-R had no intention of joining, and yet had no difficulties with males preventing her from gaining power.

International Workers of the World

Status: Eliminated

Those few Wobblies who survived the last year before The Crash have since joined with the Commies in Alpha State. They are even less productive than their better-known counterparts.

Groupies not used in *Second Edition Paranoia*

Up until now, these *First Edition Paranoia* Secret Societies were not used in *Second Edition Paranoia*. This was *not* an oversight, but merely a reflection of how secret these Societies had actually become.

Amazing, wasn't it?

Alpha News Network (formerly National Fantasy Fan Foundation)

Status: Secret

This is the only Society that has had any experience with printing presses and the like, what with their publication of fanzines, etc. During The Dark Time, they were looked to as a source of information, since they could always find a way to exchange gossip. Now they run the post-modern version of CNN, with newsclones all over the place gathering the latest scoops and presenting the news in an unbiased yet sensationalist manner, both published and cable broadcast. This makes ANN very popular with the powers that be — every Council member wants his or her face on the news ... usually.

While they are technically a "Secret" Secret Society, they enjoy a facade of neutrality — even The Computer is loathe to stomp on them (unless their "unbiased reporting" doesn't agree with Its knowledge of reality). Most of the other Societies scoff at their power ... but not to their face (or on camera).

Player Characters: Dig up dirt. This usually means spilling all the beans on your team whenever it does a mission. Really gets you the ratings! Most Troubleshooters from this Societies insist that they be Communications Officer for the team, but they refuse to hold the camera (they want their face on the news, too).

Foundation

Status: Eliminated

They went right off their Edge.

Knight Fighters (formerly Knights of the Circular Object)

Status: Council

Most people ignored the KoCO until The Crash, at which point the Knights gallavanted around Alpha rescuing citizens in distress, slaying wrongdoers, and generally setting a good example in very dark times. Their inscrutably chivalrous behavior and combat skill earned them a lot of respect and made people very suspicious of their mo-

tives. Since these are two major requirements for being a valid Secret Societies, the KoCO reorganized as the Knight Fighters, a Society dedicated to chivalry, righteousness, and (most importantly) martial prowess. They are very popular as bodyguards, though their diplomacy skills are truly medieval.

Player Characters: The Knight Fighters are obsessed with quests. The latest is to organize a group of raiders to capture the Lost Arcwelder. Failing that, they will crusade against "The Metallic Machiavelli," slaying Its minions with great fervor. They respect power, but not overt mass destruction. Politeness and fair play are positive traits for a Knight Fighter — not to mention the ability to slay Dungeon mutants — er, monsters. Knight Fighters believe that, when their last clones perish in the quest, they go to Alpha City.

Moo

Status: Secret

If anything, this group has gained in power, as The Crash and ReBoot gave them more obscure points to ponder. Unfortunately, they don't have the least little idea what to do with it.

Player Characters: Sure Moo has agendas. It's just that they're usually too esoterically zen to be comprehensible to anyone, including the Mooist. "Contemplate your teammates' navel ... then figure out why she has one."

On the up side, Moo is one of the least demanding of the Societies; on the down side, it doesn't do anything for you either.

Mutons (formerly Eugenicists)

Status: Simplex (the Dungeon)

Diehard Eugenicists and fringe Psions have reformed themselves (figuratively and literally) into a Society endorsing and engineering massive mutation among human genes. Those with concealable mutations are used to contact prospective members, while those who look like comic book villains stay in the simplex frightening away visitors.

Player Characters: A favorite Muton mission is to kidnap someone and drag

them off to The Dungeon. Either that, or they "shill" for other Mutons, leading hapless parties of Troubleshooters into the Dungeon in search of treasure ... and then into a trap. They especially like doing this to Knight Fighters.

Barring that, rumor has it the Mutons have developed a serum which, when injected into people, mutates them horribly. They have attempted to infect the food and water supplies of Alpha Complex and Alpha Base with their formula, but they have never succeeded (oh, yeah?).

Sybil-I-NNG Rivals (formerly Sy-B-LNG Rivals)

Status: Secret

Sure, go ahead. Drive your players mad with fear. The taste of adventure that all clones had during The Crash ensures that higher-numbered clones hunger for more! These clones are impatient to be activated and, with the destruction of the creche and clone family systems, there are a lot of these "successor clones" roaming around free. They *really* enjoy eliminating their lower clone numbers, too.

Player Characters: Troubleshooters never belong to this group. Just their clones. And they usually outnumber them.

Trekkies

Status: Secret

Boy, the Trekkies are really back into the swing of things in Alpha Complex (and elsewhere). And, of course, they are still not prosecuted. Why should they be? They're so blatant that they're obviously not traitors. The biggest advantage of having a Trekkie on your Team is that if you meet some hostiles, and there's a Trekkie in that group, the two of them always meet amicably, and can defuse an otherwise tense situation.

One exception: rumor has it that there is a new branch of the Trekkie Society out there, going by the name of *Trekker.* They are distinguished by their resistance to "getting involved," their high-tech and shiny-looking equipment (though it never seems to do any

good), and their refusal to fight under virtually any circumstances — except when they encounter a "Classic Trekkie." Then, the two individuals (or groups) will scream and yell at each other incoherently until somebody louder tells them to "get a lifecycle!" Then they pout.

Player Characters: Mission? To explore strange new sectors. To seek out [deleted for security reasons]. To boldly [deleted] where no [deleted] has [deleted deleted].

And, Brand New Ones ...

The Conciliators

Status: Secret

This, if anything, is the IntSec of the Council. Formed secretly by the Council in an attempt to keep their member Societies in check, the Conciliators are very *Paranoid* indeed. See, the very existence of a truly *Secret* Society within the Council makes them vulnerable to prosecution for sedition from the very organization they support. Boy, are these guys secretive.

Player Characters: Keep Council missions on track. Try to entrap other Troubleshooters.

The Computer Clone Column

Another new Society, this one is a group of irregulars from Alpha Complex dedicated to furthering the reign of The Computer. Knowing that the Council has infiltrators in Alpha Complex, the CCC has not revealed their existence to The Computer, and thus they are all still considered traitors by The Big C. They just hope they'll be able to schmooze their way out of trouble if ever caught. Basically, the CCC hates everybody and wants to hurt everybody. They are "right" and everybody else is "stupid." "Those guys are dorks" is a favorite password of Tri-Cs

Player Characters: Disrupt Council Troubleshooter missions utterly. Kill some folks while you're at it. Hide your features as much as possible and be obnoxious to anyone available who isn't exactly the same as you ... and if they're the same as you, boy, you don't like them *at all*.

The Saga Of Secret Societies

Let's take a moment to think about secret Societies. Sit back, get comfortable. And answer this question: why would any clone in his right mind join a Secret Society?

Because he has no choice?

No, no; the *other* reason.

They're dangerous. They ask you to do crazy things. They show up at inopportune times and talk about incriminating things. They demand your best, and demote you or even kill you if you fail them.

They sound sort of like The Computer, don't they?

Even within the Council, where everything's supposed to be pretty mellow, covert operatives do bad impersonations of cold cuts all the time.

How many of you out there have your Troubleshooters' Secret Societies GIVE them useful items? Huh? How many? Thought so.

"Grrrr!"

What can I say ...YUCK!

Remember, everyone in Alpha (Alpha City notwithstanding) is always on the hot seat. Life is dangerous; people want to betray you. Everybody wants some real friends.

Service Groups and Committees are a poor source of friends, for although they'll uphold your common interests above those of other groups, coworkers are generally as compassionate as a piranha.

Since membership in (or espionage for) a Secret Society is treason (or sedition), your fellow members tend to be a lot more trustworthy than other people around Alpha. Plus, they don't want to piss you off, or else you'd turn them in or become a double agent or something. So your superiors will also occasionally give you a bonus (bribe) to keep you happy. And extra training ensures your missions will be successes.

Bennies

Every time a Troubleshooter succeeds in a mission, give out a small reward. Just a little token of appreciation, not more than about twenty credits' worth.

A Zany Eddie might get a new gold tooth. A PURGEr might get a new magnetic hammer. Or an Anonymous Methanolic (a new bot Society) might get a bottle of syrup to pour on his brain.

Whenever a Troubleshooter goes up in status, give out something a little more substantial. An Anti-Mutant might get a psi-homing missile (a "brainbuster"). Or a bot might get some new peripherals or software.

And don't forget to give your Troubleshooters a little Society-oriented training. This is not just formal training, but skills learned just from being around others with similar interests. If a Computer Phreak hangs around the BBS shooting the breeze with other hackers, he's bound to pick up some new programming techniques. Likewise, a Knight Fighter may learn some new melee moves or techniques for aiming a laser. Of course, in order to be a member of a certain Secret Society, you might be forced to spend initial (and subsequent) skill points on certain skills. Imagine; a Computer Phreak without any *data analysis* or *data search* skills, or a Romantic without *old reckoning cultures* (or a Death Leopard without lots of weapons skills). All gamemasters are aware of what restrictions to impose when, right?

Also, don't forget that Troubleshooters can pull strings to get aid from their Secret Societies at *any* time. You never know when you might need a few extra goons or a bottle of glass cleaner. Societies respond to Troubleshooter re-

quests for two reasons: first, Troubleshooters are valuable members. Second, if the Troubleshooters don't get help, they're less likely to give it.

Make being in a Secret Society worthwhile. *Then* have a fellow member show up and say, "You forgot the bomb to blow up the reactor. Here you go."

Secret Society Assistance

See up above where we said "... Troubleshooters can pull strings to get aid from their Secret Societies at *any* time?" Well, that's just what we meant — any time. Does this make the game unbalanced? Can it cause adventures to turn out differently than you expected? Yes. Does it slant the difficulty of Troubleshooters' missions inordinately? Yes, it does.

But not the way they think.

Handling Interference

So you're worried that Secret Society Assistance might make a difference in your campaign. Well, it will, but it isn't going to help the 'shooters as much as they think. Some things to remember:

1) Most Troubleshooters don't *know* they can "call for help" at any time;

2) Most Societies won't be *able* to help all the time (but they'll try);

3) Societies don't know what the Troubleshooter *really* needs; only what he *thinks* he needs to complete his mission;

4) The Societies can only help in their areas of expertise;

5) Often, members of Societies with opposite goals will get assigned to the same mission (really? No?!)

1) You haven't told the Troubleshooters that they can "call for help," have you? Good. Then the only way they could know this is if they read this Ultraviolet Clearance document ... and you can make their lives hell ... or short ... for this.

Troubleshooter: Oh, no? Ten

Warbots coming down the corridor?! *(screams)* Help!

Gamemaster: Citizen Dead-R, why are you calling for help?

TS: 'Cause there are ten Warbots coming at me!

GM: So what will calling for help do for you? Is there anyone around to hear?

TS: Huh? I don't know; is there?

GM: Why would there be anybody around who could help?

TS: You mean there might be someone? Okay; I'll look around —

GM: Too late. The Warbots are firing *(rolls dice, clicks teeth)* Well, at least you won't have to worry about those treason points you got …

TS Player: What treason points? For *what?*

GM: Never mind …

2) Okay; so you finally let them in on the secret. Well, what's a Computer Phreak-contact going to *do* about fifty screaming Vulture Warriors going after your Troubleshooter? Maybe something; most likely he'll just do his best to hide. Try not to have the appearance of a useless SS member be the be-all and end-all of these "help" calls. Secret Society Assistance should happen … it just might not be what they expect …

Romantic Troubleshooter: Oh, no; the reactor core is melting? I'll, uh, do my Romantics' Secret Societies hand gestures to see if there's anybody around to help *(waves frantically, bashing herself on the head).*

Gamemaster: *(rolls dice, ignores same)* Hmmn … yeah. There's a guy near the door (of course, everybody's near the door at this point) making the receiving gesture. He comes forward *(GM as Non-player Character Romantic):* "Um, greetings fellow Citizen … can I be of service (in a real hurry, 'cause I want to get out of here)?"

RT: Well, I was hoping you could help me repair the reactor or get out of here …

NPCR: I was saving these for an emergency, but since you're a member of my Society *(digs in pack, pulls out small box)* here! Bye now! *(flees)*

RT: Gee, thanks! *(opens box; inside is a pair of sneakers made by the Ree-Bok Infrared Supply Company. The lid of the box says "Pump up before you blow up!" … speaking of which …)*

3) The above is also a good example of this difficulty. When the Societies have enough time, they can come up with some really neat and useful stuff. Unfortunately, Troubleshooters need everything in such a diode-blasted *hurry!* And, when the Societies do have time to make deals and search for good stuff, they invariably screw up the Troubleshooter's request due to miscommunication ("Gee; I was told you needed a flame *broiler*, not a flame*thrower.*")

4) Again, certain Societies can only help in certain ways. Obvious examples are: The Anti-Mutant Society does not pass out mutant power-enhancing drugs (unless they're poisoned); Computer Phreaks don't usually send armed muscle (unless they were able to "redirect" orders); and the Death Leopards aren't good at building things. This is a fact of life. If the Troubleshooters can't cope with that, then maybe they're in the wrong Secret Society.

5) This is a nasty one. Often, Troubleshooters from one Secret Society will be assigned to a mission that directly conflicts with the "official" mission or the Secret Society missions of other members of the Team. This is, of course, purely accidental. Conflicting Troubleshooters would never be assigned intentionally to a mission. Likewise, they would always be informed of members on the Team who wanted to stop them from accomplishing their missions. Not.

Hey, this happens — a lot. Sometimes it is intentional (from the Secret Societies' point of view) and sometimes it just happens. This is an old standard in *Paranoia* and it continues in ReBoot Alpha.

So how do I work Contacts in?

So, a Troubleshooter "yells for help" and is actually heard — how do you handle it? Well, you could have some faceless Infrared step out of the crowd and hand the Troubleshooter what he asked for, or you could jazz it up:

The Man in the John: Remember all those *Get Smart* shows with the guy who could pop up anywhere — or at least part of him did. His head came out of lockers, vending machines, and … yes … even toilets. He'd give Max some information and then vanish, only to pop up again later.

This can be fun, especially if it appears to be the same clone every time. Somehow, he appears in the lavatory, then on the bus, then in the Vulture Jet! He never stays long, and can't actually help in a fight (or be exposed to danger), but he's almost always there. Throwing one of these types in is generally good for a few laughs — and some fun continuity.

The Network. Okay: *your* Secret Society is the best organized, the largest in size, and the most efficient … right? There's always somebody looking over your shoulder, ready with a helping (?) hand. Likewise, they are there when you screw up.

This is a take-off on *The Man in the John* and the "faceless Infrared" — but definitely more interesting than the latter. The members of the Troubleshooter's Secret Society are *everywhere*, and *everybody* seems to know *him*, but he doesn't know *anyone*. This promotes his paranoia, but gives him access to a lot of potential help. Maybe he has to make a secret sign, or go through complicated meeting rituals, or he has to drop a codeword into his speech … whatever. Sometimes, they help, sometimes they just watch …

And anything else you can think of …

Secret Societies all operate differently … except when they operate the same. Mix these up and add your own ideas. Drive your players crazy, but give them a reason to stick with their Society and perform missions other than "because I said so." They'll have a lot of fun and so w 'll you.

Master Secret Society List

Secret Society	Status	Classic	Nu Alpha Pi
Alpha News Network (1)	public	1	1
Anti-Mutant	secret	2	2
Clone Arrangers (2)	council	n/a	3
Communists	simplex	3	4
ComputerCloneColumn (8)	secret	n/a	5(a)
Computer Phreaks	council	4	6
Conciliators (8)	secret	n/a	7
Corpore Metal	simplex	5	8
Death Leopard	council	6	9
Earth Mothers	eliminated	7(b)	n/a
Femme Fatale	eliminated	8(b)	n/a
First Church of CCP	eliminated	9	n/a
Foundation	eliminated	10	n/a
Frankenstein Destroyers	secret	11	10
Humanists	eliminated	12	n/a
Illuminati	secret	13	12
International Workers of the World	eliminated	14	n/a
Knight Fighters (3)	council	15	13
Moo	secret	16	14
Mutons (4)	simplex	17	15
Mystics	council	18	16
Pro Tech	council	19	17
Psion	council	20(c)	18(c)
PURGE	secret	21	19(b)
Romantics	council	22	20
Seal Club (5)	council	23	21
Sybil-I-NGG Rivals (6)	secret	24(c)	22(c)
Trekkies/Trekkers	secret	25	23
Zany Eddies (7)	council	26	24

(a)CCC if in Alpha Base, PURGE if in Alpha Complex
(b) Only if female, otherwise reroll
(c) If not psionic, then Mutons
(d) Roll for additional group

(3) formerly Knights of the Circular Object
(4) formerly Eugenicists
(5) formerly Sierra Club
(6) formerly Sy-B-LNG Rivals
(7) formerly Free Enterprise
(8) new to this sourcebook

(1) formerly N3F
(2) formerly Clone Rangers

Using this Table

First, decide if you are playing in the "Nu Alpha Pi" world of ReBoot Alpha or if you are playing "Classic" *Paranoia* (or MegaWhoops Alpha). If you are doing the latter, then use the first column under "Classic" and ignore "eliminated" Status notes. If you are using the New ReBoot Alpha Campaign setting, then use the second column.

Next, roll a twenty-sided die and record the result. Then, flip a coin. If it comes up "heads," then add six or four (respectively, in regards to the table you're on) to the number and check the table. If it comes up "tails," then don't add anything and just check the table. If it lands on its edge, then either get plastic surgery and give up your life of crime, or send it and all other coins in your possession in to West End Games for further examination.

Chapter Four
Research Redesigned

This section includes some gamemastering tips on how to use R&D to instill fear and frustration in your players without actually blowing them up at every turn. It also makes R&D a more tangible entity during the game, and can add a lot of continuity to your scenarios, even if they aren't strung together in a campaign.

This is written assuming the Troubleshooters, as either Alpha Complex Troubleshooters or Council infiltrators, will be getting their devices from R&D. If instead they are adventuring in Alpha Base and the Badlands, rest assured that Pro Tech and other development branches use similar procedures.

No Smiling Faces

Until now, R&D has been a virtual vending machine of nifty and extremely hazardous devices. A hapless Troubleshooter walks into the briefing, gets force-fed some experimental devices, uses them, dies, and returns them to the briefing officer whereupon they fall again into that mysterious void of gamemaster resources and old jokes.

While initially hysterical, this is not the limit of what can be done with the wonderful resources of R&D. The "new improved" R&D Service Group still forces (through The Computer) Troubleshooters to test the equipment, but now they actually try to make stuff with the previous reports in mind. New R&D experimental equipment is the Alphan equivalent to Russian Roulette: about five times out of six, the thing doesn't kill you.

Because of this new efficiency coming out of R&D, Troubleshooters are required to use their experimental equipment several times throughout the adventure. Usually, they will find it doesn't do anything awful to them (whether it actually accomplishes what

they *think* its supposed to accomplish is another story). Then, just as they figure out exactly how it works and what it really does ... BLAMMO! Major backfire or thoughtless oversight causes them to fail miserably.

Or maybe not. You can't be too sure.

Perhaps the device is definitely useful and reliable, but has a price; a constant nagging inconvenience or re-equipment. Maybe it's a psionic blast helmet that prevents the wearer from talking, but he can't use it if he takes it off. Maybe the device has a small fission reactor power pack that needs to be "fed" constantly or it will shut down — in an explosive manner. Many R&D (and Pro Tech) devices have some sort of "hangnail" that makes the clone acutely aware that he's carrying an experimental device at all times.

Putting the "R" into the "D"

Did you ever wonder what happened to all those Experimental Equipment Testing Report forms you've had the Troubleshooters fill out time and again? What did R&D — and, later, Pro Tech do with them? You may have thought that they turned these reams of paper over to Power Services or the IRS for fuel production — and you'd be right — but not any more! Now, with the added pressure to produce decent, workable ... well, at least "less deadly to the user" ... equipment, R&D has sunk as low as it can go — it's *reading* the reports.

To the DEATH

The Department of Experimental Apparatus Testing Headquarters (DEATH) is an R&D-established bureaucracy dedicated to expedite actual field testing of R&D inventions. As such, they must — *must*, mind you —

listen to the reports of the Troubleshooters, and make recommendations based on these findings.

Granted, the recommendations may include summary execution of the Troubleshooter for wanton negligence (a good cover-up for embarrassment when the item you issued was more a plunger than an improved cone rifle ... or vice versa). Often, however, the Troubleshooters' valuable observations are used to modify the device, whereupon it is again be foisted off on the clone, as an experienced user, for further testing.

Experienced *Paranoia* gamemasters should see a world of opportunity here.

Have your Troubleshooters fill out extensive reports on their R&D equipment, pointing out flaws, positive effects, and recommendations for improvement. Then, when they appear to be satisfied that they've told the DEATH rep everything he needs to know to improve the device, you get to go into action.

At first, you should give low-security, low clone-number Troubleshooters the most experimental, most dangerous equipment — though still not as bad as before. When they come back all toasty and full of complaints, listen to a few of their criticisms and have your R&D scientists modify the equipment. Sure, R&D will try to incorporate everything they have learned from DEATH into the device, but they have their own ideas on what it should or shouldn't do as well ... and so does the Troubleshooters' DEATH rep.

Then give the gizmo back to them the next time they play.

Have their friendly and concerned DEATH rep point out the modifications that the Troubleshooters caused to be made to the device — unless they really screwed up and can find out for themselves later. The DEATH rep plays

down the importance of improvements that *weren't* made, of course, and fails to mention other modifications made on his personal recommendation or by the R&D guys themselves.

Suddenly, devices can be reused almost infinitely, with minor modifications to reflect the Troubleshooter's desires — and your devious whims. Each testing makes the players wince as they try to second-guess your fiendish stratagems, but eventually the result *might* just be a polished new piece of useful equipment ready for inclusion in your campaign. This leads to situations where the wizened old Troubleshooter starts gaffing about "the Good Old Days when the X-84 Plasma Imploder was jest a mite touchy. I remember one day when I was testing thet thar thang, and ..."

It also gives the Troubleshooters hope that things *can* get better.

Hope is great in a *Paranoia* campaign. It can be crushed over and over, only to be rebuilt again and again.

Oops, excuse me; my horns and hooves are showing.

Regulations and Directions

DEATH has very draconian security precautions, as befits any game where we screw the players at every turn. As such, each R&D device actually has four security clearances. Three of these clearances affect the Citizen Handling Uncontrolled Material Proofing (CHUMP), and the last relates to Citizens Licensed to Observe the Device (CLOD).

The CHUMP is the clone who actually carries the device, uses it under uncontrolled (non-laboratory) situations, and generally proofs its utility. The Troubleshooter issued the equipment is definitely a CHUMP — obviously.

The other persons on the CHUMP's Team are all defined as CLODs. Just as obviously.

The first security clearance each device is rated for is what clearance the CHUMP must have to test the device. Without this level of clearance, the CHUMP cannot use it in any fashion. ("That is beside the point. We expect a

full report on its versatility tonightcycle.")

The second is the clearance the CHUMP must have to actually get instructions ("Whatever you do, do not touch this button here. Yeah, the one that says 'push me.'")

The third clearance rating each weapon has is the clearance the CHUMP must have to be allowed to observe the device effects. Without this clearance, it is impossible for a CHUMP to give an evaluation. Well, they could, but then they'd have to be executed. It also can make weapons hard to aim, because you have to do it with your eyes closed. ("Team Leader? Could you write down your impressions and place it in a sealed envelope for me?")

The final clearance rating for devices is what clearance a CLOD must have to be allowed to witness the effects of the device. ("I'm opening the box, now! All you CLODs cover your eyes!")

Note that these clearances may not have any logical relation to each other. An expensive top secret device with
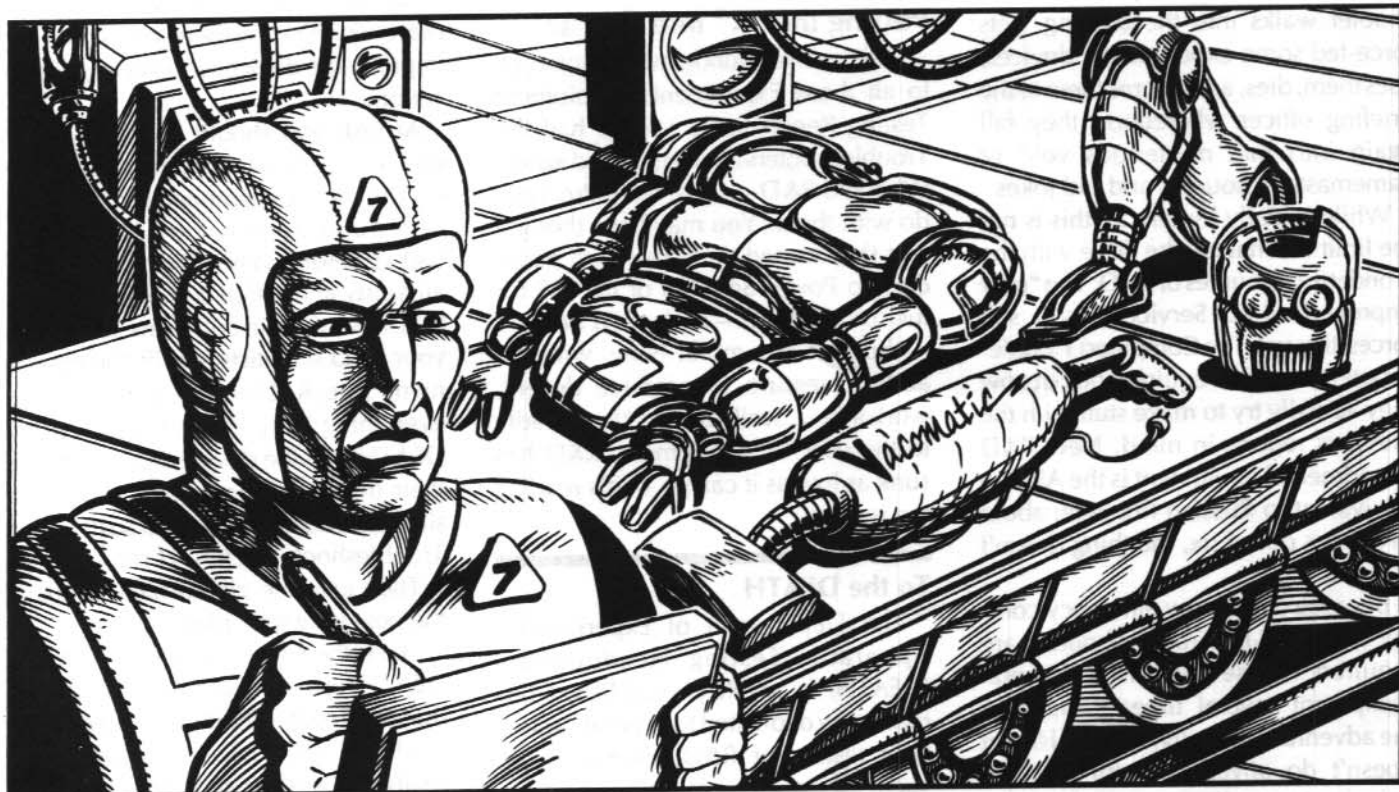
R&D efficiency has climbed in Reboot Alpha ...

... climbed, but hopefully not peaked.

minimal effect (like something which stirs Hot Fun inside the can) may require a Blue clearance to use, but only an Orange clearance to observe. More fun can be had by having CLODs cleared to observe effects, but not the CHUMP.

So play around with it.

Example: *Ron-I-LOT-3 is issued the Multi-Launch Grenade, a grenade that, when thrown, breaks into four rocket-propelled sections that all act as grenades. They propel themselves to areas around the original target area and detonate, causing a greater spread of damage. Ron-I must evaluate the effects.*

Since the device is designed to be used in the field by low-ranking Armed Forces types, it has a security clearance of only Orange to use. Ron-I's got that covered. Likewise, instructions on its use are available to him, as they are only Blue clearance. They tell him, "Throw it really, really far away, preferably at someone you don't like or who doesn't owe you credits."

Unfortunately, the MLG is a very hush-hush top secret weapon, so the observation of its effects is rated at Ultraviolet clearance — way to high for Ron-I. He can't watch what happens after he throws the MLG.

Fortunately, the CLODs in his team can; The Computer knows that this device, when activated, is going to be witnessed by a lot of clones — some of whom It may not want to execute (like Its own Armed Forces). So, in Its great benevolence, The Computer has stated that any CLOD (Infrared clearance) can witness the explosions. Isn't that considerate?

So, when Ron-I hurls the MLG at the onrushing Dungeon Mutant (also known as a DM), he turns around and watches for his team's — the CLODS — reactions.

Well, they react strangely. Instead of being filled with confidence at the weapon's superior performance, they seem to be panicking and fleeing. Ron-I is confused. What are they saying? It's hard to hear above the noise ... ah, "One of the rockets

is coming this —"

We'll leave the rest of the report to Ron-I-LOT-4.

The Continuing Story

Here's an example of continuing experimental device research that can be used to haunt your campaign:

A Council Militia goon brings back a Frisbee from the Outside. Pro Tech researchers have no idea what it does. The only clues are on the disk itself; faintly visible words say "THROW" and "WHAMMO." Everyone likes the implications of the second word. They give it to a Troubleshooter for testing.

Having no idea of the proper way to throw a frisbee, the Troubleshooter fails to get any distance. He reports the difficulty to the Council's DEATH squad, who send the report to Pro Tech, and they decide it needs more weight to reduce the drag coefficient.

After some more discus-style throws while chasing Commies, the Troubleshooter reports that it flies

"Here goes ..."

that under our hats for now — Troubleshooters seem to react strangely to unexpected improvements.

Perks and Bennies

Yes; by all means don't forget to give the Troubleshooters little perks and bennies for testing the stuff. Maybe use of the device is enough, but, when in doubt, give them an autographed Teela O'Malley photo, or a new R&D digital chronobot or something. It's nice to feel appreciated sometimes.

If you want to get the Troubleshooters *really* paranoid (as if they weren't already), have some DEATH rep offer them *credits* to test equipment:

DEATH rep: Hey, guys; I've got this *perfectly safe* device for you this time!

Team (*assorted groans*): Oh, no! Not again!

Dr: No, *really*; this time for *sure*! (*meeting skepticism and some fear*) I'll even give you a hundred credits as a perk for testing it!

T (*now really suspicious*): No way!

Dr (*sighs*): Okay, *two* hundred credits — listen, you've gotta do it anyway.

T (*resigned*): All right, what does it do?

Dr: Beats me (*holds up red and silver can with "Classic Co-" written on it*). We found it Outdoors. Near as we figure you pull this little tab to activate it. Here it is; I'll credit your account (*ducks hastily behind bunker*)!

Other Ideas

The Invisibility Field Generator has been extensively tested. First encountered in *Alpha Complexities*, and with a Mark II version tested in *Mad Mechs*, this gizmo still needs improvement.

And about all those mutant gizmos in *Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues*? Maybe someone wants to use them to infiltrate The Dungeon.

Intelligent Self-Mobile Landmines were touched on briefly in *Acute Para-*

okay, but lacks damaging potential. Pro Tech improves its aerodynamics, adds a razor around the edge, and issues a throwing glove.

The glove hampers the clone in fine detail work (like preventing a laser overload) and the razor makes the disk hard to carry, so R&D develops a pistol-like launcher. After the launcher has been tested, they replace the razor with an electroshock bumper, powered by the launcher's power pack.

Eventually, the player may end up testing a frisbee crossbow which fires gyro-stabilized energy disks with infrared homing. Then you can develop gauss rounds, guillotine rounds, and maybe a bayonet for those close-in fights.

Alternatively, maybe development will end up with a dinky little pistol that fires tiddlywinks, and ends up being used for training Junior Citizens in combat skills.

Of course, the whiz-kids at Pro Tech may decide that they need to conserve ammo, so the weapon could be given some sort of "boomerang" twist. But let's keep

noia. They could use more work. If any are still around.

How about if the players were assigned a jar of Oil of Olay recently recovered from some Old Reckoning ruins? What sort of imaginative uses could your players come up with?

Experimental water-breathing pills? In *Alpha Complexities* we had PyroPocket Armor. *Mad Mechs* has Razor Armor. What other neat armors can you think of? How about a chainmail bikini? Hey, it works for those *other* game systems …

The old adventures you have are full of wifty ideas, many of which would need only a small tweak to make them (mostly) useful. For other good ideas, and examples of the "quirky but useful" maxim, check out the devices later in the book.

If all else fails, we recommend looking at the new "Sears Hardware" and *Sharper Image* catalogs. Maybe even *Better Homes and Gardens* has a few ideas … ("Oh, no; he's got the Mechanized Trowel O' Doom!")

R & Devices

R&D has continued to release new devices, especially since the return of The Computer. Most devices the players test are survivable, and when they work, the effects will be worth the risk.

And remember, there's more to life in Alpha Complex than just weapons, though to hear some players talk you'd never believe it. Give (or sell) your players some miscellaneous equipment; the items below are all for sale now down at R&D (or Pro Tech), and some can add a new dimension to *Paranoia* campaigning without — yes, *without* — the usual gratuitous bloodshed. (Well, without *some* of it anyway.)

The Security Question

Instead of listing Security Clearances for these pieces of R&D's favorite equipment, we've left this aspect up to the Gamemaster's wise judgement. Using the new four-way security system outlined in the last section, we are certain that the Gamemaster will come up with appropriate clearances needed by the CHUMPs and CLODs assigned this equipment.

Don't you think so, Citizen?

The Price of FreeEnterprise

While most R&D Equipment is assigned to a Troubleshooter, most clones will find that they have increased purchasing power—especially when they are in areas outside their own. Much of this R&D (or Pro Tech) equipment can be bought on an "Infrared market" (a term that obviously shows anybody with enough plasticreds can purchase just about anything). In addition, it is much easier to buy ... say, Pro Tech equipment when you're a Merkie from one of the Simplexes than when you are an actual Citizen of Alpha Base.

The reason is fairly straightforward: Alpha Base, Alpha Complex, and most of the major Simplexes have some way of collecting taxes from their clones. Sales tax is one of the most popular of these methods. This is because when an IRS guy or a member of The Computers' Special Tax Force sees money come out, they figure they've got to have some. The more money, the more tax (**Note**: there is no "set tax percentage" in Alpha; the percentage of tax "donated" is generally contingent on the situation of purchase and how well armed the donator is).

Anyway, when an outsider sneaks into (or is allowed into) a foreign Simplex or Alpha Base/Complex, they are almost certainly going to be charged a much higher rate for anything they buy. This, in addition to the fact that this is money coming into the local economy rather than going out, causes the Infrared Market to drag out just about anything they can sell for a profit.

Of course, selling R&D and Pro Tech devices to non-members of your simplex is treason/sedition/illegal, but that doesn't stop most clones from turning a profit. Besides, most or this stuff is higher in defects anyway ...

Weapons

As this appears to be every Troubleshooter's first priority, we'll start with these.

Minilaser

This is the ultra-studley Troubleshooter's pipe dream! Designed along the lines of the popular sub-machinelaser (*Crash Course*) and the Gatling Laser (*R&D Catalog*), this trusty device has overcome many of the formers' weaknesses.

It requires six laser barrels to fire, and is considered a Field Weapon instead of a Laser Weapon. The six barrels are mounted on a revolving wheel, which passes them in front of the firing chamber. It cranks out six shots per round (one shot per barrel), and may be used to spray fire. On a roll of 20, one of the laser barrels has overheated. Since the minilaser takes two rounds to wind down from spinning, the Troubleshooter is apt to be a little apprehensive about trying to remove the overheated barrel. If, however, he does not remove the barrel, there is a one-in-twenty chance that the Minilaser discharges all the remaining ammo in one big blast (roll for damage three columns up on the table).

It takes an *easy Strength* roll to carry and fire the Minilaser in combat. Wimpy Troubleshooters have to use a tripod. It also requires a round to warm up before it can be fired. This is only a problem if the Troubleshooters are ambushed.

Stats: Minilaser
Type: F
Damage: 10L
Rate: six shots per round, one round warmup; two rounds cooldown
Range: 100m
Ammo: six 6-shot bursts

Advanced Laser Firearm

The ALF is a recent improvement over the traditional laser pistol. The old-style laser pistol had one setting (*well done*) and simply fired concentrated bursts of energy, whereas the ALF fires longer streams without sacrificing power.

It also has a dial with several settings.

Setting 1 (*char*) deals out 13L damage, but uses three charges.

Setting 2 corresponds with the laser we all know and love and consumes only one charge.

Setting 3 (*rare*) does one less level of damage, and is useful for trying to stun someone — it also only consumes one charge.

Setting 4 (*pre-heat*) fires slow and steady, and is used to cut through steel plates and gain access to locked maintenance hatches without blowing up whatever is inside. It uses one charge for about a minute's worth of cutting. (**Note:** IntSec Agents deny that this setting, which rolls on damage column 6 twice each round, is used in interrogations. Intense burns displayed by confirmed traitors are merely a coincidence). The range is under one meter.

Setting 5 is a targeting laser; a pinpoint beam of coherent light that has a range of about fifteen meters. It does no damage itself, but, if used for one round before firing, lowers the difficulty number of hitting the target by two. Setting 5 effectively uses no power.

Stats: Advanced Laser Firearm
Type: L
Damage: 13L/8L/7L/6L (cut)/none
Range: 20m/40m/50m/1m/100m
Ammo: 6

Crater Gun

A belt-fed energy blaster with incredible power, this device was first encountered in *Clones In Space*. After thorough testing in outer space (in part against the L-5 outpost), the crater gun is being distributed planetside for general testing.

On a roll of 20, the round explodes in the chamber, doing damage column 17 to everyone within three meters. Also, the operator must make a *luck* roll (normal roll vs. *power*) or else all unfired rounds also explode in a massive chain reaction.

Stats: Crater Gun
Damage: 17E
Range: 200m (blast radius, ten meters)
Rounds: 12

Icethrower

This is a supercool cryogenic projector, the exact opposite of a flamethrower. The damage, range, etc., are all identical, except that the damage is not permanent, but rather temporary damage wrought by the ravages of frost. "Vaporized" results indicate that the target is encased in a solid block of ice, happily hibernating in cryogenic suspended animation (see *The Iceman Returneth*). As it takes about one hour of thawing to undo one damage level, the Icethrower is an ideal weapon for capturing organics or bots who don't respond well to your threats.

Of course, if you need to interrogate

"AAAAAAAA!!!" (A typical response to the unknown)

a guy quickly, you may not want to do him *too* much damage. Besides, the victim of the Icethrower needs to make a successful Endurance roll for each level of damage taken: for each one she fails, she takes that damage for real.

On a roll of 19 or 20, the Icethrower explodes, doing its damage to the user and any individual in a one meter radius.

Stats: Icethrower
Damage: 11F
Range: 10m
Rounds: 10

Example of Icethrower use: *Ben-G has an Icethrower that, because of unusual circumstances, he can use and witness the effects without violating his security clearance (the Gamemaster must have been really tired). Anyway, he fires the Icethrower at Arn-I, an infiltrator from Alpha Complex (Ben-G is a Merkie currently employed by Alpha Base).*

Anyway, Ben-G manages to hit the unfortunate (and unarmored!) Arn-I. Rolling on Damage Column

11, he gets a Wound result, which means Arn-I is going to be frozen for two hours.

In addition, Arn-I must roll twice against his Endurance (of 10) to keep from being additionally injured by the weapon. He rolls first for the Stun effect and gets a 12 — a failure. Of course, it doesn't really matter if Arn-I is stunned; he's frozen in ice. So, Arn-I's player rolls again for the Wound. This time he gets an eight, which the Gamemaster informs him is a success. When Arn-I unfreezes, he won't be wounded. Of course, he could be defrosting in Alpha Base's food vats …

The Studmuffin Burlyclone Assault Rig

This is one of the most powerful devices yet designed for an individual. It contains two powered weapons; a molecular chainsaw and a thermo-blaster. Both are powered by a small reactor strapped to the clone's back (eep!).

The chainsaw contains its mono-

filament in an energy sheath, which shapes the molecule for maximum cutting potential. It can go through just about anything. The blaster has a barrel three inches in diameter. What more needs to be said?

The problem is that these weapons are so big that they completely cover the clone's hands. When suiting up, the reactor is first strapped to the clone, then the weapons are slid over his hands and locked in. Although the tester has two of the most powerful weapons in existence, he'll be unable to reach into his pocket or open a doorknob.

The other big problem is that the only way the Troubleshooter can get himself out of the rig in a hurry is by slicing himself out. This would not ordinarily occur, except that this device tends to overload the same way as a plasma weapon, and, when overload occurs, one's teammates are likely to be dopplering their way to safety.

Stats: The Studmuffin Burlyclone Assault Rig
Damage: gun 15F / saw 15M

"I am thinkink is good time for strategik withdrawal!"

Range: gun 200m / saw 1m

Ammo: a whole lot. That's a reactor back there.

Armor: the extensive number of straps, skeletal supports, etc., give this All2 armor equivalent.

Side effects: It takes a character ten rounds to get into or out of the armor without assistance. With assistance, the Troubleshooter can get out in one less round per teammate helping, up to a minimum of three rounds.

Reports that many of these devices have inadequate radiation shielding are *totally untrue*. Really. The spontaneous generation of mutations by those often exposed to the device and the warm glow given off by some wearers are problems the individual should work out with himself.

Support Devices

These are things that make combat or adventuring much more *fun* and *interesting* for your Troubleshooters.

Sludge Grenades

These are the accidental result of R&D's attempt to make a smoke grenade that lasted longer. When exploded, these create a lump of solid foam, irregular in shape, but approximately spherical with a diameter of about three meters. The foam totally obscures vision, and acts as All2 armor for all shots that try to penetrate the mess. It's most obvious uses lie in creating a wall against enemy fire, or preventing traitors from going where they want to. The foam is extremely flammable, however, and, even though it provides initial protection versus flame, once ignited, it goes up like an electrotorch. Anyone caught in burning foam takes damage on Column 10 for two rounds whether they subsequently break free or not (it sticks!)

A clone can rend his way through (or free of) the foam by making two *normal* Strength rolls.

Sludge grenades, by the way, are another good continuing-development device. Make some short, weak grenades, and eventually your players end up here.

BATBelt

Made under license from HPD&MC in DIE sector, where the High Programmers have always insisted on wallpapering the ceilings of the domes, the Battlefield Accessory Troubleshooter Belt may well be the fashion item of choice for the Post-ReBoot Troubleshooter.

A low-slung holster carries any pistol-sized sidearm. One belt pouch carries a small grappling hook, which is attached to a motor. This motor provides enough power to pull a standard Troubleshooter up the length of the cord, and is recharged by absorbing the speed of descent of the Troubleshooter. It can also be used to descend rapidly. Another pouch holds an emergency parachute that halves damage for falls from great heights. Also included are a pouch full of caltrops, a twenty-sided die, some toilet paper, a little dehydrated Cold Fun, and a secret pocket for your Alpha Complex Express card (Don't leave your dormitory without it. Or else). Additional pouches can be attached to hold food water, mission orders, or whatever.

The only problem apparent with the BATBelt is that, occasionally, one or more of the gizmos go on the fritz. Either the motor on the grapple will lock up (or release!), or the parachute won't quite open, or maybe all the gizmos will explode outwards in the middle of combat.

Of course, these defects are just rumors spread by CLODs who were fortunate enough to witness the CHUMP who operated the BATBelt.

No CHUMP Troubleshooter has ever complained about its function.

(Note for rules-users: Whenever a BATBelt wearer uses one of the items on the belt, or whenever he is in a highly active (and probably dangerous) situation, write down two numbers on a piece of paper. Then, have the Troubleshooter's player roll a die. If the first number comes up, there is a minor malfunction (i.e., one that doesn't directly injure the Troubleshooter); if the second number comes up, there is

a major malfunction.

Of course, unscrupulous gamemasters have been known to write down every number between one and twenty on separate scraps of paper, pulling them out after the player rolls.

We know *you'd* never do that, right?)

Comlink

This looks like a hearing aid with a small wire microphone extending out from it to the side of the clone's mouth. A small dial on the aid controls tuning. This voice-activated communicator broadcasts from a maximum range of 200 meters if unimpeded, down to about 10 meters in a densely-stocked warehouse. Transmissions are on radio waves, so you can also talk to bots on the same frequency. Of course, you can also be monitored by the enemy. Very popular among Troubleshooters, as it does not require use of hands, and allows coordinated strikes from several directions.

One of the neatest things about this device is its reception. It can pick up transmissions from all over Alpha. At just about any time. Even when it's off.

Miscellaneous Devices

These are weird little gizmos that add a whole new dimension to *Paranoia* role-playing (okay; maybe not a new Dimension — how about a Temptation ... ooh — old joke). They have little or nothing to do with killing people (directly), they're not designed to protect you; they're just obscure devices like the thing that scrambled eggs in the shell.

If it don't kill, Why do I want it?

Good question.

Many Troubleshooters do seem to be infatuated with the amount of destruction they can cause, and little concerned with much else. Integrating this stuff into your campaign may not change that, but it will provide for that much-needed background material. Unless you're part of The Computer's

or the Council's spaceflight program, playing in a vacuum (that is, playing without *some* background material) is very limiting.

Hopefully, introducing your Troubleshooters to items and devices and circumstances that don't revolve around the same dimension of their character ("see it; kill it; explain later") will make your game a little more fun and will involve you and your players' imaginations more.

If not, most of these items can be used to beat Commies over the head with …

The Electric Axe Guitar

In recent years, the music industry has grown geometrically in Alpha, especially in Alpha Base. Freed from the pablum served up as entertainment by HPD&MC, many clones have shown remarkable creative talent as "Rockerclones." Of course, the Rockerclone needs an instrument, hence the Electric Axe Guitar.

But the Electric Axe, while modeled on Old Reckoning instruments of the same name, has one significant improvement; a polycarbonate head with a steel cutting edge. That's right, they didn't name this beauty the Axe for nothing! The cutting edge of rock (remember what I said about hitting Commies over the head — try "Commie-Music-Critics").

Not only is the blade specially hardened and tempered to keep it looking clean and cutting sharp, but the capacitor is also hooked into the blade, thereby carrying a powerful electric charge to a target.

Use of the Electric Axe requires a new skill: *Musicianship.* This is a *Chutzpah* skill, for in Alpha the question is not whether you play good or bad, but whether you play badly with or without confidence. Most citizens have no concept of what good music really is, so they're happy listening to what they can.

Ozzi-O-ZBN (who appeared in the adventure *Mad Mechs*, saved Alpha from certain destruction at the hands of tone-deaf aliens, and was subsequently killed for it by everybody with the least taste in music) was one such Rockerclone. For yearcycles he struggled to free himself from Computer-censorship, only finding freedom at the cost of his life.

Insert meaningful silence here.

Well, enough of that tripe; back to the EAG.

Far and away the worst problem with the Axe is the tendency of Troubleshooters to touch the strings when swinging it in combat. On a roll of 19 or 20, the Troubleshooter does just this and gives himself a nasty shock; 1-10 rounds of *Stun.* Or just electrify him and let him dance and sing if that is more appropriate.

A roll of 20 when attempting *Musicianship* leads to nasty effects too. No encores, for starters. No groupies, to add injury to insult. Oh, and the Rockerclone zaps himself as above.

There's a lot of stuff that can be done with the Electric Axe. The first thing that comes to mind is the mini-adven-

"How do you eat algae chips, anyway?" "Very carefully."

ture "Radio Free-U-ROP" in the *Crash Course Manual*. Obviously, the Electric Axe is not your average, run-of-the-mill Troubleshooter item. But play around with it. Things are different in Alpha these days, and Art is getting a lot of free reign. Some new stuff will come up with the Axe around. And that's what roleplaying is all about.

"Music soothes the savage Vulture Warrior — and if it doesn't, hit him with your guitar!"

Stats: The Electric Axe Guitar

Damage: 10M plus stun

Ammo: 10 hits worth of stun; unlimited playing. Can be recharged by plugging into an electric power source for ten minutes.

The Statickler

The statickler is a "harmless" device designed expressly for funny practical jokes. Here's how it works:

Everyone is familiar with static electricity. It makes your hair stand on end, and it can give funny shocks to your neighbor if you touch him lightly on the nose or ear. It makes balloons stick to the ceiling and jumpsuits stick to your legs. It's an unlimited source of free (but weak) energy.

Special Statickler shoes and socks (normally worn on the feet, unless you attend some unusual parties) enhance the static charge normally picked up by walking across a carpeted floor. This charge is carried by special insulated wires and stored in a small capacitor. This capacitor is held by straps which hide it just under the back of the neckline, virtually invisible.

Another wire runs from the capacitor to a special transmitting ring worn on a finger. The stored static charge is released when the clone touches another person with the ring! Powie!

The Statickler has additional effects that R&D had not anticipated, but that certain clones immediately ascertained — the statickler could be used to inflict actual damage.

Certain people have bought the Statickler and replaced the capacitor with a more powerful storage device.

"Sounds great!" "Less annoying!"

Storing more energy led to more powerful shocks. Everybody seen *Batman*?

In addition, thanks to the wiring spread over the clone, the Statickler provides E1 armor. This column shift is stored in the Statickler as one column's worth of damage. Which leads nicely into presenting the Statickler's game stats:

Stats: Statickler

Armor: E1

Damage: One column per round of scuffing your feet on the floor, plus one for each energy weapon shot absorbed.

Maximum damage is Column 5 unless improved by the Troubleshooters. Treat results of "No Damage" as possible stun; roll an *easy Endurance* check for the target to see if he is stunned.

These babies are so cheap that everybody ought to have 'em. Distribute them freely among the Troubleshooters and let your Troubleshooters get zapped at every turn. Get them *Paranoid* about shaking hands, letting people touch them, walking in crowds: everything. Plus, if one of your Troubleshooters has a Statickler ring on his gun

hand, you can have all sorts of fun shorting out his blaster or laser pistol. On an attack roll of 20, the Statickler causes a short circuit which effectively unloads the weapon (no other ill effects, but a lot of smoke and flash — unless it is an R&D weapon; then look out!).

Enterprising Troubleshooters may wish to boost their statickler. Assuming the character has supplies on hand, a successful *normal mechanical engineering* roll allows a Troubleshooter to add more wire mesh, increasing the armor rating by a point, maybe two. Or a *tough electrical engineering* roll (again, with supplies) lets the Troubleshooter safely install a better capacitor (or several in parallel) to contain up to double the energy. Miserably failed rolls cause predictable but nonetheless electrifying malfunctions when used in combat.

One last thing about the Statickler. Don't get wet while you're wearing it. Not at all. Don't take a shower; don't get hit by a bucket of water. And, if you've made "special modifications" to the equipment, don't go Outdoors on a humid day.

We mean it.

Shake, Citizen.

X-O-TIC
LOCALES
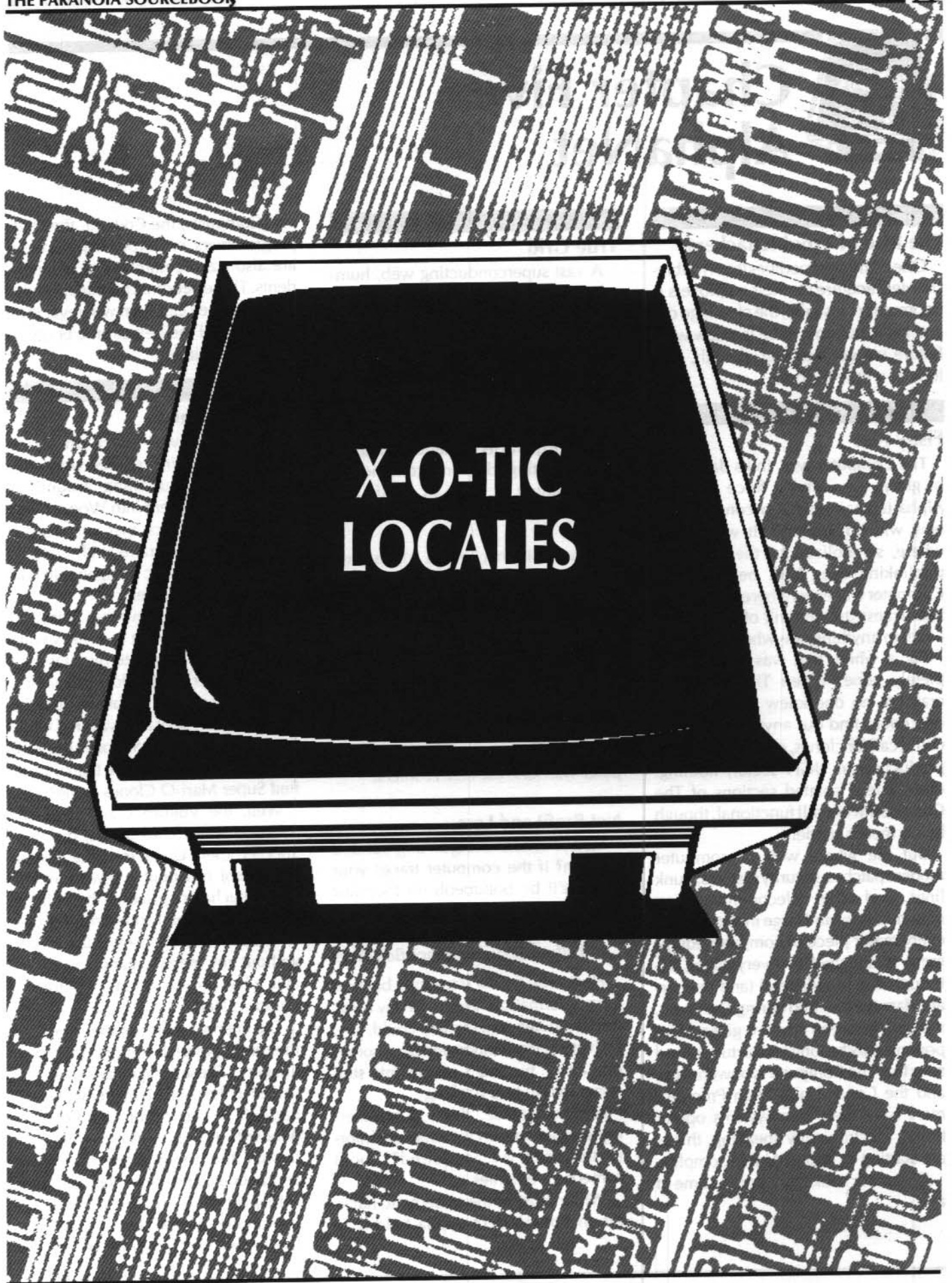
Chapter Five
AlphaNet

The Rise of Troublehackers

One of the commodities that Trouble-shooters acquire for their employers is information. Usually, the clones go out and get it, but now there is a new way. Before we get into that, though, let's look at a little history.

Fishy Net

The Computer was, in Its daycycles of glory, the unifying force in all of Alpha (amazing what a common enemy will do, isn't it?). It was everywhere, symbolized by the all-seeing unblinking eye. And, because The Computer was everywhere, all citizens had access (to the limit of their clearance) to anything, anywhere in Alpha.

For a while, that was gone. Completely gone. When The Computer crashed, no one knew anything. No one could find out anything. No one could call for clones, check on Hot Fun production in UGH sector, nothing. Only a few isolated sections of The Computer were still functional, though by no means sentient.

But the whole web of computer modem patches, security systems, trunk lines, and other telecommunication networks is by and large intact. Almost every major piece of computer equipment is attached to every other, although due to collateral (and deliberate) damage incurred during The Crash, the path between any two given components may be long and tortuous. And now that The Computer is powered up, and the Council and High Programmers have their own systems operational, electronically speaking, things are starting to hop in Alpha Complex.

Computer hacking has now come of age.

True Grid

A vast superconducting web, humming with electronic life, full of programs, without a single unifying command interpreter. Sort of like a giant electronic brain, mostly empty, but with a few large competing personalities.

In this environment, The Computer seeks to expand Its influence — mainly by assimilating additional compnodes, downloading a copy of Itself, and rebooting. This is how The Computer grows.

Meanwhile, hackers in Alpha Base and Alpha City, with the support of their own non-sentient (maybe, maybe not) computers, are trying to prevent that occurrence, while also using the surveillance controls and file storage to gather information about their opponents. The Computer (and Its hackers) react in kind.

Thus is born a new breed of computer warriors: the Net Workers.

Net Profit and Loss

":do you mean using an ungrounded modem? if the computer traces your line we'll be botlubeoh oh they just coned my door i ...
ERRORERRORERRORERRORERROR"
—*Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues*

Electronic media transports but one item: information. Well, sure, by using the computer systems you could, say, activate a laser cannon and blow someone away, but that's penny-ante stuff compared to true hacking.

And, of course, there is an ever-replenished market for whatever information can be "acquired" about someone's enemies.

While most of the cybernetic hackers in Post-Modern Alpha belong to The Computer, the Council, the High Programmers, or Corpore Metal, there are also sizable numbers of independents. These neuronet nomads plunder whatever they can from wherever they can, and sell their electronic booty to the highest bidder.

The Netterlands

Remember way back in *Alice Through the Mirrorshades* when the Team, while stumbling around in Cyberland, was sent into WonderNet? They used a device that interfaced a group of human brains with consensual hallucinogenic imagery. It was called the Six-Shooter.

And remember how the Team ran around in WonderNet in a really wifty parody of all those terminally-grim studly leather post-holocaust games, and caused a lot of problems, and the rules of reality bent and wavered while they were in the Six-Shooter, because it really was nothing more than a glorified Super Mari-O Clones game?

Well, the Vulture Warriors of Dimension X got hold of thet thar Six-Shooter. Clem Unger (see *The Iceman Returneth*) has built a few, and The Computer has long known the technology required to build one, and of course robots can hook themselves up directly without any messy organic interfaces, and what do you know! We have a *Paranoia* Net!

The interface relies on the command interpreters in each compnode for their imagery. These images are then presented to the user, no matter where the hacker's jacked in from. All the independents (Council, simplexes, etc.) design the themes for their own compnodes, and, since the command interpreter is resident in each compnode, all hackers are forced to live within that programmed reality.

Even in areas controlled by The Computer, each compnode has its own interpreter, and The Computer makes each interpreter a little different to impair enemy hackers from moving about too easily.

Thus, moving through AlphaNet is like traveling Europe in a lear jet; every time you look around, the scenery's completely different. One minute you're in a tranquil riviera, the next you're in a Balkan warzone.

This, of course, leads to the suggestion of a new skill:

Interpret Creative Reality: This is the ability to get your bearings and understand basic assumptions about the AlphaNet location you are in. Successful use of this skill allows you to recognize that the program item that looks like a translucent pancake is a Brain-Cooking Program instead of a nourishing meal.

Example: *A person in AlphaNet finds a remote surveillance ("Watchdoberbot") program, which in the particular reality of HUH sector is represented as a pocket watch. With a skill roll of one, the Troubleshooter will know how to take the program for his own use. With a barely successful roll, he'll know what it is and that an opposing hacker is probably monitoring him through it. A badly failed roll leads the Troubleshooter to believe that the program will "watch out" for him, and he'll probably take it along, allowing the enemy hacker to monitor their every move.*

Net Treks

Net adventures can be a really weird adjunct to other adventures. AlphaNet can be a very useful resource for finding out information, uncovering plots, stealing plans, or getting the layout of the interior of a building.

It's generally non-lethal (death usually equates with forced ejection from the system and a splitting headache), so the weirdness and lack of referents will not overwhelm your players with Paranoia.

Overall, a great plot device. Use it

often enough and creatively enough, and your players will do anything to avoid experiencing it once again.

Skill Use and Combat in AlphaNet

AlphaNet is a consensual environment; Troubleshooters perceive things like data and programs and hardware as three-dimensional objects. The command interpreter equates the Troubleshooters' actions with computer commands, and adjusts the scenery to compensate. Thus, if the Troubleshooter has an attack program that appears as a laser, he can point the perceived laser and shoot. The compnode will interpret this action as an activation of the program against the target pointed at. Thus, all skills are potentially useful in AlphaNet.

At the same time, AlphaNet's a computer. At any time, Troubleshooters can use *Programming*, *Data Search*, or *Data Analysis* rolls (as appropriate) to compensate for lack of skills. To continue our example, suppose the Troubleshooter with the laser program has no laser weapons skills. He can instead use his *Programming* skill to fire it, and later his *Data Search* and/or *Analysis* to figure out how much damage it caused to his target.

Damage to hackers in AlphaNet is really damage to the interface code of the hacker's modem. Slight scrambling of the code can cause slowed reactions, equivalent to a *wound*. *Incapacitating* damage so scrambles the program that the hacker can only observe until he corrects the problem. *Kill* damage scrambles the interface, and ejects the Troubleshooter from the system, rendering him unconscious for 1d10 minutes. A *Vaporize* result scrambles not only the victim's interface, but also the neurons in the victim's skull. Send in the clone.

Example: *Hack-R and Cyb-R are on a mission. They've been trying to break into the Computer's Vulture Squadron Agenda in ZAP sector. Damage to trunk lines forces them to go from one of the Council's compnodes through seven sectors in the Badlands and three in Alpha*

Complex to get to ZAP sector compnode; that's the shortest connection, and it's bound to be full of patrolling hackers and security programs.

Instead, they traced the signal of an independent hacker, found his home, and convinced him to tell them a shorter path. Amazing what a cone rifle does for sealed lips. He told them that they could break into ZAP sector by sneaking into CAN sector (a recent Alpha Complex conquest), which is directly connected to ZAP.

Hack-R and Cyb-R bribe their way past a few scrubots and into CAN sector. They place the electrodes on their temples, and patch their modem into the Computer system by hotwiring a confession booth.

The universe appears to swirl as they jack in ...

It is immediately apparent that the programmer of this interface has a serious case of bathroom humor. Hack-R looks down to find his assault program looks like a plumber's helper. Cyb-R notices that the anti-tracking program she has looks like a roll of toilet paper. Looking around, they see they've appeared to have just come through a mirror; a representation of the camera in the booth. In the mirror, they can see their real selves jacked into AlphaNet. Cyb-R wipes their fingerprints from the mirror with the t.p., reducing the chance they'll get traced. Hack-R smashes the mirror with his plunger, effectively neutralizing the camera monitor by destroying the control software.

Eventually they figure out that the way to exit the CAN sector compnode is to flush themselves down a toilet. They make a note to kill the programmer of this virtual reality if they ever get the chance, just on general principle.

ZAP sector appears as a huge military base from ancient Greece, as one might expect from a Vulture-dominated system. A five-hundred meter long trireme sails ponderously overhead, the consciousness of The Computer Itself pursuing a traitor through the subsystem. They watch

as the screaming hacker frantically tries to evade, wondering if he's anyone they know. The Computer trireme settles to the ground with a heavy thud; the screaming stops rather suddenly.

They eventually find the secret Vulture database (it looks like a trojan horse), and sneak inside.

Slipping cleverly past several guardian programs, they find the agenda, which appears like a papyrus scroll. Hack-R grabs a golden fleece which he sees nearby, figuring it's important.

They slip back to the connection between ZAP and CAN, which from this end looks like the entrance to a small temple. Cyb-R slips through easily, but Hack-R can't. Sirens go off.

Cyb-R yells into the toilet bowl. "Quick — get out of there! It's only a matter of seconds ... before ... CAN ... sector ... gets ... notified!"

"I can't!" comes the reply, bubbling up through the water. "The fleece won't let me!" Desperately Hack-R tries to pry the fleece off his arm, using his raw strength which is greater than his programming ability. He fails, then grabs his assault program, which appears as a spear.

Cyb-R realizes that the fleece is a capture program. They intend to make Hack-R talk, and if he does, her chances to escape from the CAN sector confession booth are slim indeed. She sprints back for the broken mirror even as a horde of flashing red bubbles spill out of the toilet and streak all across the CAN sector compnode, setting off alarms.

At the mirror, she activates the camera's coaxial laser. To save her own skin, she's got to kill her partner before he talks. She takes the best aim she can with the broken mirror and fires.

She misses miserably, and drills her own (real) self through the skull with the powerful laser.

On the other side of the compnode, the sound of another heavy thud bubbles up through the toilet.

The entire run has lasted less than two minutecycles.

Huh?

If you still don't understand what all we've been talking about here, buy Alice Through the Mirrorshades, or one of those "other" (not-fun) cyber-type games. They'll help you make fun of their genre.

AlphaNet Equipment and Skills

There isn't any.

Whoops; wasn't supposed to tell you that, now was I?

What this means is: make them up. Remember: AlphaNet is a virtual reality — this means it isn't real. That means that nothing that goes into it is real — not the scenery, not the weapons, not anything. Both the Troubleshooters and their opponents make up what exists within the Net.

This can be fun, and this can be confusing.

Make it fun by giving your players limits on how many things they can "make" within the Net — attack programs, equipment programs; heck, they can even change themselves if they're good enough. Use the characters' Net skills as limits: whatever their skill value is, that is the base limit on how many changes they can effect semi-permanently.

Huh?

All right: a Troubleshooter with an Interpret Creative Reality skill level of six goes into AlphaNet. This means that he can "semi-permanently" (i.e., until he leaves the Net) "create" six conditions for himself within the Net. These

OOOH.
LOOK AT ALL THE
PRETTY COLORS.

are his "creation points." He has his basic attributes and skills with him, but nothing else.

Let's say he wants a laser pistol. Well, since this is fairly standard equipment, the gamemaster says he can make a ICR roll to create one: this costs him one of his six creation points. If he made something really impressive, like a cone rifle or Ultraviolet reflec armor (shame!), it might cost him two or three points.

So the Troubleshooter "equips" himself. He might even buy "programs" that raise his attributes or give him new skills. Each skill point or attribute point costs one creation point. After he's done that, he can't affect anything else in the Net, right?

Wrong.

The Troubleshooter can use his ICR to affect the surrounding area of the Net — to a very small degree and only for a brief period of time. Let's say our Troubleshooter runs up against a virtual (that's the name for something within the Net) Warbot Mark IV. It hasn't seen him yet, and he wants to keep it that way. The Troubleshooter makes an ICR roll versus the Warbot's Surveillance skill to make himself invisible to the Warbot. If he succeeds, the Warbot's virtual image will not see him until he leaves the Net (or until something changes the situation). This does not cost an ICR creation point, unless the Troubleshooter wanted to give himself an invisibility rating versus everybody, that would cost him at least one point, and then for only a "skill value" of one point in invisibility!

Making ICR Rolls

Normally, a Troubleshooter is making an ICR roll versus another being or another being's ICR total. This is modified by the gamemaster and then resolved just like an attribute vs. attribute conflict.

Simple.

However, when the Troubleshooter is warping general reality within the Net (using creation points or just modifying his surroundings), he is going against what he perceives as reality.

This perception, for most people — even Troubleshooters — is fairly strong.

The gamemaster has to set difficulty numbers in this case and should let this reflect the situation. For example, when a Troubleshooter enters the Net and wants to "create" a laser pistol — something he is very familiar with — the difficulty level is *easy*. If he was creating a R&D device with neat (and difficulty to understand) powers, the difficulty level would probably raise to *tough*. Trying to obliterate a virtual reality wall or other object would probably mean a *difficult* (or even worse!)

difficulty number. *Don't make anything impossible!* Remember; this is a virtual reality — anything the Troubleshooters do can be undone later. Let 'em have fun. Then send them back to the real world.

The Bad News

Oh, did I forget to mention? There is a "downside" to Nethopping. See, even though it is very hard for a baddie to kill our favorite Troubleshooter within AlphaNet, it is relatively easy to get one lost or even imprisoned within the virtual reality. In fact, The Computer (and other hostiles) has installed certain guardian programs within the Net to do just that ... while Its operatives find the body in the real world.

It really sucks when that happens.

Note: remember, gamemasters; any "guardians" within AlphaNet are probably much more skilled at ICR use than your Troubleshooters but, conversely, much less imaginative (must be all that rebooting). They will resist your Troubleshooters' attempts to "overwrite" them, but they can be a whole world of frustration for the players!

Chapter Six
The Not-so-Great Outdoors

... And then there is the Outside. Or Outdoors. Or whatever you want to call it.

After the Crash, the idea of going Outdoors became less and less repulsive to most clones (as opposed to starving), though most have still never actually done it. However, Troubleshooters are often sent on missions to the Outside — whether to scavenge Old Reckoning sites for possible R&D material, or to hunt down Commie Mutant Outdoorsy Types.

Rumors state that both the Secret Societies and The Computer have outposts in the Outside, though nobody's saying anything official. Isn't that just typical?

Instant Terrain Charts (... just add dice)

If you need to create terrain for long-distance missions to throw the One True Control Rod into the Crack of Chernobyl, you'll need to be able to whip up some terrain features from time to time.

This table does this for you. For slowly changing terrain, simply move up or down the chart by small increments as noted on the Travel Chart (note that the Terrain Chart is cyclic, so going past number 20 brings you back to number 1).

Of course, no Gamemaster is so unscrupulous as to shift terrain radically and with little warning ("Gee, the fog lifts and (clatter, clatter) you're on top of a snowy mountain! How'd you get there from the desert, Citizen?")

Instant Weather Charts (... just add SFX)

Troubleshooters are always troubled by the weather, because they don't have it in Alpha and they can't shoot it. The winds (uncontrollable drafts from unseen ventilation), rain (leaks from the non-existent dome), and nightfall (power outages) are enough to unnerve any Alphan.

But every so often Mother Nature unleashes her full fury. These are the times that Troubleshooters panic. So, anytime an adventure outside starts to drag, have a weather front move in. Don't worry about realism; your Troubleshooters haven't got the foggiest idea what weather is supposed to be like. For all they know, it's just that time of year. Tell really troublesome players (aren't they all?) that this is the result of the radiation on the environment.

Terrain Chart
1. Alps
2. Mountains
3. High Plateau
4. Arid Hills
5. Canyons
6. River or Oasis
7. Desert
8. Village Ruins
9. Savannah
10. Brushland
11. Seacoast
12. Metropolis Ruins
13. Forest
14. Swamp
15. Lake
16. Jungle
17. Wooded Hills
18. Town Ruins
19. Wooded Mountains
20. Mountain Pass

Travel Chart
1-3	Move up two on Terrain Chart
4-7	Move up one on Terrain Chart
8-13	Terrain does not change
14-17	Move down two on Terrain Chart
18-20	Move down two on Terrain Chart

Weather Table
1-2: *MONSOON:* Incredible torrents of rain pour down on everyone. Make maintenance rolls for all equipment caught in the deluge.

3-4: *BLIZZARD:* Moscow, 1941. Drifts 12 feet deep. Rabid snowshoe hares bite Troubleshooters' noses. Giant Mutant St. Bernards with brandy casks.

5-6: *TORNADO:* Anything from steady high winds to the Wizard of OZZ Sector.

7-8: *SLEET:* Freezing rain. Hail the size of hand grenades (use the same damage column just to make it simple).

9-10: *HEAT WAVE:* Blistering Dust Bowl sort of stuff. Water becomes a big concern.

11-12: *FLOOD:* Anything not tied down floats away. Anything tied down drowns.

13-14: *FOG:* Visibility is limited to arm's reach. This'll do wonders for their paranoia.

15-16: *TOTAL ECLIPSE:* Bedtime already? But I'm not sleepy!

17-18: *EARTHQUAKE:* Have your players get swallowed by the Earth, only to find themselves in Pellucidar. Or the Center of the Earth. Or Hell (no, not HEL Sector).

19-20: *VOLCANIC ERUPTION:* Thar she blows!

Creating Wifty and Mega-Destructive New Monsters for The Outside

For a long time Alpha Complex scientists sought desperately to ignore the existence of the Giant Radioactive Mutant Cockroaches. But, with the discovery of a whole plethora or two of Giant Mutant Radioactive Australian Monsters (in *Mad Mechs*), it was decided that some attempt would have to be made to catalogue the critters banging on the domes of our very own Alpha.

That being the case, we'd better whip up a few of them, right? So here you go ... tables for the creation of your very own Giant Radioactive *American* Troubleshooter Eaters! Boy, this is GRATE stuff!

GRATE Chart Number One: Animal

Die	Critter	Attack (skill)	Number
1	Amoeba	glom (5)	1
2	Ant	chomp (12)	1-100
3	Bison	trample (16)	1-10
4	Cat	claw (13)	1
5	Dog	bite (10)	1-3
6	Elk	gore (8)	3-12
7	Fly	barf (8)	1
8	Frog	tongue (12)	1
9	Goldfish	bite (9)	1
10	Grizzly Bear	crush (14)	1
11	Human	hit (8)	1-10
12	Lizard	bite (10)	1
13	Parakeet	peck (7)	1
14	Pig	graze (11)	3-7
15	Rattlesnake	bite (10)	1
16	Slug	smush (7)	1
17	Squirrel	gnaw (12)	1-4
18	Venus FlyTrap	glomp (3)	1-2
19	Vulture	chomp (7)	1-10
20	Ref Choice — maybe a GRATE Dane?		

GRATE Chart Number Two: Size

Roll	Size	Damage	Macho
1	2-foot tall*	3	-1
2	8-foot tall	5	0
3-4	10-foot tall	6	1
5-6	15-foot tall	7	2
7-9	20-foot tall	8	3
10-12	25-foot tall	10	4
13-16	30-foot tall	12	5
17-18	40-foot tall	15	6
19-20	50-foot tall	18	7

*Okay, so it's a bit of a weenie. Not all mutations are successful, you know.

GRATE Chart Number Three: Glow

Roll	Radiation*	Mutation**
1-2	100	0
3-4	200	0
5-7	400	1/20
8-11	800	3/20
12-16	2000	5/20
17-18	4000	7/20
19-20	8000	10/20†

*This is the number of Rads (in roentgens) the creature gives off. No one really cares about scientific measurements, so this also tells you how bright the critter glows; i.e., how many pages of a Stephen King novel you could read by the creature's phosphorescence before the ghoulish light gave you a headache.

**This is the chance that a Troubleshooter exposed to the creature spontaneously generates a mutation (or a *Sneak Attack* or *Vice*; see tables below).

†Bright Gamemasters may notice that these numbers are considerably higher than those in *Mad Mechs*, where this table was swiped — er, "suggested" from. That is because creatures just Outside Alpha have been exposed to more radiation over the years (not to mention other Alpha byproducts — yecch!). As Troubleshooters progress from Alpha, feel free to lower the numbers accordingly (or not).

GRATE Chart Number Four: Mutation

Roll	Mutations
1-9	No mutation*
10-18	Roll once on *Paranoia* mutation table
19	Roll twice on table
20	Roll or pick as many fun things as you want. Or make up a few.

*You really rolled this? Check your die ... see — it's cocked just a little bit. Better roll again.

"Hmmm ... what is your security clearance, giant mandibled Citizen?"

GRATE Chart Number Five: Sneak Attack

Roll   Special

1-2   Can use human technology at skill 10.

3-4   Breathes fire 3 times per daycycle (12F, 10 meter range).

5-6   Impervious to one weapon type.

7-8   Each body part continues to fight after it's cut off.

9-10   Regenerates damage (on a roll of five or lower, it heals to lesser wound state once per round).

11-12   Can burrow underground with amazing speed.

13-14   Gaze turns Troubleshooters to stone. Well, okay, not that bad, but there's a seven in twenty chance each round that one character will be struck inactive until he makes a *normal chutzpah* roll.

15-16   Bellowing roar: 1/20 chance each round that another GRATE shows up in response to its warcries.

17-18   Two-headed: attacks twice a round.

19-20   Whatever you think is best to rack up the body count or just plain frustrate the Troubleshooters.

GRATE Chart Number Six: Vice

Roll   Weakness

1-2   Sobs uncontrollably when assaulted with Harsh Language.

3-4   Obsessed with "Culture."

5-6   Moves very slowly. Gifts of orthopedic shoes will gain its trust.

7-8   Explodes mightily (there's no damage, but it's real gross) if hit by laser fire, or by one other weapon type that your players have.

9-10   Mortally terrified of its own reflection.

11-12   Actually, it is a very nice creature and will not attack first. You might say its a GRATE guy ... but then again, you might not.

13-14   Counts Coup; after it does damage to one Troubleshooter, it shouts "I win!" and starts ambling off. Or it jumps around a lot in celebration (Jump 5, damage +2 columns).

15-16   Pauses to messily devour slain Troubleshooter before continuing attacks.

17-18   Grabs Troubleshooter, then climbs nearest tall object and hangs out swatting at flybots.

19-20   Referee's Choice. C'mon, you are an intelligent and creative Gamemaster; really give the creature a GRATE weakness.

GRATE Chart Number Seven: Name (Optional)*

Roll	Name
1-4	Alexander
5-8	Peter
9-12	Santini
13-16	Scott
17-20	Sue R.

*Okay, so this table is of limited usefulness — but hey; you'll use it … just wait and see.

Where Did the GRATEs Come From?

It's really amazing, because with humanity cooped up inside Paranoid little domes for over *[deleted for security reasons]* years, the Outside has by and large returned to the Arcadian paradise it once was before the invention of war, smog, and fast food franchises.

In the vicinity of the domes, however, raw toxic sewage has created wildly variable and very unbalanced sociopathic animals, who spend their time bashing on each other like critters from a Japanese horror film. Naturally, these are the critters that the Troubleshooters encounter when they first go Outside.

Then, by the time even the most die-hard Seal Clubber gets away to the Rocky Mountains, well away from the environs of the GRATEs, he'll keep blasting away at every little bluebird for the sake of his mental security. Sigh.

When You're Outside, the Problem is Inside

The Outside is full of many terrors. Giant Mutant Radioactive Household Pests are everywhere, the effects of "weather" are incomprehensible and profound to even the most seasoned citizen, and the mind-boggling perspective crushes the soul of even the most stalwart Vulture goon.

However, there is one enemy in the Outside that no one ever thinks of until it's too late. That's what these tables are for.

See, everything in Alpha is heavily laced with all sorts of marauding phar-maceuticals; hormone suppressants, antibiotics, mood elevators, nutriments, rat poison, and a few other things whose purpose was lost during the Crash, but are still faithfully added "because that's the way it's supposed to be."

Even in the domains of The Council or the High Programmers, these additives are found; those in power have discovered that the citizens are a lot more manageable and predictable when inundated with biochemical supplements.

But when a Team is Outside for an extended period, especially if they have to eat the so-called "Natural" foods, they will undergo two separate but distinct phases. The first phase is cold-turkey withdrawal from the heavy barrage of drugs routinely administered. This usually starts about half a daycycle after eating the last pre-packaged rations.

The second, and worse of the two, is that without the hormone suppressants, the Team will suddenly and mercilessly go through puberty, which has been heretofore repressed hormonally. This generally starts up a few daycycles after starting to eat "natural" kibble.

Note: as stated many times before, within Alpha Base and in the Badlands, these drugs are becoming less and less frequent. However, they still exist enough to keep the Citizens from experiencing major discomfort. Depending on how you run this, the Troubleshooters could be undergoing all, some, or none of the below effects.

Drug Withdrawal Effects

(The contents of this table were derived from an independent study by a group of very enthusiastic volunteer researchers. May they rest in peace. Hopefully, their effort will set an example for the rest of us — "don't try this at home.")

Directions for use: Take one effect twelve hourcycles after last exposure to Alpha Complex food. Roll one die as many times as needed to achieve the desired result.

1. **JITTERS**: Extreme shakiness and convulsions, especially of the trigger finger.

2. **TOTAL AMNESIA**: I forgot what this means.

3. **HIVES**: Excessive itching and scratching promotes rash behavior. Fingers and palms itch notoriously, as does that one place you can never quite reach...

4. **PIGMENTATION**: On this result, the Troubleshooter's skin changes color. This could be interesting if he's not cleared to be that color — or maybe it's an instant promotion!

5. **CLAIRAUDIENCE**: A blast from the past! Heavy metal rock and roll audible only to the affected Troubleshooter, who spends his spare time playing air guitar (like Angus from AC/DC) or singing (real loud and generally off-key) or dancing (like a Hammer wannabe).

6. **HUNGER**: It's an all-you-can-eat night. The Troubleshooter that Ate Toky-O.

7. **HALLUCINATIONS**: It's your choice. These can be flashbacks, for example, to the last SNAFU fire-fight. They can be ambient, so that the character believes he's a microbe in a giant food vat. Or they can be humorous, causing the Troubleshooter's teammates to turn into nine-foot-tall peppermint laser pistols.

8. **SHRINK**: Remove half his height and strength.

9. **PROJECTILE VOMITING**: Don't worry about the Law of Conservation of Mass. Even if the Troubleshooter hasn't eaten in days, he'll still have a full load.

10. **ROLL TWICE**: You probably already did to get a ten.

Will the rest of the clone's family suffer these same effects? Well, if you're a traditional George Patton sort of gamemaster, the point is probably moot, as all the player's clones will already be dead. Should the situation arise nonetheless, realism demands that all clones suffer as did the first. After all, they're genetically identical.

Hormone Overload Effects

(Data in this table may or may not be based on private empirical observation of my younger brother and sister.)

This table gives the effects of mutant hormones when suddenly impacted on weakened mutant bodies. Roll a ten-sided die, then choose your favorite number and look up the result.

1. **HYPERACTIVE FOLLICLES**: Lots of hair. Everywhere. Chin, armpits, legs, chest, hands, eyebrows, ears, etc.

2. **HYPERACTIVE PHEROMONES**: The Troubleshooter exudes a wide variety of smells. Halitosis. B.O. Flatulence. Odorous sweat.

3. **GROWTH**: Add another inch and *Endurance* point per hourcycle until the hilarity wears off. Then let the Troubleshooter explain this increased stature to Those In Power.

4. **NARCALEPSY**: In English, this is called sleepiness. If the Troubleshooter gets less than 16 hours sleep a day, they yawn continuously and are generally less than at their best.

5. **MUTATION:** Mutant genes can develop a new mutation. Unfortunately, this mutation is involuntary, and it has a habit of always getting in the way. The Troubleshooter has no control over his new power.

6. **SATYRIASIS/NYMPHOMANIA**: For those who don't yet know those words, it's a desire to be "friendly" with those of the opposite sex — *really* friendly. All the time. When you read a fortune cookie, you say "in bed" at the end.

7. **NEANDERTHALISM:** The Troubleshooter reverts to a primitive state, complete with howling at the moon and sniffing people's — er, hands.

8. **WIDESPREAD PUBERTY SYMPTOMS**: Make a list of all your least favorite experiences. Squeaky voice, clumsiness, zits, unexplained growth of certain anatomical parts —there's got to be a million of 'em.

9. **POOR CONCENTRATION**: Attention span: five seconds. In other words, the Trou— *hey*, where are you going? Listen up, this is important!

10. **ROLL TWICE**: Note: Choosing ten as your favorite number is exceedingly amoral. It's also rather fun.

Naturally, cruel Gamemasters like to liberally sprinkle the Outside with mutant rattlesnakes that inject additional hormones.

And Then?

Of course, the characters eventually return to Alpha, wherein they are once again be battered with drugs of every shape and color. One way to improvise this abuse upon their newly-purged body would be to roll again on the above tables, and apply the exact opposite effect; Projectile Vomiting becomes Ravenous Hunger, Poor Concentration becomes Exclusive Concentration (Hey! Quit looking at that puddle! We got a gunfight here!), etc.

Of course, having your Troubleshooters act as rebellious, physically mature, armed teenagers may not be such a good idea.

EMERGENCY SERVICES MANUAL

Chapter Seven
ES of A: An Overview

Emergency Services are a factor in Alpha life that has been sadly neglected up to now. Here then, is everything you'll ever need to know about emergency responders in Alpha.

This portion of *The Paranoia Sourcebook* includes a definitive history of the development of these bureaus from their inception through the Crash and into the present. Capsule descriptions of the various services are here also, along with full descriptions of the Ambulance Service and Emergency Room, the parts of the Alpha emergency system that Troubleshooters most often encounter. Also included are one other service each from Alpha Base and Alpha Complex. Finally, we also have a story detailing the application of emergency groups, and essays analyzing the new developments of Alphan health coverage, insurance fraud, and other such medical niceties.

Why We Need Them

Paranoia has traditionally been a stomping ground for disposable characters, none of whom lasted longer than a Bic pen in a blast furnace (which is also about what they looked like when they died).

Realistically, though, there have to be some measures Alphans would take to

ANESTHESIA WILL BE ADMINISTERED WHEN THE OPERATION IS COMPLETE.

protect their elite when injured, especially the Troubleshooters, who get injured more often than most. These services (especially the ambulance crew) help your players' characters survive getting rent, spindled, and mutilated. Your characters live longer, happier (well, more complicated, anyway) lives, gain in power and prestige (?), and eventually die capriciously at the hands of bigger and better weapons.

The Development of Emergency Services

The Problem

In the years before The Crash, it was determined that Troubleshooter mortality was at an all-time high, and still rising, breaking records every yearcycle. No one was particularly fond of that statistic, least of all the Troubleshooters. And they were armed.

A joint board was appointed by The Computer to develop a recommendation to counter this. The board came to the conclusion that while the Troubleshooters themselves were plenty capable, and really doing an incredible job (read: "please don't shoot us, we're your friends"), the docbots assigned to Troubleshooter Teams were generally unsuited to the demanding rigors of Troubleshooter life of course, that just PO'd the docbots, but that's another story …).

Not to say that docbots were maligned, mind you. The tendency for docbots to have flashbacks to daycycles of being a food processing bot were blithely overlooked. But while docbots were deemed more than adequate for standard citizen-on-the-tubeway medical treatment, Troubleshooters required more attention, faster response, and better backup than the standard docbot could provide.

The Solution

What the board recommended was that the Troubleshooters get something more than just docbots; the Troubleshooters needed an emergency medical service that could respond quickly and effectively to unknown crisis situations with lots and lots of gore flying around in little Troubleshooter bits. The members of this service would require excellent equipment and lots of training, and therefore vatloads of funding.

The concept was agreed upon and immediately approved by The Computer. It liked terms like "elite," "powerful," and "bloated budget."

The Problem with the Solution

Everyone on the board knew that such an organization would be a political windfall for the Service Group that ran it. Lavish funding, high profile, and the ability to call on the service to serve their own ends. Unfortunately, everyone on the committee assumed that their Service Group would get the contract; it was just obvious, right? (The idea that a new, independent Service Group could be created never crossed anybody's mind.) So, immediately after approval by The Computer, everyone started bickering savagely about who would get to run the service (and thereby control its budget).

War raged in the political arena. It was a long struggle, delaying the project incredibly. Troubleshooter staffing fell as casualties mounted, and less capable Troubleshooters soon found themselves with more difficult assignments. (This, by the way, is what led to your players, instead of a more competent Team, getting the missions they were assigned.)

The Solution to the Problem ... Not

Eventually, HPD&MC, PowServ, and PL&C realized that they had no hope of getting this service assigned to them. Not wanting one of the more prestigious Service Groups to land the contract, they proposed that this emergency service instead be formed as an adjunct to the Troubleshooters. That idea was rapidly passed by the committee on the "just so long as *YOU* don't get it" principle.

Naturally, everyone on the board was upset that their Service Group didn't get the new and prestigious service themselves, so they unanimously voted to fund the service with a minimal budget three percent of its original projected size. The Computer, deluged by terms such as "streamlining," "more efficient," and "Commie-proof," went along for the ride.

Thus was formed the *Intersector Network for Emergency Protection and Transportation* (INEPT), an adjunct to provide field support for Troubleshooters in need (of which, by now, there were very, very many).

The Spin-Offs

Immediately after the founding of INEPT, each Service Group began organizing its own variant, generating several emergency response teams. Each had better funding than INEPT, so the *Troubleshooter's Dispatch Center* often called on them to take care of situations when INEPT was stretched a little thin. Each could also be contacted directly, through The Computer, or through Troubleshooter Mission Control.

Each emergency group maintains spies, wiretaps, and informants to keep themselves informed of the doings of the others. Should one emergency service get a call, other groups hear of it and send their own response teams, depending on how effective they might be, how important the call is, and how prestigious the action might prove.

For example, suppose an Infrared fell and got badly injured. No one but a decrepit docbot would show up, unless the hapless Infrared's body was somehow impeding public transportation. But should an Ultraviolet step on a tack and call for INEPT, you can bet the Power Services group would arrive to make a big production of removing the tack. Army troopers would also show up to transport the Ultraviolet (stealing him, in effect, from the ambulance) and HPD&MC's folks would show up in hopes of being the first responders on the scene and gaining brownie points. Often, pitched battles would ensue between different Service Groups' emergency teams and INEPT, arriving last of all, would get to fix up what was left over (which was about the only way they got a contract).

The Crash Yearcycles

INEPT (and the various imitators) were launched a few short years before The Calculator King went down. During that brief period, mortality statistics wavered, and then began to fall slightly. For a moment, it looked like INEPT and company might actually reverse the trend.

But no, it was a case of too little, too late. Too bad. When The Computer went down, so did funding. Chaos reigned. Service Groups shattered. For a while, there was no emergency service of any sort.

Then, as order started to reassert itself, a few of the groups started showing up again, as freelance outfits, charging exorbitant rates to keep citizens alive while clones were out of stock. Some Secret Societies formed their own copies, for members only (or those with enough to trade).

While most of these groups were formed purely as opportunistic organizations, some actually thrived during MegaWhoops Alpha. Efficiency was tried by a few such organizations, and these groups helped clonekind survive the wanton violence of the Dark Cycles.

Here and Now

With The Digital Downtimer back on line, Alpha Base has designated funding to meet these needs, and emergency medical services (INEPT and Society organizations) have again returned to full-time operation. Likewise, INEPT is also operating in Alpha Complex, with bases scattered throughout the Computer-controlled areas of Alpha. (Rumors that Base INEPT and Complex INEPT are one unified force are treason.)

Many of the services of both Alpha Base and Alpha Complex have long reaches, and will operate in the Badlands or even in enemy territory. In addition, certain Simplexes have their own systems. For full details on the state of emergency care around Alpha, see below.

At Your (Emergency) Service ...

For most Troubleshooter emergencies, only one or two services show up. Despite the anxiety they cause, they usually do some good. After all, their statistics are closely watched by the other services — who are all just waiting for a chance to close them down. Most teams feel it is imperative that they respond effectively, if in a somewhat heavy-handed manner.

But during major disasters like reactor core meltdown, every service in Alpha shows up and makes a confusing mess of the whole affair and often precipitating a major league brawl and fire-fight over matters of jurisdiction, adding to the chaos and destruction. Meanwhile, the plutonium core continues to melt.

In Alpha Base, bidding has taken the place of a general melee, with the competitors haggling over expenses. So, instead of blasting each other while Alpha burns, they fiddle around with each other until one underbids far enough. Alpha Complex has so far

avoided this "spirit of Free Enterprise," but it won't be long now ...

So here's a brief description of the various emergency responders, guaranteed to turn any Troubleshooter incident into an emergency.

Alpha Base Emergency Groups

These are Emergency Groups based in, well, Alpha Base. Depending on their preference, they operate in other areas — but should be considered treasonous or alien to other environments. Naturally, this affects their rates ...

INEPT (Troubleshooters)

The *Intersector Nexus for Emergency Protection and Transportation* is the ambulance service in Alpha Base. INEPT is a branch of the Troubleshooters, and their behavior is as stable and predictable as any Troubleshooter's. They recover Troubleshooters in the Badlands, and sometimes even in Alpha Complex and the alien Simplexes.

INEPT's response teams, dispatch personnel, and administrative branch are all fully described, while only the response teams are described for the rest of the services. There are several reasons for this:

1. The players are Troubleshooters, and INEPT is a Troubleshooter arm.

2. INEPT often calls on the other services when the needs of the calling Team are to many for the resources of the few.

3. The other services have dispatch and administrative sections similar to INEPT's, so feel free to steal, in whole or in part, INEPT's superstructure for these other groups as you see fit.

The Paramechanics (Council Bot Societies)

The Paramechanics are robotic paramedics, an INEPT-style group dedicated to giving the best in emergency care, reprogramming, and overhaul to the large mechanical contingent in The Council. Their every call is closely monitored by

the Frankenstein Destroyers — who have other objectives in mind.

While the Paramechanics generally only go after downed 'bots, they will usually help the rest of the 'bot's teammates. Of course, they see cyborging as an alternative to setting broken bones (or to band-aides, sometimes), but they mean well (we think).

Wholedome Holistic Ambulance Team (Mystics)

The *Wholedome Holistic Ambulance Team* (WHAT) is the service of choice by Mystics, Mooists, and Shamans everywhere. WHAT provides the best in natural care, which, by their definition, is implemented by intensive pharmaceutical assault and yoga. They may not actually cure you, but you'll feel no pain.

Live In Concert (Death Leopard)

Live In Concert is a Death Leopard group. While Death Leopard has taken to publishing books on politics, etc., they are a team of <live> advisors who will act <in concert> to save you from the potential damage of any political emergency. No, they don't do medical stuff, but if there are any potential repercussions stemming from your actions, you can bet they'll be there to advise you while holding off the press with a heavy barrage of "No comment."

While this might sound good, most Troubleshooter Teams feel they could get along fine without LIC's services — as long as there are no LICers on the other side. Generally, it ends up as a battle between two or more LICs, and they are the only ones who profit. There is a rumor that, if a revolution ever comes, the first thing they'll do is shoot all the LICs.

Field Service (Computer Phreaks)

These guys do incredible jobs repairing any electronic equipment, anywhere, and they guarantee their work. Call them when your comlink is malfunctioning. No wait, that wouldn't work ...

Dial 116 (Knight Fighters)

No one can seem to adequately explain exactly what their name means, but these are a group of combat-loving chivalrous guys who want nothing more than to rescue helpless citizen or fair maiden from the clutches of death. Anywhere. *Especially* from inside Alpha Complex or the Dungeon. See? These guys are nuts. They're so nuts we'll describe them in Chapter Thirteen.

Power Suits

Power Services is the only Alpha Base Committee to field an emergency team, for the simple reason that they carried a lot of their organization with them when they split from the Alpha Complex Service Groups. These guys in rad suits do everything from reclaim radioactive material to bomb deactivation. Unfortunately, they tend to forget that the bystanding clones *aren't* shielded from radiation ...

Within Alpha Complex

Okay. These groups are based in Alpha Complex and only rarely go into other Simplexes or Alpha Base. They do operate extensively in the Badlands, however, and some even go Outside. They'll pick up anybody because, until proven otherwise, everybody is loyal to The Computer, right?

INEPT (Troubleshooters)

Startlingly similar to the Alpha Base group, they also work very closely with the *Hospital Urgent Receiving and Triage* (HURT), which is a development of the modern-day Emergency Room. INEPT is often called upon by Troubleshooter Teams whose docbot was either destroyed, ineffective, or malfunctioning — if indeed they were assigned a docbot at all.

There is no truth to the rumor that Base INEPT and Complex INEPT work together, although the number of Troubleshooters rescued from enemy territory by INEPT seem to support the notion. Rumors are treason/sedition, right?

Fire Department (Technical Services)

The *Fire Department* handles all sorts of environmental emergencies within Alpha Complex with the sole exception of fires in the nuclear power plants scattered around the dome. The animosity between TechServ and PowServ is so great that they'd rather watch a core melt through the center of the earth than lift a finger to assist. Watching this group try compete for "contracts" with PowServ is truly the definition of a "fire-fight."

HELP (HPD&MC)

The *Happiness Emergency Line Psychoanalysis* Team is a purely political organization. Organized as much like INEPT as possible, they're called out whenever a citizen experiences treasonous thoughts, and the Mental Hygienists remedy the situation. Thus, HELP is called out to the scene of many Troubleshooter situations, where they try to grab the traitor and rehabilitate them.

HELP was designed to steal the show from IntSec by nipping treason in the bud, but has been allowed to remain because they assist in ferreting out treason. In fact, IntSec maintains files on every citizen who has ever called for HELP.

Accidentally, HELP has proven its usefulness by truly reeducating a few potential traitors — without killing them! Not even IntSec has been able to do that! (And, boy, are they jealous!) See Chapter Twelve for more HELP.

Search & Rescue (Armed Forces)

Search and Rescue is an extremely euphemistic name. Although clones do get lost in regular commuting or in disasters, most operations involve "searching" for traitors-at-large and "rescuing" citizens barricaded in their rooms. They are fully armed and very dangerous. Because of their successful record, they are starting to muscle in on IntSec, which is just what the Armed Forces High Command hoped for. S&R is the only Complex service that will freely operate anywhere in Alpha. If

asked, they will attempt to rescue Troubleshooters trapped inside a nuclear reactor in Alpha City. These guys are really rabid.

Janitors of Death (PL&C)

Really, this organization is not much to talk about. Despite their ominous name, their job is to clean up the litter of corpses found along the path of every Troubleshooter Team. They also clean up hit-and-runs, etc.

They are not to be ignored, however, as they have a lot of forensic experts, and they take notes on the minutest of details as they work. Think about it ...

Rumors that PL&C creates work when things are slow is just not true ...

Hazardous Materials Relocation Team (Power Services)

Should your sabotage attempt fail and you suddenly find yourself with ten kilos of Uranium-238 in your bunk, *HazMat* is who you'd call. They also double as a bomb squad. The danger implicit in their work gives them almost as much prestige as Troubleshooters, and they are known for the same reckless devotion to their work — and they have similar efficiency ratings.

Suicide Prevention (IntSec)

Internal Security set up this office to give them another way to persecute unhappiness. They tend to prevent suicide by applying copious amounts of execution. Execution is, of course, a last resort, and used only if the clone in question refuses to become a toady for IntSec.

This is the least popular group with The Computer, and is often being penalized for "excessive zeal." You can guess what that means. The Computer is really tired of wasting resources, and IntSec had better tow the line ... or else. As a result, SuPr spends most of its time trying to make the other services look bad.

CPU Emergency

Calling this line gives a recording. There is nothing here. There are so many proposals for a CPU emergency

branch that it doesn't look like they'll ever actually create one. Typical bureaucracy.

Troubleshooters

Technically speaking, the Troubleshooters are also an emergency service, but unless you're running some sort of grand campaign, I doubt your players will ever call on them.

Badlands

There are a very few simplex-oriented services, like the Cleariks, who operate out of The Dungeon. But only one group deserves detailed mention:

Red Badge (Communists)

Red Badge operates out of Communist-controlled Alpha Base, driving a captured INEPT ambulance. They monitor all broadcasts that they can, and if they have the opportunity to jump on a group of Troubleshooters who are all wounded or incapacitated, they will. Then they'll tie them up and indoctrinate them while they whisk them back to the safety of Alpha State.

Patient (*in pain*): Aaaaarggh! Give me some painkiller, quick!

Red Badger: Da, da; I beink with you in a moment. First, I be readink to you from *Red Book ov Rules*.

P: What? *Rules*? I need help!

RB: First the Rules, comrade; while your head is beink clear — or no painkillink stuff.

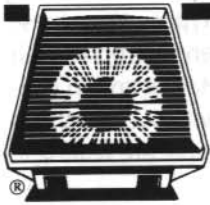**P** (*groans*): All right, *all right*! But hurry, please!

RB: "But hurry, please," *what*, comrade?

P (*thinks*): Hurry please ... *comrade*?

RB (*smiling*): Da, da ... (*begins reading*)

And More ...

There are many more Emergency Services (EmServs) in Alpha, and even a few in the Outdoors. Create 'em, play with 'em, and make your characters wish they could die in piece ... um, *peace*.

Chapter Eight
Welcome to INEPT

Typically, the *Intersector Network for Emergency Protection and Transportation* is divided into three sections, as befits the bloated Alpha Bureaucracy: Control, Dispatch, and Response Teams.

As part of an ongoing campaign, your players' characters will meet and get to know each of these three. First they'll encounter Dispatch, whom they'll call after dealing with a nest of Commies with a laser fixation. Then they'll meet the Response Teams, who'll shovel them off the sidewalk and onto a stretcher for care. And finally, they will eventually meet with those at Control, whom they must battle over fee and health assurance disputes.

There are, of course, nearly as many INEPT offices in Alpha as there are Troubleshooter Headquarters. We'll give one example here (complete with maps), along with a few key personas for your hapless (but very cool) characters to meet.

OPD Sector INEPT

The OPD Sector Control offices are located in a very nice, new, clean, futuristic building some distance from the nearest Troubleshooter headquarters. The maintenance garage is an ugly rambling annex located below and behind the offices, in what amounts to a scummy alley.

Aside from being the locus for INEPT's command and administrative personnel, the offices serve as a public advertisement and PR device. As such, extra care is taken to keep the offices looking clean, neat, orderly, efficient, and productive — despite rumors to the contrary.

The garages, being closed to the general populace, are kept in horrifying though functional disarray. Ecch. Be sure to wear your waders down there.

Entrance to INEPT Control is gained through the lobby, which is always guarded by at least two Troubleshooters. Red clearance elevators take the visitor wherever desired. There are buttons labelled 1 to 5, and F, G, and H.

Pushing F opens the elevator doors to the core of a small (F)usion reactor (the elevator doors were providing the shielding). The garage is located at sublevel G. Often another guard is stationed here. The entry (H)all is H, a sparkling black foyer with attractive patriotic sculptures, posters, and security cannon. Everyone is allowed to leave whenever they want.

The first floor is the INEPT lounge, a large and luxurious resting place with some games and a few vending machines. This level is Orange clearance, but there is a separate, nicer Green room. Red INEPT personnel are usually tolerated in the Orange lounge, but if a higher security clearance person needs an excuse to harass, they have one.

The second floor is the supply stock room, clearance Yellow. Doberbots patrol the area. The third level houses the Red secretarial pool, Yellow INEPT records department, and Orange Public Information Office. The button is unintentionally Indigo coded, but INEPTers ignore coworkers pushing it. Others have to wait for someone else to or take their chances.

The fourth level contains the real administrative personnel. This level is Yellow clearance. INEPT's directorate occupies the fifth floor. This level is clearance Blue.

By the Book

INEPT Control, according to the municipal code, "directs the daycycle-to-daycycle operation of this most beneficial service, and has been [*deleted for security reasons*]. They are friendly

and helpful, and happy to help you with any questions you may have regarding the INEPT system. INEPT is open around the clock for your convenience."

Unlike most of the Alpha Complex Municipal Code, this entry is pretty accurate. Although INEPT Control has not yet been deleted, they deserve to be, since they're only so much bureaucratic deadwood on this otherwise useful organization. They very effectively give the guise of being friendly and helpful, although they're only slightly more helpful than the average bureaucrat. But since they're not at all necessary for the continued operation of the ambulances, they must put on a good show to insure their continued existence.

The INEPT Control Staff

This is an example of the type of clones you might find running an INEPT branch HQ. They work in either Computer-controlled Alpha Complex or in the Council-run areas of Alpha Base. With a little imagination, these characters can seriously infect — I mean, "affect" — any *Paranoia* campaign.

Administrative Assistance (?)

Jen-O-SYD-1 is officially the Administrative Administrator, a neo-lofty title that amounts to rubber-stamper and mailman. Since all paperwork passes through her hands at one time or another, she has a pretty good understanding of the more important goings on, which is no bad thing for someone who's actually a high-level Illuminati agent.

Jen-O deeply resents her transfer from the "real" Troubleshooters to a desk job at INEPT, because now she has little or no opportunity to even draw

her gun, let alone kill people and smash hardware. She petitioned for a transfer back out, but noticed when processing the paperwork that her superior recommended she not be transferred because "filing papers appears to fully utilize her feeble brain." She filed a sedition report in revenge, and her boss found out and filed a reprimand. Now with the damage to her permanent file, Jen-O can only hope to do her job well (or bad) enough to be put back into the extremely violent Troubleshooters.

The characters are most likely to meet her when trying to pull some assurance fraud, which she approves with ridiculous ease. Later, when she starts her blackmail, they'll understand how they pulled off a scam so easily.

The Heart of INEPT

Vlad-I-MPL-3 is the very disturbing head of INEPT in this sector. He's disturbing for several reasons:

He thinks he's a vampire, and dresses, acts and talks likes one; with sweeping gestures, drawn cloak, and neo-Transylvanian accent. The fact that he's a Matter Eater, and a Seal Clubber (he prefers "natural" foods) only exacerbates this.

Also, he *really* enjoys his work. I mean a *lot*. Hands-on sort of stuff. Eeesh! He can usually be seen "swooping" through the offices, exhorting his troops or swinging from the chandelier. His sinister laugh and his organ playing both are enough to make strong men quail.

There is no way to avoid seeing him whenever you visit INEPT.

Vlad-I-MPL

Matter Eater   **P**20
Seal Club 8th degree
S9 **E**20 **A**12 **D**14 **M**18 **C**3 **MA**9
Armor: All5 (with macho)
Neurowhip 13
Oratory 12 Psychescan 18
Intimidation 15

In the Family

Phil-R-BIT-1 thru 6 (yes, the whole family) are assigned to make INEPT's

WHIRR!
BZZZZZZZZ!
WHIRR!
THUMP!
OOZE!

lobby and Public Information Department appear bigger, better staffed, more efficient, and busier. To this end, they walk briskly hither and yon, shuttling packages, manuals, and reams of paperwork from desk to desk in a carefully choreographed frenzy. (None of their documents have been read since the Crash.)

The entire family belongs to the Trekkies, and they dress like security guards and look stern. If a Troubleshooter tries to talk to them, they refer him to a random desk without even breaking stride. Other Trekkies, however, will find themselves welcomed and assisted with courtesy no clone has known before.

Being courageous grunts, they also provide better security for INEPT Control. They're pretty handy with energy weapons. Also, the Phil-R family is a *team*. They realize that there are no clone replacements for them (correctly or not), and so they watch each others' backs like ... well, like brothers.

It is, of course, treason for all six clones to be active at the same time, but, because these clones are fiercely loyal to The Computer (or the Council, if this INEPT base is there), nobody pays any attention. In fact, pointing this out is a verbal *faux pas* of incredible proportion around here. Nobody will listen, and they just may do something awful to the observant clone ...

Bribes are the only things that can make the Phil-R's break stride, and maybe even stop. Once a player has caught their attention, they can be great contacts with all sorts of paralegal and

illegal underworld types. Yes, these "fiercely loyal" citizens are up to their ears in the Infrared Market and in various other illegal activities ... but this is another thing few people are willing to point out.

Phil-R-BIT-1-6

Energy Field   **P**9 (reg)
Trekkie 3rd degree
S16 **E**16 **A**12 **D**12 **M**10 **C**13
MA6
Armor: Red L4I1P1
Energy Pistol 8

There are, of course, a large number of secretaries, assistants, junior assistants, clerks, junior assistant clerks, etc., but I'm getting close to deadline, and both The Computer and the Council take the word "deadline" quite literally, so I'll have to save describing them for another day. For your information, most of the INEPT staff consists of Troubleshooters with a few flaws that keep them off the front lines — but are not "serious" enough to warrant reeducation or execution.

INEPT Scheduling

Although the entirety of INEPT operates around the clock, there is no scheduled activity or output requirements for INEPT Control past normal Alpha working hours. The rest of the time some workers hang out and look busy if and when a visitor shows up. Naturally, they are completely uninformed of anything important. Further, Despite the fact that INEPT Control is open, the elevator will only take you to floors F, G, H, and 1. Pushing any other button activates a recording that says, "You have requested access to a level that is closed at this time, and has always been closed at this time. Please stand in front of the camera. Face the camera, then turn slowly from side to side. Thank you for your cooperation."

During the working day, the schedule for INEPT Control is very full, allowing them to better promote their loyal, efficient and productive image. The day is full of meetings and conferences, especially between Vlad-I and

anyone he can grab. In between meetings, workers are supposed to file forms, update records, check and approve supply requisitions, and generally keep things running smoothly. To read their job descriptions, you'd never know they were only so many fifth wheels.

Perhaps of greatest concern to players is the procedure for transferring into or out of INEPT, whether they do so by choice or under official orders. This is a long and arduous process, though not noticeably more so than any bureaucratic procedure in Alpha. Since INEPT is considered to be a non-hazardous assignment, any Troubleshooter who applies to be transferred in gets three treason (or sedition) points for cowardice and suspicion of lack of enthusiasm. Players applying to transfer out get one treason point for recklessness and not wanting to help citizens in need. Note that treason point awards apply whether or not the transfer is approved.

None of the regular activities are all that interesting. Staffers look spiffy, pass papers around, dictate memos, type memos, read memos, rubber stamp requests, rubber stamp responses, rubber stamp each other's rubber stamps, and do all the other functions expected of useless bureaucrats.

This should be terminally boring to players.

Instead, players should look forward to the occasional unscheduled activities. INEPT Troubleshooters are no different than any others in terms of hotheaded laser drilling, and paperwork is a well-known irritant.

Several times a MEAT Wagon has taken a short cut up the elevator and through the lobby, screaming across the floor like the apocalypse. It has also happened that driver confusion has resulted in MEAT Wagons taking the elevator to the lounge area or other places in the building.

Note that these two events commonly occur together whenever a controversial departmental policy triggers spontaneous argument and therefore a mass-casualty situation. And just think

if two MEAT Wagons collided at a time like that ...

INEPT Control, being less heavily guarded than Troubleshooter headquarters, is also the target of raids by smaller or less brave hit squads. Such inexperienced traitors often use cliche assaults like time bombs or the frontal assault, but Pandemonium still results.

INEPT Dealings

Most Troubleshooters, at one time or another, will have to deal with an INEPT Control Base at one time or another. If they aren't transferred there, they will probably be instructed to call INEPT when a team emergency arises.

When this happens, gamemasters need to remember two things about INEPT: one, they are paranoid about budget cuts, so they will "do their jobs" to the best of their abilities, and two, they aren't really sure what they are *supposed* to be doing at any given time, and so will try to bluster their way through a crisis.

They've gotten good at that, at least.

While somewhat gruesome, MemoMax is the way to go ... er, "come back" ... for most Citizens.

Chapter Nine
INEPT Dispatch

Dispatch handles all the calls that Troubleshooter Teams place to INEPT. If the nature of the call is beyond mere injuries (i.e., there's collateral damage in an explosives factory) or if INEPT is stretched too thin, Dispatch alerts one of the "look-alike" services to handle the call. Thus characters may call for INEPT and get the Fire Department or Dial 116 or someone else. This, of course, is strictly treason, but the less popular services are glad of the business and are thus willing to keep their mouths shut.

Inside INEPT Emergency Dispatch, you'll find a small room crammed with every conceivable electronic communication and tracking device. Between the equipment, cables, output strips, posters, notices, paperwork, manuals, and leftover meals everywhere, the room looks like several pounds of explosives were recently detonated. Several citizens of various clearances lounge around apathetically. Could it be that the lives of Troubleshooters everywhere depend on these people?

Well, yes. Actually, Dispatch is a capable group of Troubleshooters. Those who work here are officially referred to as Dispatch Intermediary Personnel (DIPs). Despite the apparent chaos of their surroundings, they know the location of every piece of equipment in the room, although they might have to dig a little.

INEPT Emergency Dispatch is equipped with every communication and tracking device in Alpha, as well as a few experimental ones. These are scattered around the room, the organization being more chronological and space-available as opposed to, say, logical or coherent. Dispatch is patched in to the Alpha atlas database, and has remote monitors for every device carried by the MEAT Wagon.

The INEPT DIPs are almost always frantically bored; there's nothing for them to do during their shift but sit and wait for a Troubleshooter to get injured badly. This happens just often enough to keep them from going bonkers.

Troubleshooter Ogul-I-NNG-3 strolls into the DIPs lounge. Being new to the DIPs, he wants to make a good impression on his new teammates. Looking around, he sees several other DIPs, veterans by the look of them, sitting and standing in a semi-circle around a monitor. One DIP is apparently trying to manipulate the monitor to receive a picture.

Suddenly, a cheer goes up; the monitor has come to life, and it is showing a corridor of Alpha Complex.

Ogul-I is confused. Why are the other DIPs so engrossed in this show? Is it a rerun of Teela O'Malley? Or an episode of Hairaldo? No, he determines, it is just an empty corridor.

"What's all the excitement about?"

One of the DIPs turns to face Ogul-I and says, "Shhh — it could happen any minute!"

"What could happen?"

The DIP turns back to the set but answers in a whisper, "We got a tip that a group of Troubleshooters was heading into Sector DED, and we heard that a renegade warbot has been spotted in that area."

"Oh," Ogul begins to understand, "and the Troubleshooters are after the warbot?"

Turning around to face Ogul, the DIP sneers, "of course not; that's why we're excited!"

Now Ogul-I is confused again, "don't you think we should warn them?"

The entire host of veterans turns towards Ogul-I, expressions of disgust on their faces. As one, they say, "are you *nuts*?!"

Ogul-I is saved from further embarrassment by a sudden wave of sound from the monitor. Explosions and gunfire! Mass mayhem! "Whoopee!" scream the DIPs. Almost simultaneously, the red lights and alarms in the lounge are activated.

"We've got one!" Scream the DIPs as they head for the MEAT Wagon.

Ogul-I-NNG is almost caught in the rush when the first DIP to address him grabs his arm and screams, "welcome to INEPT, Citizen!" And then he is dragged along by the crowd.

DIP In Code

The Alpha Complex Municipal Code does them too much honor by stating, "INEPT Emergency Dispatch calmly and quickly processes all calls for aid, and sends assistance by the most efficient means possible while standing by to provide further guidance as necessary."

Actually, calls for assistance are processed as slowly as is merited by the injured parties and their mission — and the DIPs' relative boredom level — thereby allowing the DIPs to savor the moment to its fullest extent. Personal motivations are served as much as possible without risking personal or departmental reprimands.

There are several DIPs who appear, for whatever reason, to have a permanent post in Emergency Dispatch. This position has brought out one common character trait in every one of them: a jealous loyalty to their job and the department. They stand for no backseat dispatchers. Low clearance ingrates will be forcibly removed. Higher
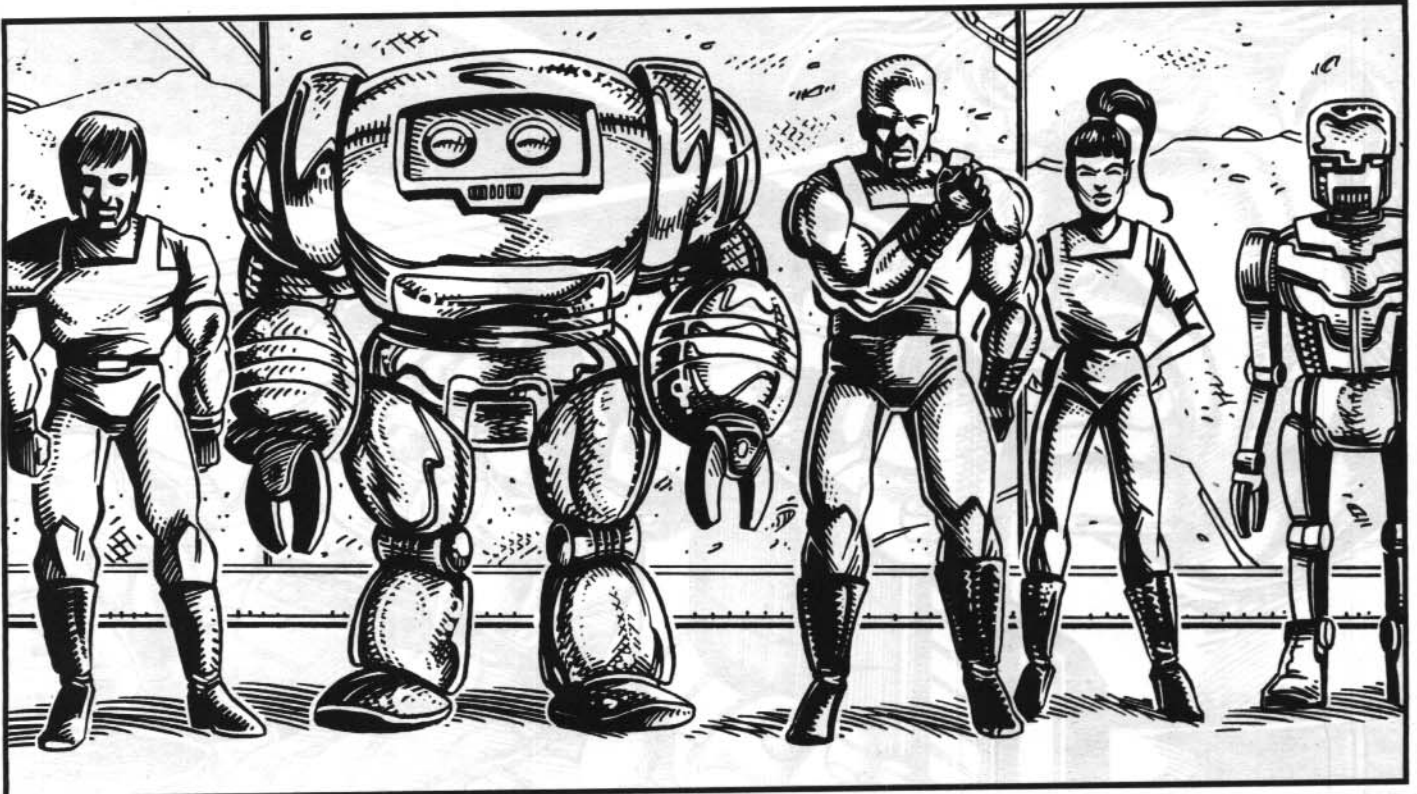
The few, the proud, the borderline psychotic.

clearance know-it-alls will be graciously and politely put in control, at which time all the DIPs go for an extended lunch. "Out of department expert" to the DIPs means "someone to hold the bag."

Anyway, two examples of permanent staffers in Dispatch are:

Victor-G-RAD-4: OPD Sector Dispatch

Although Victor-G is the head of Dispatch, he still must report to INEPT Control, and, of course, The Always-Too-Involved Council (OPD is in Alpha Base). Unknown to everyone (here, at least,) Victor-G's job prior to being a Troubleshooter had been as a Field Surveyor for the Council-endorsed Clone Arranger Gene Mapping Program. His inconsistent reports got him into some hot water and he lacked the power to cover his tracks so, in self-defense, his fellow Mutons (fellow, you say? my, my) transferred him out. He spent a very *Paranoid* year in the Troubleshooters, always awaiting the CIA. His hard work and clever back-stabbing finally paid off,

however, and now he finds himself with quite a bit of political power, which he defends fiercely. Victor-G, being the ranking member, handles all the really dangerous calls, especially when the TWIT Team must transport a dangerous mutant. These calls get smoothly re-routed to a Muton Safe House camouflaged as an emergency room.

Victor-G hates his superiors, and wants to get INEPT Control deleted as an unnecessary board, so he can head the whole INEPT Department himself. He always wears green reflec to work, and always carries his laser rifle in his lap, pointing in the direction of the door. He allows no one to bring anything besides laser pistols into the room.

Victor-G-RAD-4

Hypersenses **P**10
Muton 8th degree
S10 **E**11 **A**6 **D**14 **M**18 **C**16 **MA**8
Armor: Green L4
Laser Rifle 15
Fast Talk 7 Surveillance 16
Security 9

Raed-Y-ODJ-2: Communications

Raed-Y-ODJ-2 is far and away the Troubleshooters' least favorite DIP, and for good reason. When he broadcasts, his already unpleasant voice is affected to such a stylized extreme that even bots find it unendurable. Top that with ten-minute responses to questions, inane humor and a small variety of over-worked cliches, and the only thing that would make it worse would be if Raed-Y were perpetually deliriously happy. He is, of course, because as a hopeless Romantic, he styles his entire existence after 1950's disk jockeys. Gag. Here's a sample of Raed-Y taking a call. Those of you with weaker stomachs can skip this section:

Buzzzzz!

"Hey, hey, *hey*, and good evening, rockers and rollers, and thank *YOU* for tuning in to get the latest and greatest news and views on the action, impaction, fraction, and traction that goes on here in wonderful Alpha Base, dig it? I sure hope not, 'cuz if you've gotta dig, the patient must be in pretty bad

"What do you mean 'Friendly Fire?'"

shape! Ha-ha, so grab your gurneys and … oh, I can see by my little red light a winkin' and a blinkin' that I got a call! Heeelllllooooooo there, Mister Com Unit, this here's Raed-Y-ODJ-2, and I'm sayin' where they're layin' so get 'em payin' or they'll just be stayin' and a prayin', and we all know that prayin' is sedition, and there's no condition for sedition 'cuz it's the season for pleasin' your friends and mine, The Glorious Council, whose *wonderful* support has made this program possible. For a few words from our sponsors, just help yourself to any of the anti-Computer rallies held regularly at …"

Notice how he never got to the call? You did, huh? Well, that patient died, and the the TWITs all got fined. Raed-Y didn't, though, because The Council really loves his enthusiasm and servile attitude, not to mention all the good advertising.

Raed-Y also tends to tell those in INEPT Control all the bad little things that happen in Emergency Dispatch. Raed-Y's not intentionally ratting on

his coworkers (he isn't that bright); he's just a loose-lipped braggart and whiner. This really irritates his coworkers, who have all had close calls with the CIA. The only way they can fight this is to do their best to keep Raed-Y uninvolved and uninformed. Fortunately, the more liked he is by the Council, the less he's actually on the air — at the moment he's only on about a quarter of the daycycle. His substitutes are not nearly as … energetic, but they get the job done.

When on the job, Raed-Y wears naugahyde armor and "shades"; normal glasses painted pitch black. Makes him blind as a bat, but he doesn't mind unless he falls off his chair while spinning.

Raed-Y-ODJ-2

Regeneration **P7**
Romantics 3rd degree
S12 **E**14 **A**3 **D**11 **M**6 **C**13 **MA**10
Armor: I1L1   *Laser Pistol 2*
Con 7 Oratory 9 Motivation 5
Spurious Logic 8

How Things Work (Or Not)

On paper, the INEPT Dispatch procedures look flawless. A dispatcher answers the call, takes down the required information, and activates a TWIT Team, and, with the detailed information, he directs them via the fastest route to the injured party. Likewise, the dispatcher directs them back to the hospital, or the emergency room if the patient is in a bad way, taking care to avoid construction sites, etc.

Sadly, the Troubleshooters never

GO AHEAD;
IT'S YOUR
PLASTICRED

seem to have it that easy. Assuming the DIPs are not all out to eat a meal, they (those other than Raed-Y) typically answer each call with a calm, serene, and annoyingly unhurried voice that gets all the vital information necessary to the call: caller's name; patient's name(s); location; extent and type of injuries; location of patient(s); location of caller; mission reference number; whether anyone is a Commie, mutant or traitor; current activity at the site; etc., etc., etc. This delay results in the deaths of those patients who would not have survived being transported, which incidentally also saves the INEPT survival statistics. The DIP then activates a MEAT Wagon Team and gives them a code name (Mission Alert! Activate Team One, handle "Turkeyneck," proceed to Sector ABC, coordinates …"), and directs them to their destination. The route taken depends on the relations between the DIP and the Troubleshooter. The worse the relations, the more "interesting" the route.

Oddly enough, the route seldom depends on the amount of hostile activity in the area; DIPs and MEAT Wagon crews alike are notoriously blasé about taking a MEAT Wagon though a war zone. They'll get there, through HEL or High Programmers, and they'll get back.

Even if you have to FED-X the pieces …

TWIT: Dispatch, this is Vat Dreg. We have arrived, transporting three with autocar tracks across chest, Code 1, over.

DIP: We copy, proceed vector 300 mark 5 to on-ramp, Code 2, over.

TWIT: Copy, Dispatch, Vat Dreg out.

Translation: The Driver, Vat Dreg-O-CRD, is telling the DIP on communications that there are three live patients with autocar tracks across their chests in the MEAT Wagon. He bets that one out of the three will die before they arrive.

The DIP gives the Driver a route to travel and bets that two patients will "pass on" by the time they arrive at the emergency room.

Obviously, the Driver seems to have an advantage: he's seen the patients. However, he will not lie about the patients' injuries, nor will he or his team kill them to win the bet (well, not usually …). The DIP, however, will try to mislead or confuse the Driver with obscure (but viable) routes back to the hospital. This is considered fair, as long as the route can be traversed by the MEAT Wagon and does lead more or less directly to the hospital.

The Driver, of course, can override and take another route, so it is a matter or "bluff-and-bluff-again" between the MEAT Wagon and the DIP Communications Officer. Remember: nobody collects any creds if the MEAT Wagon doesn't make it back at all.

Betting makes the runs even more interesting. Only the particular DIP and the MEAT Wagon Driver are involved in the betting, and they use the honored "Code" betting system; each code number equals the death of one patient. Bets are five credits each, and are laid when the TWIT Team arrives at the site.

Overall, the DIPs (with notable exceptions) do make an effort to get in-jured citizens to a HURT with reasonable speed. They are a little callous and mercenary at times, and they can be very vain and petty, but they are very aware that their jobs are at stake and an inefficient DIP gets transferred out to the Troubleshooters … and they always seem to know who he is, too.

Chapter Ten
The MEAT Wagon and Crew

This is Alpha's answer to the twentieth century ambulance. The vehicle itself is a Medical Emergency Aid and Transport vehicle, usually referred to as a MEAT Wagon. Those in the MEAT Wagon are Troubleshooters who have received in-depth schooling on field medicine — hence they are called Troubleshooters With Intensive Training, or TWITs.

The MEAT Wagon, designed by Amb-U-LNC-6, is an intelligent autovan with lots of gear attached in various areas. Painted on the side is a giant INEPT emblem, and the motto, "We're INEPT; We're Here to Help."

Although enough survived the Crash to equip INEPT Teams both in Alpha Base and Alpha Complex, the MEAT Wagons, like most items permanently assigned to Troubleshooters, are a showplace in creative maintenance. These cruelly battered vehicles show every mile they've been driven, and the various repairs and customizations have removed any trace of uniformity. Nonetheless, there is a lot of equipment you could expect to find on every MEAT Wagon.

Full Combat Chassis: MEAT Wagons are heavily armored, built for ramming, and able to take terrific punishment.

Weaponry: A hatch directly above the passenger seat leads to some form of heavy firepower. Paired autolasers or slugthrowers are most common, but cone rifles are not unheard of. Weapons facilitate removing a patient from the immediate vicinity of trigger-happy citizens (a very common occurrence). It's also useful for creating a supply of patients whenever budget apportionment is approaching.

Bot Brain I/O Ports: There are video sensors, speakers and microphones mounted here and there, inside and out. A Standard Data Port is mounted near the fuel intake.

Gurney: A stretcher with a collapsible wheeled undercarriage. You can supposedly lock the undercarriage to keep it from collapsing. You can supposedly lock the wheels to keep it from rolling. It comes with restraints which very effectively keep the patient from rolling.

Stretcher Scoop: Mounted on the rear of the vehicle, it's like a loader on a garbage truck. It comes in handy when you've got to load a lot of people very quickly, or when the cross-fire is too heavy to leave the relative safety of the MEAT Wagon. Note: MEAT Wagon crews *never* attempt to use the Stretcher Scoop on patients while travelling at a high rate of speed. Ever.

Revolving Extendible Grasper: This mechanical arm is mounted on the rear of the top of the MEAT Wagon. It is usually used to grab upright patients or valuable cargo, but innovative TWITs can pluck annoying teammates out of the turret and bang them on the ceiling or something.

Back Doors: True to Hollywood cinema, the latches on these doors are notorious for swinging open when the MEAT Wagon is heading up a slope. See "Gurney," above.

InstaPlaster: Is it a cast or a straight jacket? It's both! Research based on the crusty rings found around the interior of food vats culminated in the development of a super-fast plaster. Since it hardens in mere seconds, it's great for immobilizing broken limbs. Creative TWITs rapidly learned to immobilize overactive jaws and pacify recalcitrant patients.

Oxygen: Yes, very flammable (or is that *in*flammable?), but also very beneficial to the severely injured. Oxygen, like the other gases, is stored in a pressurized tank and administered by attaching a mask to the outlet line. The pressurized tanks, incidentally, explode with incredible force if ruptured.

Nitrous Oxide: Laughing gas. Helps to curb the actions of patients who are not very understanding. It also makes work more enjoyable for the beleaguered TWIT. Sorry, though, the oxygen and nitrous tanks are well marked. No chance of confusing one for the other. But the lines leading to the *mask* often get tangled ...

Ammonia: Poisonous but aromatic, this stuff is great for waking up the unconscious. If you gave a corpse a whole lung full, you could probably revive him just in time for him to die again. Sadly, neither nitrous nor ammonia are flammable. But then again, if none of your players is strong in chemistry, who's ever gonna know?

Quadro-Clamp Oxygen Mask: This is used for the administration of any gas. It covers the face, and has eight "fingers" that lock the mask permanener, *quite securely* on the patient's head. The intake hose wraps around the patient's neck so as to avoid entangling the other limbs.

Splints: Made of hard plastic, they always seem to be a half meter longer than the limb being splinted. In other words, they bump things. Older models of splints were made of metal. They were abandoned because they were easily magnetized. But gosh, plastic shortages are still a chronic problem in Post-Crash Alpha.

Bandages: Every MEAT Wagon has rolls and rolls of bandages. With all the variety, a TWIT could make anyone look like a designer mummy. Bandages come unraveled often, trailing behind just waiting to snag on something.

Monitors: The MEAT Wagon has 'em all! Monitors for the heart, blood pres-

sure, lungs, eyes, brain activity, hemoglobin, plasma, kidneys, body temperature, digestive disorders, relative humidity, stock market, and who knows what all else. Detaching a monitor can be done very quickly, but effects are analogous to those caused by removing brain probes by yanking on the wire.

Anesthetic Hammer: Most true anesthetics are very high-clearance drugs, and INEPT is not allowed to have most of them. Thus, the presence of a heavy rubber mallet ensures that any patient who needs it may be quickly and easily anesthetized. See "Nitrous Oxide" for other ways to keep your patients cooperative.

Nuclear No-Doz: This is a super stimulant which is employed purely to save INEPT's statistics. When the patient is dead on arrival, this drug is used to force his body to function for a few more minutes, after which it shuts down for good. Thus, the patient officially dies in the hospital, though some have been known to actually revive.
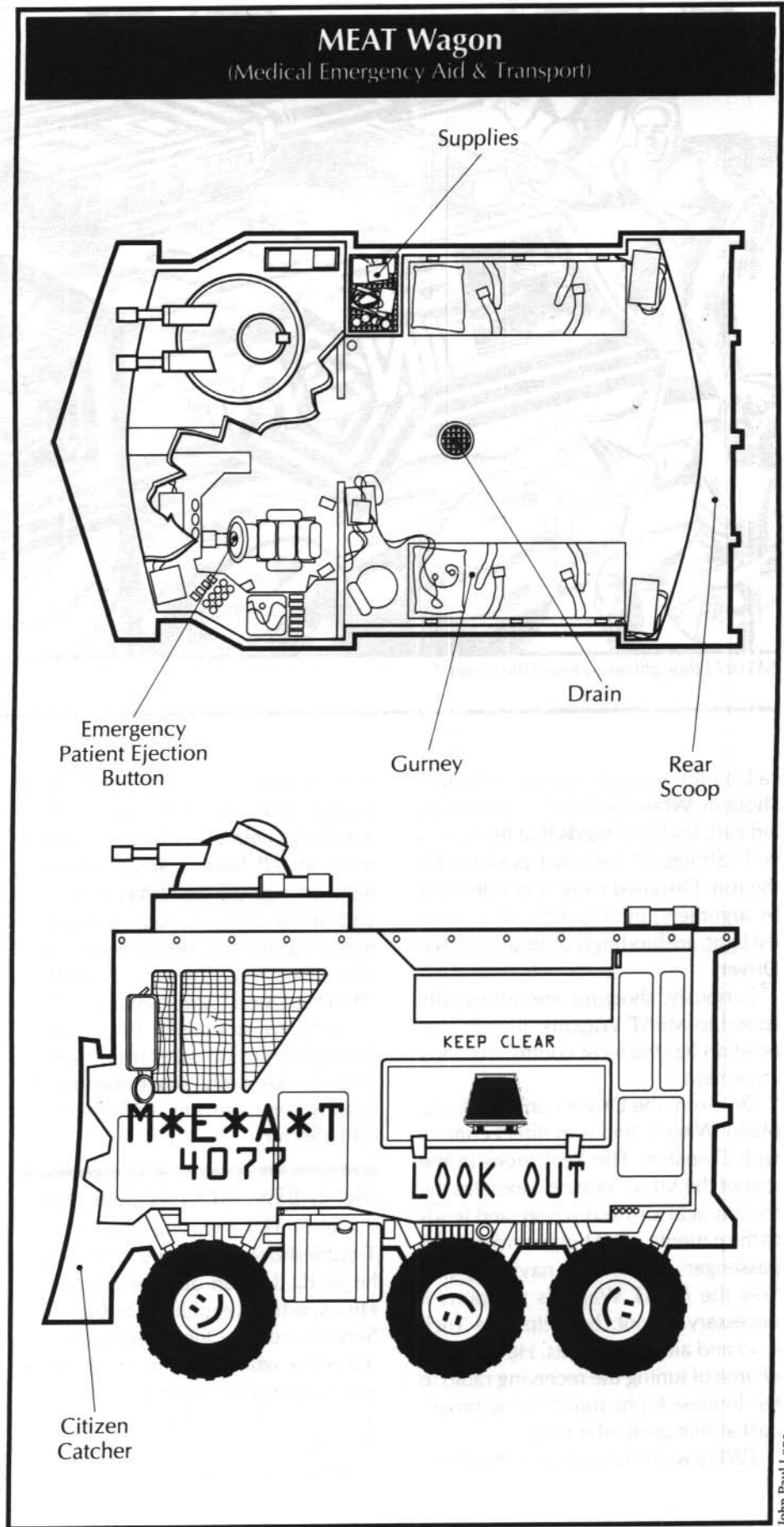
MEAT Marketing

Wanna hear a joke? How 'bout this: "INEPT TWITs provide fast, reliable, comfortable, courteous, safe, and stress-free field care for any injured citizen, while promptly bringing the patient to the nearest hospital." Isn't that a scream? Well, yes; I suppose it is.
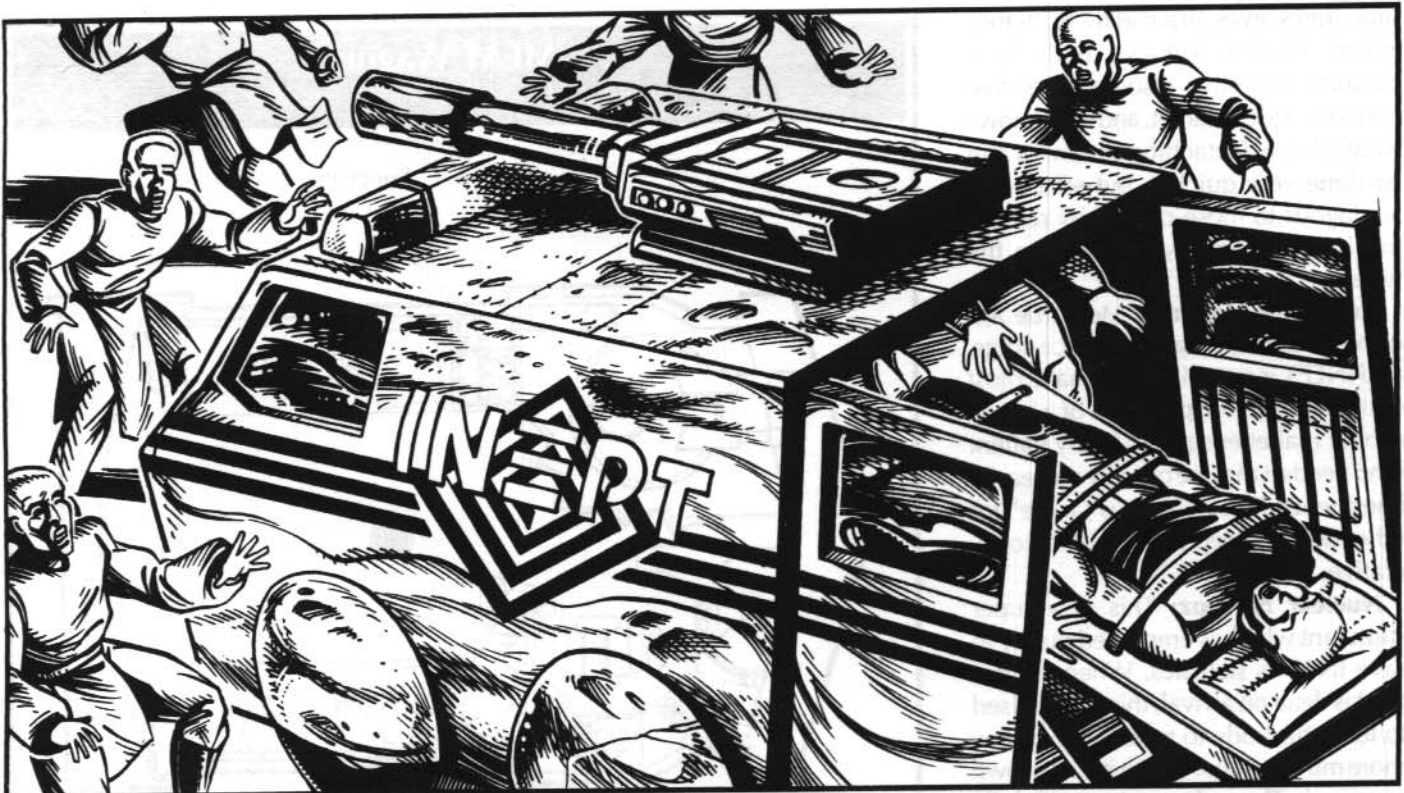
This particular entry in the Alpha Complex Municipal Code is farther off-base than most other entries (with the notable exception of the Cafeteria). Remember, everyone in INEPT is a reassigned Troubleshooter, so any ambulance run is going to be as fast and violent as possible. True, swift and skilled medical care is provided, but would you feel safe or relaxed if you were being tended by Troubleshooters?

The INEPT TWITs

There are three TWITs per MEAT Wagon. The first position is the Driver, the second is the Tech (a fancy name with no real meaning), and the third is

MEAT Wagon
(Medical Emergency Aid & Transport)

Supplies

Drain

Emergency Patient Ejection Button

Gurney

Rear Scoop

KEEP CLEAR

M*E*A*T 4077

LOOK OUT

Citizen Catcher

John Paul Lona

"What? I thought you closed the doors!"

called, for reasons lost to antiquity, Shotgun. When the TWIT Team gets an aid call, tradition holds that the first to yell "Shotgun!" gets that position for the run. Disputed calls, if not decided by argument, intimidation, or a quick fist fight, are bindingly arbitrated by the Driver.

Curiously, shotguns are not usually issued to MEAT Wagons, though that position has the most control over any armament.

· On a run, the Driver commands the MEAT Wagon, and is in direct contact with Dispatch. The Tech rides in the rear of the MEAT Wagon, operates the mechanical arm and scoop, and tends to the patients. The Shotgun rides in the passenger seat, helps navigate, and fires the MEAT Wagon's weapons if necessary. If not, he helps the Tech load and aid the patients. He is also in charge of tuning the receiving radio to the loudest Alpha music being broadcast at that particular time.

TWITs wear standardized INEPT ar-mor when on runs; a stiff plastic mesh mostly covered with reflec. Their matching helmets, made of similar material, all have a small revolving light on top (in the TWIT's security clearance) and a "visual reassurance phrase" printed on the forehead — stuff like "Death Is Treason," "Relax," "Breathe Deep," and "Smile Or Else."

There are a couple TWITs, who, through long and meritorious service (and occasionally other means) are usually seen on duty with INEPT in OPD Sector.

Mel-G-BSN: MEAT Wagon Driver

Mel-G-BSN-4 was transferred to the Troubleshooters from the CIA, where he worked as an autocar patrolman. His expertise is explained by his Power Services cover. One of his knees was injured a while back in an accident, but the limp does not impair his driving ability. He does not abide enemies of the Council at all, whether their sedi-tion is proven or rumored, and refuses to transport them (actually, he tends to back over them).

Mel-G has a devotion to CIA that borders on fanaticism. CIA agents get priority over all others, period. The only thing that makes him crazier than an attack on a CIA agent is having to transport a mutant (registered or not) — then things *really* get interesting.

He generally comes across as being hostile and arrogant, and he'll take no affront to his ability or judgement. Con-versely, he has a way with derelict or forgotten bots, (those bots whose exist-ences are obsolete or no longer on file,) and he usually can be seen with some small petbot that he has carefully re-programmed to protect himself and his MEAT Wagon, in that order.

In spite of his little quirks, he's by far the best INEPT Driver in Alpha, and often gets called out when the patient is a Troubleshooter trapped amongst vast hordes of motorcycle-riding ren-egades or some such.

Mel-G's helmet has "Trust Me" writ-ten on it.

> **Mel-G:** What's going on here?
>
> **CIAgent:** That guy ran over my toe. I think he did it on purpose, so I gunned him a good one!
>
> **Patient** (*bleeding badly*): That's not true! He stepped out in front of me and …
>
> **Mel-G:** Oh, that looks bad! You all right?
>
> **CIA:** Well, my foot hurts.
>
> **Mel-G:** Fine. Into the back. I'm going to put you in isolation; that bad toe might be contagious.
>
> **Patient** (*coughing*): Hey, listen here, you stupid TWIT! Let me talk to someone in charge!
>
> **Mel-G:** You want to get out of here? You talk to me. (*chains patient's ankle to rear fender.*) Here's a hacksaw, in case you change your mind about being transported. Lie still, now, and you won't get as much road rash. (*vroom!*)

Mel-G-BSN-4

Precognition **P**7
Anti-Mutant 9th degree
S12 **E**18 **A**11 **D**16 **M**10 **C**11 **MA**13
Armor: Green L3I2P1
Slugthrwr (HE) 14
Motivat 9 *Autocar* 24
Petbot O&R 18

Bolsh-O-VIK-1: An Experienced Tech

Bolsh-O-VIK-1, besides being a respected TWIT, is one of the most successful Communists in Alpha (i.e., he's alive). Whenever INEPT is called out for a run with only one patient, Bolsh-O lets the other TWIT call "Shotgun" first.

At the scene, Bolsh-O makes sure that the patient's life is not in imminent danger, and, if not, that the patient is strapped securely to the gurney. He also places a "bite stick" in the patient's mouth, effectively gagging him.

Once in the back of the MEAT Wagon, Bolsh-O leans over to the unfortunate victim with a smile and says in a thick basso Russkie voice, "Wolcome to beink with me, tragically undereducated citizen. I am must to read to you this ferst before treatink you, so you to be properly indoctr — *educated!* Are you ready and willink to listen?" If not, Bolsh-O pokes him roughly in the ribs and says, "Nyet? This is werry improtant! Willink to lend attentiyon good now?" If still no, Bolsh-O pokes the patient very roughly in the eye and asks again. And again. Should anyone manage to ask why he must listen, Bolsh-O smiles and says, "Is requirement by CIA."

Bolsh-O will not treat any non life-threatening injuries at all until the patient agrees to listen. He then proceeds to read extracts from *Das Kapital*, *The Communist Manifesto*, *Pravda*, and *The Little Red Caboose*. When he finishes, he smiles and says, "You must now dyemonstrate your undarstendink. Tyell me what is learnt." At this point he removes the gag stick. If the patient cannot demonstrate that he has retained at least part of the lecture, Bolsh-O sighs very heavily, saying, "Is pity am nyot allowed to madication you yet, comrade. I try agyen."

Is there any way to save your life without being indoctrinated? Of course! All you have to do is fake your knowledge of Communist propaganda. A successful *con* roll suffices, as may *fast talk*, *bribery*, or other skills under the right situation.

After finishing his instruction, Bolsh-O treats the patient quickly and skillfully.

Bolsh-O carries a scimitar, and wears a red kerchief. His suit has red piping, and emblazoned on his helmet is, "Please Don't Scream."

Of course, Bolsh-O covers his own little red … caboose. He tapes the entire conversation and, if a patient attempts to turn him in, he turns the tape over to Mel-G. Mel-G firmly believes that Bolsh-O is a covert CIAgent assigned to the MEAT Wagon and holds him in the highest respect. Likewise, the CIA of OPD Sector so respects (and fears) Mel-G that they take his word without question.

Translation: anything the patient says is sedition; anything that Bolsh-O does is a brave attempt at routing out conspirators against the Council.

Bolsh-O-VIK-1

Charm **P**16
Communist 16th degree
S19 **E**20 **A**15 **D**5 **M**9 **C**13 **MA**8
Armor: Orange L3I2P1
Scimitar 11
Medicine 9 *CommieProp* 14
Psychescan 6

Acting Like a TWIT

We all know what the arrival of an ambulance is supposed to be like: fast, efficient, clean-cut medics; direct and appropriate questions delivered in a calm voice; high regard for a patient's comfort and security; and, of course, careful, skilled treatment of injuries. Can't get much less fun than that in *Paranoia*. Isn't it wonderful that INEPT TWITs don't have to simper like that? After all, INEPT TWITs are Troubleshooters. Such craven attitudes would be bad for morale.

TWITs always assume they're in a combat zone. And, since each TWIT rides with two others, and since they're frequently sent out to aid other Troubleshooters, they're usually right. The second most disconcerting thing that can happen when a MEAT Wagon pulls up is for one of the TWITs to kneel beside you and start to ask you questions, only to have his chest ripped wide open by the automatic lasers on the turret of the MEAT Wagon. But this almost never happens. Certainly no more often than with regular Troubleshooters.

There are, of course, occasions when more than one MEAT Wagon shows up at the scene of an accident — especially near the borders of Sectors or when a high-clearance patient is involved. Generally, the two crews work out the mix-up with the efficiency famous in Alpha.

Yeah, that's right; they shoot it out.

Chapter Eleven
Hospital Urgent Reception Terminal

... *aka* The Emergency Room

The HURTs are a relatively recent addition to the Hospitals of Alpha, and the appearance of each HURT certainly suggests that it was an afterthought. Overall, the impression is one of being a dingy, permanent/temporary structure wedged claustrophobically between other architecture, eventually due to be replaced by something bigger, more efficient, and cleaner.

Typically, a HURT has low ceilings a little over two meters high. The ceiling beams are visible, and there is no paneling on the walls. The only things bearing any resemblance to chairs are several long hard plastic benches scattered haphazardly about. Lighting is provided by an overwhelming number of revolving lights (acquired from overstocked inventory), and the bulbs therein vary greatly as to power and color.

Usually there are quite a few citizens sitting around HURTing, or, as another slang phrase puts it, "Going Terminal." These citizens can be found in almost every state of disrepair, from an emaciated Infrared who has been waiting two full daycycles for treatment, to a

citizen gushing blood from her severed arm ("I'm sorry; you'll just have to wait your turn"), to a Council Chairman with no visible injuries, to a Commie's skeleton still awaiting admission as soon as the waiting list dries up.

There is a secretarial window at the far end of the room, usually unattended. A sign below says (in faded, nearly illegible print) "Please check in before sitting."

Why They HURT So Badly

Of the HURT, the Municipal Code has this to say: "The Hospital Urgent Receiving Terminal (HURT) is a recent addition to the hospitals, enabling citizens with serious injuries to be rapidly and effectively treated and admitted to the hospitals for recovery."

That was during the daycycles of socialized medicine. All two of them. In these free market times, the HURT has fallen away from its original purpose. Now, its main purpose is to treat (and charge) citizens with minor problems not requiring hospitalization, and to take breaks as often as possible. Of course, serious cases will be treated quickly and efficiently, but realistically speaking, minor complaints swamp the HURT.

Naturally, this detracts from the serious cases. With both Alpha Base and Alpha Complex offering medical care to its citizens, just about anyone with an assurance policy goes to the HURT when they get a splinter. Then, when a seriously injured patient shows up, they have to compete with those more physically able for attention. Since the technicians and medics at any HURT are so woefully outnumbered by their patients, they lose a considerable number of

patients daily, and their patience is long gone.

We'll HURT You Good

All the staffers at the HURT wear regulation lab coats, and are almost always carrying a notebook or clipboard, as well as various diagnostic equipment like stethoscopes, blood pressure cuffs and portable brain monitors.

Hilde-G-ARD-5 is in charge of the OPD Sector HURT. Her job combines the duties of Head Nurse, Administrator, and Despot. She is truly massive, but as her mass is not flab, she is very intimidating. She wears a monocle, and she has a faintly visible growth of facial hair.

Although HURT employees are not allowed to wear armor, Hilde-G does so regularly, since she often deals with Troubleshooters — and she's tired of losing clones. Since she wears her armor under her uniform, it's usually not visible. So far, no one has had the courage to report her.
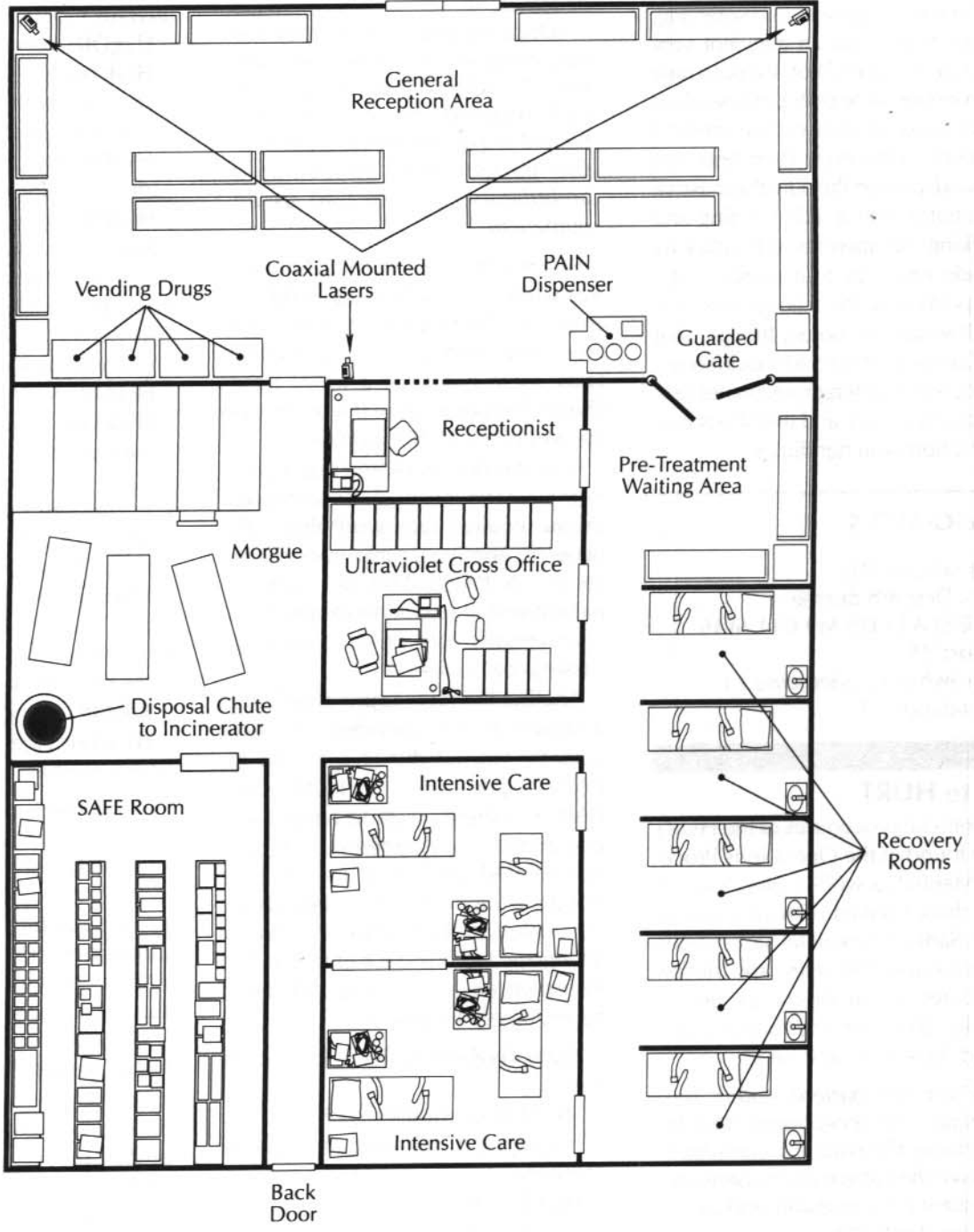
She has also blatantly disregarded the rule against weapons in a HURT, and is never seen anywhere without her neurowhip, which she has named "Tickles." All her staff members (except Infrareds) carry truncheons, which Hilde-G always calls "Funny-Boners." These innocuous names do much to avoid official persecution.

Hilde-G is a top-notch administrator — as far as that goes in Alpha Base. She has absolute control over those within her HURT and makes sure that all proper procedures are carried out. Even higher security clearance citizens need to work to intimidate Hilde-G in her environment. Hilde-G does have two

CALLING
DOCBOT K/C.
CALLING
DOCBOT K/C.

HURT
(Hospital Urgent Reception Terminal)

General
Reception Area

Coaxial Mounted
Lasers

PAIN
Dispenser

Vending Drugs

Guarded
Gate

Receptionist

Pre-Treatment
Waiting Area

Morgue

Ultraviolet Cross Office

Disposal Chute
to Incinerator

Intensive Care

Recovery
Rooms

SAFE Room

Intensive Care

Back
Door

John Paul Lona

major weaknesses, however: she hates machines with a fanatical passion and she is vulnerable to bootlicking.

Should a bot accompany a patient into the HURT, she yells very loudly, "No bots allowed! Your radioactive emissions are fouling up our delicate equipment!" If the bot persists in disobeying, she'll see that it has an accident very quickly, or, if it's a *BIG* bot, she pulls rank to appropriate some of its peripherals to "replace parts on their critical medical equipment." However, even bots can get around (pardon the pun) the massive administrator with a little fawning and bootlicking. All attempts at *bootlicking* are made easier by four points, if the citizen performing the action seems "sincere." It should be noted, though, that Hilde-G is incredibly timid should someone succeed in pulling rank on her (unlikely, but possible), and that she is diligent and honest in her duties.

Hilde-G-ARD-5

Adrenal Cont **P**10
Frank Dest 4th degree
S17 **E**20 **A**13 **D**8 **M**9 **C**11 **MA**6
Armor: P3
Neurowhip 12 Medicine 13
Intimidation 11

How to HURT

The official procedures of the HURT can be found in the Operations Procedures Manual, a well-written and not overly thick booklet with very logical advice. Sadly, this booklet has not been in print for over 150 years, and the few torn copies left in Alpha are all but illegible. But, for the historically-minded, here is what it says:

"When the patient enters the Terminal, the receptionist should take down the patient's complaint and give the patient any paperwork necessary for admission and assist in filling it out. Patients with severe injuries are exempted from this step until their wounds have been cared for.

"Staff members should render any care required for the safety and/or comfort of the patient from the time

he/she enters the Terminal until such time as the physician on duty performs an examination. Complete and accurate records should be kept by the attending nurse on the patient's record sheet. Under no circumstances should any patient be left alone.

"Once the physician on duty has performed a full examination and seen that the patient receives any care required, he may refer the patient to a doctor in the hospital, or the patient may be declared ambulatory and released as an outpatient."

Sure seems nice, doesn't it? But that was written a long time ago, and new employees are taught the content of the procedures manual, and not the intent. Thus, there has been a lot of rather liberal interpretation of the booklet on the part of the HURT workers.

First, it is now accepted that there is no injury serious enough to merit avoiding the required paperwork (that's "Paperwork: Admittance Information/Necessary," or PAIN). Also, providing the patient with the paperwork and a pen is universally considered to fulfill the "assistance" clause.

Another liberal interpretation is that a patient is not considered to have actually entered the HURT until his PAIN is approved — obviously, since PAIN is a prerequisite to admittance, and admittance is entering, you have not entered until after you've gone through your PAIN. Thus, patients are not treated until after they've filled out a long and tedious stack of forms. And even then, any care received is likely to be extremely superficial.

Team Hygiene Officer: Ah, excuse me...

HURT Receptionist: Yes?

HygOff: Uh, we need to speak to someone...

HURTer: Whom?

HygOff: You?

HURTer: (*stares blankly, then comprehends*) May I assist you?

HygOff: Well, it's our teammate who needs help.

HURTer: What seems to be the problem?

HygOff: Our Robotics Officer has been coned in the face.

HURTer: Let him speak for himself! (*pause*) Is this true?

Team Robotics Officer: *gurgle*

HygOff: That means "yes."

HURTer: Well. Has your teammate filed his PAIN yet?

HygOff: (*confused*) Er, no?

HURTer: I see. Do you have any experience with PAIN?

RobOff: *gurgle*

HygOff: Pain? Sure, I dropped a grenade on my toe yesterday.

HURTer: No, I mean real PAIN — Paperwork: Admittance Information/Necessary. You must fill one out, our rules specifically state that you need PAIN to get HURT. Without approved PAIN, you have to leave.

HygOff: No PAIN, no gain, huh?

HURTer: Now, now; we don't do humor psychoanalysis here. Further, this is a Green clearance HURT, and you guys are Oranges. I can't admit your friend unless he has a special Security Bypass Licence.

HygOff: Hey, we got licences to HURT in our Troubleshooter Survival Kits. We're allowed to HURT. In fact, some of us do so quite often.

RobOff: *gurgle*

HURTer: Fine. Give me his licence, take a number, and be seated please.

The doctor's examination is likely to be perfunctory, with an almost predestined diagnosis based more on the HARM's current occupancy, availability of supplies, budgetary considerations, proximity to the end of the shift, political position of the patient, etc, than on actual symptoms.

All of this applies to the so-called "public patients." An obscure little clause in a completely outmoded section of the HURT procedures manual (dealing with geriatric patients, never seen these days) set the precedent for the distinction between patients from the public sector and private patients. All citizens injured on the job (including all Troubleshooters) or in extenuating circumstances (like a nearby reactor exploding) are considered public; in other words, definitions can and will be stretched to include

anybody. To be private, patients must either be very powerful, owed favors by HURT workers, or pay the "PAIN private cross-processing fee," which, depending on local economics, can run from 50 - 200 credits.

Private patients, since they benefit the HURT very directly, receive priority treatment at all times. Regardless of the situation. Period. Notwithstanding any exceptions you happen to think up.

Finally, although the HURT was originally intended to provide aid to all people regardless of power group, security clearance color, Secret Society, sex (or lack thereof), or mutation, things have changed there, too. For some obscure reason some HURT have been declared restricted areas. Thus, citizens may not be allowed to get HURT. Such citizens must either be escorted, or have some sort of privileges to enter. Most HURT staffers will be more than happy to "request a bypass form" for a patient provided he pays 10 credits per security level increase for "shipping and handling." Once the fee is paid, the citizen gets a temporary permit good for one visit, "pending approval of the request."

In most of Alpha, money talks. Some places it whispers, others it shouts. In a HURT, guaranteed payment (i.e. "creds on the bot head") screams like a Banshee Alarm System. Wave a few hundred creds in the direction of a HURT member's nose, and you'll be fixed right up, yessir.

Inflicting Standard HURT

Despite all appearances, the HURT really is here to keep people alive. Troubleshooters, being the major source of income for the HURT (Power Services being a close second), get preferential treatment. This does not mean that you have to be easy on your players. Heaven forbid. Here, then, is a standard encounter with the HURT.

When a patient arrives, the HURTers give her the PAIN. Successfully completing the PAIN requires an *average* skill roll on *spurious logic*, although proper application of *bootlicking, bribery*, or *intimidation* can get one admitted as well. Improper uses of these skills can get you evicted.

Next, guards strip the patient of all possessions, including armor, weapons, and any treasonous articles. These are carefully catalogued and stored in the heavily-secured Storage Area For Equipment (SAFE). This can be troublesome when the traitor the Troubleshooters have been chasing runs into a HURT and gets his critical evidence carefully locked away — or when evidence of Troubleshooter sedition is locked in the SAFE.

Then the patient is treated. The HURT can generally heal one damage level, sometimes two. The swiftness or sureness of the treatment depends primarily on whether or not the patient is considered "public" or "private."

Should a patient be critically enough injured to warrant extended hospitalization, the HURT can activate a clone and perform a MemoMax crossplant; swapping the memories of the two clones. They also transplant the patients' tongue tattoos along with the attendant layers of skin (Yowch!). This identity swap makes record-keeping a lot easier on the HURT, and it also makes their statistics look better. (In game terms, if the Troubleshooter has more than one remaining clone, the injured character is miraculously cured, and his last-numbered clone takes the lumps and sits in the hospital until cured.)

This tongue transplant has other possibilities for the enterprising young Troubleshooter. And given enough persuasion, anything is possible.

Finally, one must retrieve his effects from the SAFE. This can be done easily if one has not antagonized the HURTers. Occasionally, some items might be missing or damaged. Especially treasonous or seditious items, as one cannot reasonably file a complaint on these. Credits also tend to get miscounted and, if a Troubleshooter mentions this in passing, but does not indicate any particular desire to see said credits again, the HURT will remember him as a "good patient" and will act accordingly when he shows up again (the opposite is, of course, quite true also).

Chapter Twelve
The Happiness Emergency Line
Psychoanalysis Team

The HELP listing in the Alpha Complex Municipal Code is almost an advertisement: "If you suffer from uncontrollable treasonous urges, if you have unexplained and frightening thoughts, if you are a victim of Commie mutant manipulation or feel everyone's out to get you, call for HELP. HELP will talk to you personally, and help you cure yourself naturally. Call now before it's too late."

Put in normal English, this reads, "If you're normal, HELP provides you with a battery of drugs and devices designed to turn you into a "model citizen." (see also: "Vegetable.") "If you are not, HELP assists you in returning to that blissful state of happiness sought by all in Alpha." (see also: "Vegetable.")

What is HELP?

HELP is HPD&MC's plagiarism of INEPT and marginally imaginative extension of Mind Control Services. HELP was designed to make Alpha Complex a happier place, and, not so incidentally, to steal some thunder from IntSec by treating people with semi-treasonous thoughts *before* they become traitors.

There are many HELP Teams in Alpha Complex, each team comprised of two Mental Hygienists and their vehicle. Each team has their own distinct style, free thinking being the hallmark of HPD&MC, and one sample team is presented below.

The TWINKIEs

The HELP autocar, the Transport With Invasive Neurological Kyphosis Identification and Elimination vehicle, is more commonly known as the TWINKIE Mobile. It compares miserably in all respects to every other form of transportation in the complex. It is by no means as useful or efficient as the MEAT Wagon (the vehicle it sadly tries to imitate), but it is the best HELP can do.

The TWINKIE Mobile is similar to modern-day meter-reader cars, those small one-man three wheeled parambulators that resemble sewing machines more than anything. However, it's almost three meters long and a meter and a half wide. It has a small one-piston motor that redlines at twenty kph, and tends to stall on slight inclines. The front of the vehicle houses the engine and the driver, the rear has a rack for the field couch and a seat for the rider. The best thing that can be said of the TWINKIE's propulsion system is that it can accelerate downhill (of course, it just might not stop).

Who Rides a TWINKIE?

The rider sits between the driver and the patient, and has access to a variety of supplies carried on the right side of the vehicle. The left side of the vehicle is where the patient's field couch is strapped in, facing to the rear. He cannot see his analyst, nor where the TWINKIE Mobile is going, but he sure can see the equipment.

There is a field couch — just like any psychiatrist's couch — except it has straps and it's mounted on a collapsible stand like that of an ambulance gurney. Helps keep the patient still and easy to move. Most HELP crews have modified the couches further so that, when they are attacked by wrong-thinking citizens, they can roll the gurney out the back and use it for cover. Fortunately, it will usually spin sideways and flip over, covering the patient as well.

What's in a TWINKIE?

Each team carries its own gear, but most teams carry the following:

Brain Wash: This drug is canned, condensed Teela O'Malley videos, used to inspire acceptable Computer fervor in a patient. Overdose brings psychosis. (**Note:** Most HELP crews that work for Alpha Base and the Secret Society Council have old vidtapes of *I Love Lucy* which have been colorized, decolorized, washed, dried, and pressed.)

Brain Rinse: Removes all recent memory, including, usually, having called for HELP. (This, of course, is very fortunate for most HELP crews because of their inefficiency ratings.) "BR" has a strength of 10. Anytime a character injected with it tries to remember anything of any importance, the character must make a *Chutzpah* roll to overcome the BR. Of course, stressful situations don't help the character's concentration ...

Brain Spin: A disorienting drug which makes clones more susceptible to suggestion. Patient tends to spin himself in an attempt to keep up with his whirling thoughts. This can be lots of fun, because, even though the drug wears off after a few minutes, it does stay in the system for months — surfacing when the character is stressed out.

Brain Dry: Suppresses the ability to change the subject or think of other things. Excessive dosages remove all ability to respond to stimuli. A citizen receiving Brain Wash, Rinse, Spin, and Dry is said to be "laundered," and is a model to the community. A character who undergoes a Brain Dry can make any skill check at a bonus of four (because of his intense concentration). If you can get him to respond, of course ...

Brain Bleach: For full laundering, this removes all memory for the last few years or more. If too much is given, a citizen might forget how to read. Or breathe. It is basically like the BR, but it has a strength of 18.

Optic tube: For direct examination of the patient's brain. Uggh. I don't even want to describe this one.

Mental Floss: Euphemism for Lobotomy Wire. ("Suddenly... I'm not half the man I used to be ...") It's a melee weapon with a damage column of 12P

MFP: Recurrence of treasonous thought is thwarted (if deemed necessary) by Mental Fluoride Protection, the standard preventative used by HELP. Sadly, it is still experimental, and valid data are hard to get from those who've had it administered. Seems some Commie is trying to sabotage this important research project and scrambling all the test subjects' brains, effectively reconnecting all the neurons. Makes for some interesting conversation, though. Sometimes, it prevents you from doing treasonous things. Other times, you just do them without knowing it.

Trinitrotoluene: For those truly hopeless cases. Inserted via a skull drill and plug. This is known as "blowing someone's mind."

Most vehicles also carry minimal medical gear, with which they can patch together a patient while psychoanalyzing him. Oddly enough, most HELP crews, out of an urge for self-preservation, have gotten remarkably good at physical first aid and medical skills. Thus, it is with mixed feelings that a Troubleshooter Team greets a TWINKIE mobile.

HELP Text

Technically, HELP exists to assist citizens in nipping treason in the bud, just like hospitals are supposed to stop disease before it starts. Ho. Hah. Hee. Hyuk harharharhar snarf ... oh, uh, excuse me.

They're supposed to simply respond to calls from concerned citizens, discern their problem via careful and considerate questioning and transport them to whatever facility is most suited to their needs, all the while giving them basic psychological care.

These days, "basic psychological care" in Alpha Complex means what you and I refer to as "intensive chemical bombardment." Careful questioning is a euphemism for grilling. And almost every patient gets taken either to a re-educational facility or a termination center. But I state the obvious.

On the other hand, these guys are trained psychoanalysts. They'll fix you up, help you out, and even get rid of that damned *Communist Propaganda* skill you've been hiding all these years.

They're good for plot devices, asking leading questions and making observations about the clues your players have picked up but not figured out. They can do a lot of good. And they can do a lot of harm.

More HELP than You Could Ever Want

It's all well and good that whenever the players call for HELP they to show up, cart off a Troubleshooter and make him die horribly. It's good clean fun. But players rapidly learn to not call for HELP. So that's not all HELP does, nosirree.

Good HELP ain't hard to find. Remember, HELP was created in a purely political move. HPD&MC wants to nip treason both in the bud and beyond, whether the patient is a volunteer or not.

Every citizen that HPD&MC "steals" from IntSec and turns into a mental infant is a political victory as living proof that Mind Control is better than Coercion. In fact, every citizen HELP picks up can be turned into a political victory of some sort unless the Mental Hygienists really flub their work. That's why HELP is everywhere; they want the business.

Troubleshooters, for their high stress levels, are regular targets for HELP. This, of course, increases their stress levels.

HELP regularly monitors secret IntSec, Armed Forces, Search and Rescue, and Troubleshooter frequencies. They try to monitor all other communication in the sector. Any time they pick up a transmission indicating potential traitors, they immediately dispatch a unit. They'll show up at the most inopportune moments. Times like these:

• Armed Forces troopers are under fire. Ordered to secure the area, they are responsible for the safety of all civilians in the combat zone. In comes HELP, zooming into the middle of the crossfire, trying to question the traitors as to their motives.

• Search and Rescue troopers are sent to pick up a citizen for some reason. When they arrive, they find HELP has alerted the citizen, and he has taken both Mental Hygienists hostage.

• Troubleshooters on an investigation need to interrogate someone for secret society contacts. As they arrive, they see a Mental Hygienist dumping a barrel of Brain Bleach into a funnel in the citizen's ear.

• Internal Security is on a stakeout, trying to catch a very big illegal shipment. Complete surprise is achieved, and success looks imminent, when HELP shows up at the rendezvous point and scares away the traitors. No bust.

• Undercover Troubleshooters finally convince the gang they're infiltrating that they're legit. HELP shows up and begins interviews with everybody.

And whenever something untoward happens to your players' team, you can sure bet HELP will show up to do their bit. With HELP like that, who needs HARM?

Speaking of players ...

Any HPD&MC Troubleshooter will be issued some sort of signal device to

alert HELP when expecting to meet a traitor. This may steal any reward from the Troubleshooters, but the informant will be rewarded by his co-workers.

HELP also does some paralegal and illegal things, both with and without HPD&MC support. Transportation of stolen goods, kidnapping, running wanted criminals ("patriots") across checkpoints, etc. Players might either have to chase the TWINKIE Mobile, or perhaps they can bribe the operators to do this sort of service for them in a tight spot. HELP yourself.

A Little HELP

As stated, there are many two-man HELP teams. Here's one:

Freud-Y-CAT-3: Mental Hygienist extraordinaire and recent enrollee in Ego Enforcer school, Freud-Y has definitely got some balance problems. Freud-Y firmly believes that all humans are jealous of those with mutant powers (his "Power Envy" theory). His theory is more complicated than this, though, for, as an Anti-Mutant, he also believes that all mutants are evil, therefore all humans are jealous of mutants' evil powers. Freud-Y believes that psychological health comes only through purging one's self from heterogenetic urges, and being happy being pure. Freud-Y defends his thesis vehemently because he's pyrokinetic, and he loves to start little flames whenever he's alone. And you *KNOW* what they say about pyromaniacs ...

Anyway, when Freud-Y's got a patient, he'll ask all sorts of leading and suggestive questions designed to discover whether the patient is an unregistered mutant. Questions like:

"Zo, how offten do you vish you vere kloned a mutant inshtead of a veak human?"

"Did you vish to possess the one who kloned you, Oed-I-PUS-6, all to yourself?"

"Do you ever vish you could pen-

etrate someone's mind with an appendage of your own?"

If Freud-Y thinks he's got an unregistered mutant, he'll do everything in his pharmaceutical power to aid the poor misguided soul ruled by mutant hormones. Freud-Y believes registered mutants are on the road to recovery, and he'll try to help them cope.

Freud-Y: "Haf you ever been vorried zat everrybody has a bigger mutant power zan you?"

Mutant: Huh? I ain't no stinkin' mutant! (*grabs large brick with telekinesis and tries to slam Freud-Y from behind*).

Freud-Y: (*ducks as if he knew it was coming; the brick slams into the mutant's face*) "Ah, zo you are telekinetic. Do you ever vorry zat you can't get it up?"

Freud-Y-CAT-3	HPD&MC

Pyrokinesis **P**17
Anti-Mutant 4th degree
S6 **E**5 **A**9 **D**5 **M**18 **C**12 **MA**7
Armor: L4 P3 I3
Stungun 10
Biochemical Therapy 17
Interrogation 15

Loon-Y-BIN-4 is the driver. He is fat and dumpy, and constantly hitches his clothes asymmetrically. He always sweats and puffs. He's been at this job for fifteen years (Crash notwithstanding), and anymore he treats the patients like slabs of cold cuts. In his opinion, machines have caused all the destruction of humanity he sees daily. That's why he joined the Frankenstein Destroyers.

Ever since The Computer funded Freud-Y's research on his Power Envy theory, Loon-Y has had it in for his rider. He tries very hard to take turns too tight and spill Freud-Y onto the tarmac, but that's tough to do at such slow speeds. All of which compounds Loon-Y's frustration. He's as rough on the TWINKIE Mobile as can be.

Loon-Y tries to foment discord between humans and machines. He runs over people's feet and blames the automatic steering. He locks up the brakes and blames the vehicle spine. And whenever they're on a run, he tries to blame the patient's condition on the nearest machine. And he gets infuriated with Freud-Y's theory of "appliance envy."

Loon-Y-BIN-4	HPD&MC

Matter Eater **P**8
Frank Dest 9th degree
S9 **E**1 **A**4 **D**11 **M**10 **C**13 **MA**10
Armor: L4
Stungun 17
Demolitions 8 Psychescan 12
Spur Log 10

HELP with Adventures

Several other abuses come to mind, and not just ways to screw up other situations. Suppose the players are ordered to capture Arth-R-DNT-1, who has incredibly valuable data imprinted in his brain waves. HELP can come in and cart him off, depositing him at the Psychiatrist's Office or somewhere more horrible. The Troubleshooters undoubtedly pursue and enter the premises, perhaps in deep cover as patients themselves.

This is a good time for sanity tests, a la *Acute Paranoia*. Then, if Arth-R-DNT gets sentenced to complete re-education, the Troubleshooters would have to pursue him to the Nursery and try to gain his cooperation with Happiness Energy Bars. On the other hand, maybe he just gets his mind blown and ends up in the Mortuary and the players have to lug 70 kilos of cold cuts back to the lab. Or maybe The Computer orders Arth-R-DNT recloned, in which case it's off to the Cloning Facilities. Or all of the above.

Or maybe Troubleshooters get transferred to HELP. Yucko. Play with it. Have fun. Give your players some HELP.

Chapter Thirteen
Dial 116

Dial 116 are a small, elite branch of the Knight Fighters charged with the responsibility of demonstrating to one and all that valorous, fighting clones can do anything and everything better than sniveling, lying, lowlife toadies. Yes, Dial 116, like most other emergency services, was created primarily to promote the interests of their Society.

A 116 Team boasts two scouts, six grunts, a warcar driver, and a commander. And a warcar to give the driver something to do.

The scouts are lightly armored, and carry special multicorders with Primary Identification Programs. This essentially takes a photo of someone and compares it to file pictures of whomever D116 is looking for. It's a very quick method of identification.

The grunts, armed with all sorts of heavy weapons including crater guns (see page 65) and especially big huge swords, are there to provide cover, fire support, and pointy encouragement to those who need it.

The warcar driver drives the warcar. No kidding.

The commander oversees each operation and fires the warcar's weapons if necessary. *Only* if necessary. *Never* just for the fun of it. Really.

The warcar is a development of the present-day armored personnel carrier, and is modeled to look like a dragon, a war elephant, or a Cadillac. It has two seats up front, and room for eight in back with moderate comfort. There's a turret on top with some heavy weapon or other, and weapon ports in the heavily armored sides. It has a bot brain to navigate and help coordinate team action and communication. The warcar looks very ugly. And very deadly.

By the Book

Officially, The Council granted Dial 116 charter to "locate citizens who get lost in the Badlands, or who are reported missing after some natural disaster. They also assist citizens who are trapped or otherwise in need of help in the aftermath of an accident."

Realistically, though, they hunt down fleeing criminals (like the occasional Troubleshooter), rescue hostages with copious amounts of explosives, and pounce on anyone reported missing by anybody. Everything they do is done in the greatest swashbuckling tradition — destructively.

Aren't You Glad You Dialled 116?

Each Team is a closely knit group of the Knight Fighters' finest troopers. Hand-picked for service, troopers rotate in and out of duty, the roster changing completely every three months or so. Casualties can speed this somewhat.

Dial 116 is theoretically only to be called when a citizen is completely missing, or when there's some sort of major disaster and they need someone to search the ruins. They are to care-

fully and methodically pursue their task, taking advantage of the strict Knight Fighter organization and code of honor. Recovered citizens are to be gently returned to first aid facilities for treatment.

Being such a prestigious group, and having occasionally saved rich Council members from dire straits, they've got money to burn. Further, each mission is essentially a *carte blanche* for operations, and is one of the rare opportunities for Fighters to go on maneuvers in sizeable numbers instead of in ones or twos, or in unrealistic mass-combat scenarios carefully contrived by The Council. This means that D116 operations are conducted as total war situations by handpicked troops with virtually unlimited budgets. Imagine ten copies of Rambo charging around! Hoo boy!

So what all do these wardogs do? First and foremost, they do actually fulfill their job obligations, namely finding and saving citizens lost or trapped by accident. They also rescue citizens who called for INEPT, just for kicks. Or sometimes somebody is reported missing by accident. They have even been

HELP!
I'M BEING
OPPRESSED!

known to locate separated clone family members — very popular with lower numbered clones, but not so popular with the higher numbers.

They also save citizens trapped by accident as hostages. Or citizens lost behind their roadblock and endangered by the heavy weapons they fire at anyone who comes near.

If an arrest attempt proves too costly for the CIA forces, Dial 116 will be called to rectify the situation. The Council hates to do this, because the Knight Fighters gloat without mercy, and generally harangue the CIA. But sometimes it's worth it, as two or three D116 Teams get destroyed assaulting a strong barricade.

Troubleshooters can also call on Dial 116 to act as cannon fodder. But they might lose credit for capturing the traitors. Or Dial 116 might show up on some easy jobs. Worse yet: the Knight Fighters might actually do the impossible. It's their specialty, after all.

To sum up, The Knight Fighters' 116 Teams get involved everywhere they're not wanted. Especially if the area is full of fragile or explosive things just waiting to be shot. They can be effectively used as a medium for short adventures, sort of like *HIL Sector Blues* is for IntSec. Or as antagonists if you like.

Chapter Fourteen
Emer-G-NCY! Emer-G-NCY!

This is an example of the proper (though perhaps slightly excessive) use of Emergency Services in Alpha (in this case, Alpha Complex). Whenever your Troubleshooters feel that they are getting the short end of the cone rifle, sit them down in front of a nice warm reactor and spin them this syntheyarn.

"Once upon a timecycle ..."

Part I: INEPT Control

The first day of Troubleshooter Interservices Appreciation Class, your instructor led your group on a tour of INEPT, the Intersector Network for Emergency Protection and Transportation. As you went through the bright, clean INEPT Control offices, your instructor gave you an overview of the workings of the place.

"INEPT is a semi-independent division of the Troubleshooters. The entire staff is comprised of reassigned Troubleshooters serving tours of various duration.

"INEPT Control supervises the workings of INEPT as a whole; handling manpower assignments, supply requisitions, etc.," said your instructor, "the garages for the ambulances are located downstairs, but we won't be going there because it's a sensitive area above your security clearances. The INEPT Radio

OLD TV SHOWS
NEVER DIE,
THEY JUST FADE
TO BLACK

Dispatch Center is located in a different building across the sector."

As you were led from office to office through the sparkling corridors, you gaped at the orderly bustle of business, the efficiency, the professionalism, the sensation of power, courage and purpose.

Although you never saw an ambulance, or even any of the field personnel, you left INEPT Control with a deep respect for the ability and integrity for the whole Network. "Truly these are exemplary Troubleshooters!" you thought proudly.

Pity you were so wrong.

Part II: Urgent Dispatch

What a daycycle! First a big misunderstanding led to a very lively small arms argument. Then, after a few deaths had made the whole point moot, your stupid docbot tried to do an autopsy on the whole team! Now you're stuck there lying on the floor, looking worse than last night's dinner. Wheezing badly, your only surviving teammate calls Mission Control. Your mission coordinator panics at the mention of deaths and patches him through to INEPT Emergency Dispatch. For the next five minutes your teammate repeats, several times, loud and clear, his name, your name, your location, the exact extent of injuries, body count, com unit frequency, etc., etc., etc. Finally the dispatcher says, "Now stay calm, we have a unit already en route to you. Emergency Dispatch out."

Part III: The MEATWagon

You can feel your internal organs shutting down one by one as your teammate tells you that help is on the way. Somewhat relieved, you turn your head to glare at the malfunctioning docbot. Surely whoever's coming will be more compe-

tent than that hunk of junk.

Soon, you hear the roar of a very large, very badly out of tune engine operating at insane speeds and backfiring like an automatic slugthrower. There's a siren that sounds like a gaggle and a half of geese and a donkey with hiccups. (Where'd you learn the term "geese" anyway, citizen?) The floor begins to shake with the iron rumble of armored combat treads. Suddenly, there it is — rocketing around the corner at a dangerous angle, small bolts popping out, loose belts screeching in its unmuffled engine — the cacophony is unbearable! The driver locks up its brakes, and it comes to a halt right next to you. Clouds of burning oil and rubber billow out and engulf you. Lights flash in the smoke, dazzling your eyes. The side door to the vehicle slams open, and someone jumps out right onto your chest.

Seeing your stupefied teammate holding his laser rifle in a feeble grip, the newcomer yells, "Gun! Gun!" The staccato, bubbling burst of an automatic laser blasts from the roof of the vehicle, the vivid colored stream chasing your teammate as he weakly dives for cover. You feel yourself being dragged roughly into the vehicle and strapped firmly to a stretcher. You can barely make out the leer of your so-called rescuer among the jumble of wires, tubes, and other things dangling about the vehicle.

Mercifully, your consciousness decides to take a short intermission as the vehicle accelerates sickeningly. Blacking out, you wonder, "Where are all the docbots when you need them?"

Part IV: You Begin to HURT

Thank goodness, you've finally arrived! The roving torture chamber most people call a MEAT Wagon has finally ended its shrieking nightmare journey, and now you can get away from those

sadistic "medics" and their gear, and get some genuine treatment! Strapped securely in your gurney, the TWITs toss you out onto the tarmac and push you at breakneck speed to the swinging doors labelled "Entrance." A bone-jarring crash reminds everyone that these doors swing out, not in. But that's okay; nothing was broken that wasn't broken once already.

The TWITs open the doors and smile down at you. "This is the end of the line for us, MAC! You're on your own, now!" They give the gurney a strong push and return to the MEAT Wagon as you sail across the waiting room. The gurney comes to a sudden stop on a citizen who appears to have lost all his blood on the floor. At least you assume it's his; he's lying face down in it. Squinting against the glare of the slowly revolving spot lamps, you see many other citizens awaiting treatment, some in various stages of decay.

Your teammate's next clone arrives a short time later and sets about trying to find a worker. He finally finds a receptionist in a lounge down the hall. After finishing her drink and filing a reprimand against him for trespassing, she finally returns to her desk to admit you for treatment. She pulls out a big stack of paper. The heading is printed quite visibly: "P.A.I.N. (Part One of Ten)."

Your Teammate takes a look at the sheaf of paperwork, and thoughtfully pulls his laser rifle. He turns to the desk clerk and sweetly asks, "Could you please hand me one of those pens right — there?" ZAP! A carefully aimed shot blows apart the cup holding the pens, and causes the desk to smolder. "And if you don't mind, I think I'll need some of those brochures over È there!" ZAP! A stack of papers on a shelf starts burning brightly. "Oh," says your Teammate brightly, "I'll need an eraser. I see you have one in your pocket right —"

"WAIT!" says the clerk suddenly. "You're loyal and noble Troubleshooters; how about if I just pre-approve your paperwork and admit your buddy for treatment? You'll have to fill out the rest of the forms, of course, but I can give you an empty conference room to do that ... would that be okay?" Her

grin, though obviously artificial, is nonetheless enthusiastic.

Your admission for treatment brings immense relief, although you are concerned for the safety of your fellow Troubleshooter. After all, he just borrowed fifty credits from you.

Part V: HELP Arrives

The doctor provides further care for your wounds, and generally furthers the first aid you received from the INEPT TWITs. No sooner do you start ambling back out into the foyer than a small, shabby, wobbling cart cautiously pushes its way through the entrance doors, heralding the arrival of HELP, the Happiness Emergency Line Psychoanalysis team.

[**Editor's Note:** What, you've never heard of HELP before? What kind of *Paranoia* Gamemaster are you? All information you need to know about HPD&MC's emergency psychological treatment team is on page 145 of this sourcebook. You can find that all right, can't you Citizen?]

The cart drives up to you and stops squarely on your heavily-bandaged foot, and two men dressed in too-large coats step out. "Ow!" you yell, "What in the dome do *YOU* want?!?"

The two men look at each other. "Definitely over-stressed," one says to the other.

The other nods, "hostility approaching treason; good thing we got here in time." They both raise stunguns, and suddenly you're on the floor.

They lift you up and strap you into the cart. The cart accelerates to about fifteen kph, the horn braying incessantly. One man, sitting behind you, leans over and looks down, his eyes belying the smile on his face. "Please," he says, "just treat me as your dearest friend. Now, why did you first begin thinking treasonous thoughts?"

Exercising what in your opinion is admirable restraint, you yell, "Let me go, you son of a glitch!"

The man sighs sadly, and injects something directly into your brain. As you feel your mind being blanked, you realize you've got to hold on to some shred of

your personality. Desperately you cling to the thought of the fifty-credit loan.

Part VI: Searched & Rescued

Your Teammate, still carrying a large sheaf of paperwork, shows up just as your brain is about to drain out your ears. He starts yelling at the HELP technicians, and the slight surge of adrenalin helps belay the activity of the narcotics pouring through your head.

Suddenly you hear a loud commotion. Lifting your head to see what's happening, you witness a huge explosion. Fragments fly through the air, and several large smoke charges follow shortly after. Fearing a Commie attack, your Teammate levels his laser rifle and fires over your supine body at the first figure you see in the smoke. He is answered by a barrage of automatic weapons fire. A voice on megaphone shouts, "Belay that fire! Primary objectives at risk! Where's my recon?!?"

A flash dazzles your eyes as someone nearer shouts, "Visual contact with primary! Flank right and cover me!" Several men charge out of the smoke, one headed right for you. You try to raise and fire your weapon, but your puny laser pistol has no effect other than to trigger another barrage of counterfire which shatters the walls of the HURT. One assailant dives on you, punches you a few times knocking the wind out of you, flips you over his shoulder, and says, "You're safe now! We'll get you out of here!"

A warcar crashes through the crowd, tumbling small cars and bots aside, and, happily, crushing the HELP Mental Hygienists. Still doubled over, you're tossed in the back. Your teammate, apparently unconscious, is thrown in after you.

"Mission accomplished! Go! Go! Go!" yells one. Another looks at you and says, "You're lucky we found you. Your late Teammates' clones reported you two as missing." Looking you over carefully, he says, "Hey! This guy's hurt bad! We'd better get him to a hospital!"

Part VII: Fire at Will

The S&R Armored Personnel Carrier picks its way through the burning rubble

caused by their arrival, spraying a few precautionary salvoes of napalm to discourage any nearby traitors.

Suddenly an incredibly loud noise rises, a solid wall of white noise, drowning every other noise (and given the way Armed Forces grunts make noise, that's saying something).

"&%#@!" yells one of the troopers as the APC stops dead. Judging by the vibrations, the engine has stalled, and there's a strange thrumming on the bulkhead. "?^*#!" he continues eloquently as he steps outside and gets washed away by a huge wave of water.

"Oh, no!" you say to yourself, inaudibly over the sound of rushing water, "the Fire Department!" You crawl over and slam the back hatch of the APC; if you can just hide in here you ought to be okay.

But then, the noise stops. Nothing but the sound of dripping water. You hear a distant voice asking if everything's extinguished. Overhead, on top of the APC, you hear a voice say, "Just let me hose out the APC to be sure!"

You see a large-bore nozzle cover up a viewport over your head.

Part VIII: CPU Emergency

"This is ridiculous," you say to your Teammate as you hobble over to a nearby confession booth in ankle-deep water. "We're cut off from our Team, I'm wounded, all our gear is sopping wet, we're lost, and we can't get back. I'm going to the top."

You step inside, and immediately ask for CPU Emergency. After all, you work for CPU; they're top of the pig pile, so by The Computer they ought to be able to get something done. The line rings, rings, and eventually a recording asks you to hold for the first available operator.

An hourcycle later, you're holding.

Part IX: Suicide Is Painful

Finally, there's a click on the line and a voice says, "How may I help you, citizen?"

Relief floods through you. Finally, something's going to get done. "Yeah, I got wounded on that mission y'all

"Don't worry, sir, we'll have that fixed in a jiffy!"

posted me to, and the docbot screwed up and hurt me worse, and then ..."

You describe in amazing detail the events of the day, and how they've adversely affected your performance and the completion of the mission. Suddenly, the voice at the other end interrupts.

"Surely that's no reason to kill yourself, is it, citizen? After all, suicide means you're unhappy, and happiness is mandatory. If you're not happy, you're guilty of treason, and may face summary execution, or worse."

"Look, all I want y'all to do is —"

"We'll do everything in our power to make you happy. We've traced your call, and are sending some field representatives to have a nice long talk with you. In the meantime, why don't you tell me who, specifically, has made you unhappy, and how."

"Hey, I was calling CPU Emergency! Who is this?"

"Mac-R-THY, Internal Security, at your service. We took the liberty of forwarding your call to our offices. Please speak clearly, citizen; you are being recorded."

You hear an ominous ticking sound.

"Whoa—nice shootin', bot-boy!"

Part X: Hazard Duty

Wouldn't you know it? One of your bandages has come a little loose and gotten stuck in the confession booth. You struggle to reach around your crutch and free it while the mysterious device approaches what sounds like overload.

You're not going to make it. The full weight of imminent clone activation paralyzes your hapless brain, and you stare witlessly as a citizen in full body armor kneels down beside you and starts fumbling with the confession booth. Not that it matters; you'll be dead in about three seconds. Three, two —

What? The keening has stopped. You look down to see the armored man pull a large glowing rock out of the device. "Megaranium 532-1/2," he says, "Restricted item. I'm afraid I'm going to have to impound it, and report you for possession of restricted materials. Sorry." He tucks the rock under his arm and walks off to his armored carbot.

Dazed, you look around. Your Teammate has reappeared from where he fled to, with the rest of the Team in tow. As they approach, one of them asks, "Are you all right, sir, or do we need to call an ambulance?"

You faint.

Part the Last: Cleaning Up Loose Ends

At the end of the day, you can't believe you made it back to your creche. Exhausted, you collapse blissfully into your very own bed. Incredibly, the mission is over, you're still alive, and, to top it all off, you got promoted! Ha! Stupid Computer! If It only knew the saboteur you killed was an IntSec agent trying to dismantle YOUR bomb! Your fellow PURGErs will be amazed to hear how you — "PSSST!"

Your brain cringes at the interruption from the verge of sleep. Maybe it was your imagination.

"PSSST!" There it is again. A mechanical sound.

Opening your eyes again is an agony in itself. The room is dark, but you can see the faint glow of bot optic sensors right next to you. And your pillow is wet with ammonia. Before you can speak, a bristle brush is rammed into your mouth. It tastes like dirty floors.

"My cooperative biological entities visually observed the residuals of the IntSec agent you are credited with disassembling. Forensic investigation illuminated your dissimulation. Your security enhancement is invalid. Unless we receive some input, this evaluation will be downloaded to The Computer and you will be erased. So there."

With blinding speed you draw your blaster from underneath your pillow. Simultaneously the scrubot casts a light on the radioactive symbol on its hull. "Destructive emanations are not user-friendly input," it says.

Chuckling, the bot leaves. It and its friends will make for some expensive palimony. Time to start cashing in on loans.

Maybe that Assurance Company you linked up with on the Infrared Market can help?

Chapter Fifteen
The Economics of Alpha Medicine

This section is primarily useful in Alpha Base, where everything is done in under a FreeEnterprise system. However, all of these concepts also are used inside Alpha Complex itself, though usually on the Infrared Market.

The Price Is Fright: Economics for Troubleshooters

FreeEnterprise is the rule in Alpha these days. Everything (and everyclone) has a price. This includes, of course, Emergency Services, who must pay for their ammo, fuel, and medical supplies (usually in that order), as well as turn a fast buck so they can score a date with "that Nature Babe."

The leaders of the Council, of course, bankroll their Troubleshooter's medical expenses — to a point. Troubleshooter missions are, after all, an expense; an out-of-pocket expenditure for a tangible gain (with any luck), and medical bills are simply considered part of the overhead. To this end, the Council has developed the so-called Ultraviolet Cross Card (so named because if the Alpha Base Emergency Teams refuse to honor it, the Ultraviolets on the Council get *very* cross). The Ultraviolet Cross Card (UCC) is essentially a medical credit card; Troubleshooters can charge whatever medical expenses they need to it.

Unfortunately, if the Troubleshooters run up a bill that exceeds their mission limit, additional expenses are deducted from their pay, often with a small service fee in addition. And, of course, knowledge of the exact figure of this limit is Ultraviolet clearance (so don't tell!)

This can lead to problems when, for example, their medical accounts are kept separate for each Team member, and one member gets injured twice while another doesn't. The twice-injured Troubleshooter is likely to exceed his UCC limit, thereby costing the entire Team money, while the other hasn't used any medical expenses, and cannot get or use that budgeted credit in any way. (Remember, U Cross can only be used to charge medical bills.)

Thus, Troubleshooters Teams rapidly developed a new concept in Paranoia roleplaying:

Fraud.

Yes, ultimately, all Troubleshooter Teams want to maximize their incomes. This requires both using their allotted expenses efficiently and minimizing their own out-of-pocket expenses.

One way to do this is to bill one clone for another clone's medical bills. This uses everyone's expense account to the fullest. Even better is to arrange for false charges, or to charge unneeded pharmaceuticals or other supplies for later resale. Note that each of these requires either deceiving the medical guys, or getting their cooperation; this is where Service Group or Secret Society contacts can come in real handy.

Needless to say, the folks at U Cross don't take fraud very well. When they find evidence of such activities, they turn the account over to their collection agency, Double Cross. Double Cross freezes *all* the accounts until the situation is resolved; this can be grim if the Troubleshooters get injured during this time, which often happens when the burly collectors catch up with them.

The fear of sudden medical expenses, from either Double Cross intervention or just plain bad luck, has led to the development of another new service in Alpha, below.

Health and Life Assurance

"Feeling down and dumpy? Feeling like you've got the world on your shoulders? Feeling like everyone's out to get you? Well, of course they are! That's why you need *Health and Life Assurance*! It makes you feel *so good*!"

There are two types of assurance in Alpha: Health and Life. Health Assurance (HA) covers medical bills. Life Assurance (LA) covers cloning costs. (Gives the concept a whole new meaning, now, doesn't it?)

The administration of these services is handled in much the same fashion as it is in modern times. The Troubleshooters pay some sort of monthcycley bill, and, in return they get their assets covered. Or so they hope. That's what they're assured of, anyway.

Unfortunately, Assurance companies have a tendency to come and go, which is why most Troubleshooters, when they can afford it, choose to be covered by Mutual of Omega, which has been around since well before the Crash (never mind that Omega Complex was destroyed by aliens in *Mad Mechs*). They are the most reliable, so, naturally, they're the most expensive.

By the Book

The Alpha Base Municipal Code Book states, "Health and Life Assurance are perhaps the most comforting and necessary services any modern-daycycle clone can have. When in your time of need they will cover you, protect you, and replace you if necessary."

Well, yes and no.

Most Health and Life Assurance companies in Alpha Base are scams. Basically, in modern times, a Health or Life

No matter where you go, they know where you are ...

Insurance company is betting that you won't get killed or injured before you've paid enough premiums to make it worthwhile for them. In the exciting world of Alpha Base ... well, this just isn't a smart bet.

So the Assurance companies play with the odds.

First off, they have barely readable contracts for you to sign. But, because most citizens of Alpha Base are so used

to dealing with mountains of paperwork just to, say, visit the lavatory, they have to be more inventive than that.

The least imaginative are "snatch and grab" boys. They just take whatever money they can get on a first premium and run. Ho, hum; what fun is that? Others are much more devious. Here is one example, but please make up a bunch of your own:

Alpha Service And Protection

ASAP is one of the larger companies, though by no means approaching Mutual of Omega in scope. ASAP's technique is fairly simple: they insure against injuries but not death, or death but not injuries on each particular patient.

Clients insured against fatality are protected by the ASAP's field agents, but not in the way you might expect. When a client of ASAP's Deader Assurance is mortally wounded (they don't like to even say "killed"), a small device attached to the clone's body cryogenically freezes the clone just before death — thus, the clone doesn't actu-

ally die. ASAP will then, for a small fee, activate the client's "next of clone" and collect the frozen remains. ASAP will only allow the "Clone on a Stick" to be thawed out by trained medical personnel — and then only after waivers have been signed and fees collected.

Of course, this does not actually protect against "The Smoking Boot Syndrome" (i.e., an "Incinerate" result), but it can prevent a "Kill."

Those clones who take advantage of ASAP's Health Assurance also get a small device attached to their bodies. Theoretically, this device is supposed to monitor bodily functions — and it does, giving off helpful beeps and blips when the Troubleshooter is excited or under stress (like when he's trying to sneak past those nasty Doberbots) and it recommends (audibly) actions the Troubleshooter should take to rectify the situation ("Say, Jon-I-DOE; don't you think you should sit down and rest for a while? You've got to stop exerting yourself so much. I'm sure those Mark IV's aren't really trying to hurt you — they're just running in the same direction.").

The ASAP Advisor (for that's its name) also gives helpful medical advice to your medical officer or docbot — all *medical* skill rolls are performed with a two point bonus modifier due to its useful advice.

Unfortunately, the ASAP Advisor has a secret program attached: if the Troubleshooter ever gets wounded enough times or so badly that it would cost ASAP more to fix the clone than the clone has paid into the company (minus a healthy profit, of course), the Advisor short circuits — real bad. Roll on Column 19E, ignoring armor. If the Troubleshooter survives that, then ASAP will be glad to foot the bill.

One last word about ASAP: being a fairly respectable company (for Alpha Base), they will try to keep their investment alive and healthy — hey, a dead last clone pays no premiums. Often, they will send in field agents to rescue their clients (whether they need it or not), or they will "pull some wires" to get the clone transferred to a "safer" work environment (use your imagination).

All these services are, of course, billed to the Troubleshooter's next premium … what? They didn't ask for the Vulture Paratroopers to drop in on their date and blow her away because she had a headcold? Hey; it's all in the contract — take a look.

Assurance Fraud and How it works

In this new age of FreeEnterprise, the object is to make credits — either print them or get them from someone else. Since only the Council is allowed to print them, there are easier ways.

One such method for FreeEnterprising Troubleshooters to turn a quick cred is to pull off an Assurance Fraud Scam. That is, for them to Do Unto Other Clones That Are Doing It Unto Them.

As mentioned, contacts of various sorts are the best way Assurance Companies ensure their version of fraud will go undetected. That holds true for Troubleshooters. Remember Rule Number 1154B of Alpha Fraud: "If you can get it in writing, it's somebody else's fault." *Bootlicking*, *con*, and *intimidation* are the most appropriate skills here; *fast talk* is really useful if you can get the victim to sign something (see Rule 1154B).

This is usually easier than it sounds, because, when it comes right down to it, the people who sign medical receipts, death certificates, and other forms you can use to defraud the Assurance Companies are *not* the ones who most often end up holding the bag; they just have to explain it to the investigator. Sometimes, the person you want to sign the papers will actually help you:

Medic: So, you bashed your wrist against the floor when you tripped. Does this hurt? (*twist*)

Troubleshooter: (*winces in pain*) Yowch! Yeah, Doc; can you wrap it — I've got to get on with my mission.

M: Who's your Health Assurer?

T: For this? It's just a sprain. But I have full coverage if you think —

M (*expresses sympathy*): Maybe you'd just better lie down …

T (*confused*): Huh?

M (*"eases" patient onto the floor*): Yeah (*wink, wink*) this looks *really* bad. In fact, I think I'll have to *report* that your wrist — no, your *arm* is broken. This could be *incredibly* expensive (nudge, nudge).

T (*finally gets the hint*): Oh, uh, yeah. Yeah! Ow. (*again, with feeling*) Ooooowwwww!

M: Hmmn; that sounds bad — maybe you'd better get some bed rest …

T (*dramatically mortified*): You mean I won't be able to complete my mis-

I'VE GOT A PIECE OF THE ROCK … LODGED IN MY CIRCUIT BOARD.

sion? (*struggles to rise and fails*) Well, you're the doctor …

M: That's right. So let's file this claim — I mean, "get you to bed" — in a hurry, okay?

Another means of covering your tracks is to employ *spurious logic* to make your claim seem valid. This buries your crime among the tangled legalese forms, and makes it much harder to spot. Likewise, computer skills or forgery can be used to go back in after the fact and alter key records. The important thing about Assurance Fraud is to make sure none of the evidence is traceable to you. Believe me; everybody else is covering their … Assurance claims, so you better, too.

Of course, gamemasters would *never* have "sting" operations in progress, and they would *never* let unscrupulous medics "hedge their bets" by making *sure* that all claims were actually valid …

Dead Clone's Rate Curve: Economics for Services

Cutthroat competition is a somewhat unnerving term to apply to medical services in Alpha, but it is unfortunately very fitting. Everyone in Alpha knows that a successful mission means economic success for their organization, whether due to additional UCC charges in Alpha Base or additional political prestige and budgeting in Alpha Complex.

This results in a practice that is colloquially known as "clone jumping." Often competitors attempt to steal victims from the scene before the competition arrives. Disputes usually result in a fire-fight. Such battles are normally brief, though, since everyone has a limited budget, and wouldn't want to risk a multimegacredit MEAT Wagon for a measly Troubleshooter.

It's Not a Bill, It's a William

And while the Troubleshooters are trying to get the most for their money, Emergency Groups are out trying to do the same thing. UCC charges are often padded, sometimes to incredible excess (see "Assurance Fraud," above).
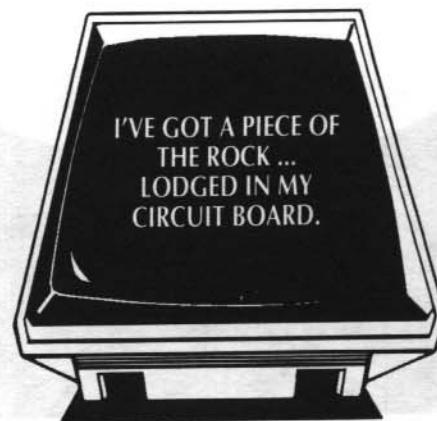
Unconscious Troubleshooters are often victimized, as they cannot protest. But, since, this extra billing can often come out of the Troubleshooters' pockets, this practice is not taken lightly.

Petty revenge assassinations are not the norm in these cases; Troubleshooters know better than to snipe at those who may someday be pulling them from the field. Instead, when dealing with padded bills, etc., Troubleshoot-

ers resort to a different tactic: Extortion.

Ultraviolet Cross, as mentioned earlier, takes a dim view of fraud, and bill-padding by a service is no exception. Troubleshooters who uncover evidence of such activity often try to pull the offender over a barrel, getting free supplies or illicit equipment in exchange for silence. This does not, however, increase the animosity between Troubleshooters and field medics; ex-

tortion and bribery have been a way of life in Alpha for many long decades, and, without Troubleshooters, the Emergency Services couldn't make ends meet. Extortion is looked on by many medics and Emergency Services as a fee — they tend to cut the Troubleshooters in anyway, as it leads to less difficulty in the future. Of course, they occasionally *will* get greedy ...
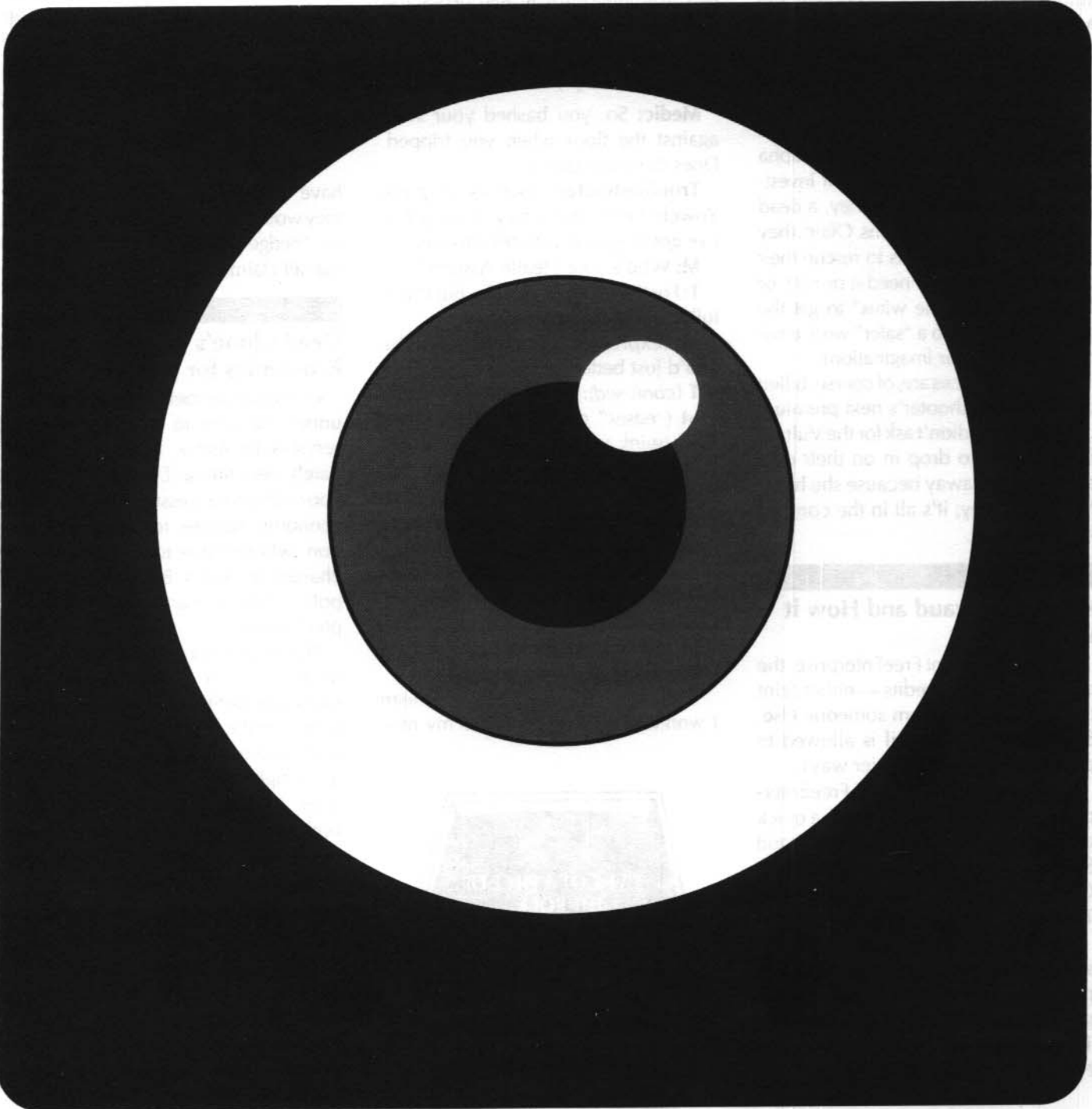
PARANOIA

"AT YOUR SERVICE, CITIZEN ..."

CONTENTS

Contributors This Issue:

Ed Bolme, John Paul Lona, Ed Stark and a cast of ... well, a whole bunch of people.

OFFICIAL
WARNING!!WARNING!!

THIS SECTION IS **MANDATORY** *FOR ALL CITIZENS! READ AND ENJOY!*

Welcome to *"At Your Service, Citizen ..."* the new *Paranoia* Quarterly Newsletter! This Newsletter is devoted to you, the *Paranoia* roleplayer. Future issues will contain a wealth of information for the *Paranoia, Second Edition* game published by West End Games.

Included in issues of *AYSC* are "Tips for Traitors," a column for you nasty players out there; "Secret Messages," which is concerned with the operations and interests of existing and new Secret Societies; "Form ...," a new form for gamemasters to use in their campaigns; "Computer Mail," comments about *Paranoia* to West End Games from subscribers; "Alpha Bytes," little "additions" to the world of Alpha; and a whole series of comic strips and revolving articles all concerning *Second Edition Paranoia.*

Perhaps the best thing about *"At Your Service, Citizen ..."* is its writing staff — YOU! Here at Computer HQ, we're hoping that you loyal Citizens out there will be submitting most of the articles, information, and comments that we publish. *AYSC* will be a forum for your questions and comments *and Paranoia'*d ideas. That's why we're going to include a "Response Form" on the last page of every mailed issue. We want to hear from *you!*

Here's how to subscribe:

If you are located in the United States, mail us a check or money order for $8.00 and a note saying you want to subscribe to *"At Your Service, Citizen ..."*

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Please make all checks and money orders payable to "West End Games Ltd."

Now, on with the fun.

THOUGHT FOR THE DAYCYCLE

"EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE, JUST GIVE ME YOUR LASER..."

Tips For Traitors

In fact, the above message is of such high clearance that you can all just nip out and execute yourselves right now.

We'll wait.

Finished? Good. Now that we've gotten past the formalities, "Tips for Traitors" is a column devoted to the few, the proud, the dead … the Traitors of Alpha! Oh, sure, you can call them "Seditionists," "Commies," "Mutants," or whatever, but they're all the same: walking, breathing, deadclones.

Welcome to their ranks.

This little piece has been stuck in this highly treasonous publication for *them*. So, if you aren't a traitor, just nip out and execute yourself right now.

We'll wait.

Everybody up to Clone 3 now? Good. That should make you good and *Paranoia*'d. Now we can get down to the meat of the article — literally.

Alpha Yummies

In the *Paranoia Sourcebook*, we've established that clone's sole source of sustenance no longer has to be those yummy food vats. Thanks to the Crash, Free Enterprise, and the Awakening of Gastronomic Distress, clones are becoming more picky about where, what, or who they eat. While the Secret Society Council is perfectly willing to yield their monopoly on food supply (mainly because they do such a terrible job that

even *they* don't eat at the Co-op all the time), most of the other simplexes and, of course, Alpha Complex and The Computer, regard competition as Treasonous.

So, in this, the first installment of *Tips for Traitors*, we'll tell you where you can get a decent meal.

EATS

Edible Alternatives To Slop is the longest-lived alternative (i.e., "treasonous," see also "high quality") dining facility in Alpha. It has survived for about ten yearcycles (including The Crash), occasionally shifting its location to keep one step ahead of The Computer. Currently, it is located in an independent (but Computer-friendly) Simplex in FDA sector, out on the edges of Alpha Complex where control and repair are less than adequate for surveillance. In fact, getting to EATS is almost as difficult as getting to Troubleshooter Headquarters.

Here, all sorts of people gather to dine. Computer loyalists, Council fanatics, and even the occasional Commie. Just so long as no one starts getting evangelical, it's all tolerated. And if somebody does start trouble, those coaxial lasers mounted in the corners (behind the fake dead potted plants) see that things don't get too out of hand.

The kitchen and serving counter, representing most of the capital involved in this operation, are installed in a large trailer, and thus are quick and easy to move. Lesser furnishings, like chairs and tables, can be swiped — er, "supplied" rather easily, and are therefore abandoned when the going gets hot.

Overall, to accurately describe EATS, imagine crossing a fast food joint with the sleaziest bar in New York and having it operate out of a Winnebago. Respectable it isn't.

Truth in Advertising

The following text was found on file in the Alpha Complex Municipal Code and purged before it was printed: "EATS, and other establishments like it, is not a bad place at all. In fact, it's a refreshing alternative to Computer-sanctioned dining, and it's nice to be out from under the gun once in a while. So what if it costs more? The food's a lot less likely to kill you."

Rumor has it that the reviewer was not killed by food …

The Staff at EATS

Ed-I-BLE-4 is the owner, proprietor, overseer, manager, president, and any other title he can think of. He is a longtime Zany Eddie, and has had many dealings with the Romantics. Ed-I also works in CPU as an assistant data cross-reference analyst, thus he manages to keep informed of any information uncovered about his business. On the job, Ed-I is a stern, professional businessman. Whether presenting a report to CPU or planning marketing and advertising for EATS, he is the quintessential entrepreneur.

Another factor of his success is his love of quality and good humor, which he also provides to his customers. Off duty, his repressed fun-loving self gets a thorough airing out. He hangs out at EATS dressed in whatever is most out-of-fashion and raps with whoever comes by. Ed-I is a nexus in the grapevine, and knows a lot of rumors and classified information, which, for a price, he's willing to divulge. Incidentally, Ed-I is very popular among Complexers and Basers alike, and threatening him around EATS or any other public place is a big risk.

Ed-I-BLE-4   CPU

Empathy **P** 20
Free Ent 27th degree
S 6 **E** 11 **A** 13 **D** 14 **M** 20 **C** 16
MA 7
Armor: usually none
Auto Slugthrower 10
*Bribe 20 forge 16 psyscan 18
data search 19*

As with any underground institution, EATS has irregular schedules and staffings. Nonetheless, EATS is open 'round the clock, every day, and there are some "unpersons" (people who don't officially exist in Alpha Base or Alpha Complex) who work there fairly constantly, and who can be good sources of information. Clandestine shipments of — pardon the expression — raw materials arrive irregularly, and certain items might be more expensive or unavailable if stocks are low. These renegade deliverymen also cart off any trash or corpses that have accumulated since their last run.

The employees, who work on commission, show up whenever possible. Ed-I has provided an automated kitchen into which each of the employees has fed their own recipes, so the menu changes every time someone comes or goes.

Ed-I has also thoughtfully provided a couple of scrubots to keep the area clean. Lower clearance customers are dazzled by the opulent luxury represented by the scrubots, let alone the chance to actually choose a meal. Many first time Red diners are executed the next day for demanding a scrubot from The Computer. Amazing how swiftly a decadent lifestyle can make someone go soft, isn't it?

Ed-I and a few of his thugs show up at irregular intervals to check on things and collect profits. Ed-I himself never gives credit or tolerates delays in payment, although his thugs have been known to give out loans using arms, legs, and such as collateral.

That's all, you ask? Does this sound pretty tame? Ah, but you're forgetting the clientele!

What kind of man eats at EATS? Commies, mutants, and traitors, and, worst of all, Computer supporters gutsy or good enough to risk Our Friend's wrath. Thanks to the admirable and oft over-enthusiastic protection of the Pink-R-TON family (the bouncers at EATS), most Secret Societies have recognized this as a safe place to rendezvous. Really says something for The Big C for a place full of enemies to be considered comparably safe ... but we digress. Secret Society members meet known contacts quietly at one of the tables, and discussions are whispered or spoken in code. Any loud or visible statements of beliefs will be met with ostracizing looks and claims of unfamiliarity from one's companions, because every member of a rival Society marks the loudmouth and all his friends for later "attention."

And if a *Paranoia*'d Casablanca isn't bad enough, there's always the threat that The Computer might locate EATS (yet again)!

When this happens, Ed-I orders an immediate sale and all items go dirt cheap. The really invigorates the local economy. But until everything's sold off and all nonessential supplies are quietly unloaded, the workers give no warning of the impending disaster. Often, none of the customers know what's going on until suddenly a nearby bulkhead gets blown in by IntSec and EATS shrieks out of its moorings, burning rubber and toppling tables, not to mention crunching customers. There follows a free-for-all of gigantic proportions as Internal Security scampers after the scads of Secret Society members caught with eggsurrogate on their face. Naturally this confusion allows EATS to leave unscathed and relocate within the hour (Ed-I has several alternate sites available).

So Near to Danger

If Ed-I is forced to move all the time, why doesn't he just set up shop in Alpha Base under the protection of the Secret Society Council?

Simple. EATS, while it was the first establishment of its kind, is by no means the best. It makes up for its lack of culinary prowess by its location. In Alpha Base, a citizen can get food twice as good at a tenth the price — and be relatively sure that he won't be shot at the salad bar.

Ed-I-BLE caters to not only the Gastronomically Repressed of Alpha Complex, but those who happen to have missions that take them there and into the Badlands. People from Alpha Base don't go there for the food ... they go for the atmosphere. Of course, if you lived in the Badlands, you'd think EATS was GOD's Gift to Your Bowels.

Everybody knows GGYB is located in The Dungeon ...

Fun With Food

EATS has limitless potential as a springboard for adventure. Everyone likes to go schmooze the bars for rumors and the like. Secret Society missions can be assigned ad nauseum. Troubleshooters can be sent to infiltrate the world of burgerjocks and fryboys. And who knows what all sorts of treason can be witnessed here! It's a great place to gather information on traitors.

Likewise, its facade of normality and neutrality allows Citizens of all simplexes to do things with each other that they couldn't do anywhere else (no not *that*, they do *that* all over the place now that the hormone suppressants are going) — and they don't have to shoot each other after-

wards. EATS is a great meeting place and infiltration point.

EATS Adventure Hook

To get the funbot rolling, here's an idea to start with: your players' characters have come to EATS after a mission to relax. Sure, its not exactly safe, but where is? Anyway, they notice that Ed-I, usually the profit-minded and therefore ready-to-please-host is acting very strangely. He is snapping at the customers, demanding exact change, and squirting ketchup on random Vulture Warriors — not exactly characteristic for a man with a survival instinct like Ed-I.

Encourage your characters to step in and talk to Ed-I. After all, if he gets blasted, EATS is gone for good. Keep the tension high, but remind the players that those mounted guns are on automatic: start trouble and ZANGO! — you're tomorrow's special.

Here's the problem: Ed-I has been getting increasing pressure from Alpha Base's IRS tax collectors. There have been several raids on EATS in the last few daycycles, and the dam-

age costs are mounting. Ed-I doesn't know whether he should move, close down, or cave in to the IRS's demands. He doesn't want the latter, because then he'd have to relocate — permanently — within Alpha Base and pay high taxes and lose profits.

Ed-I will explain that he knows why he has suddenly become the focus of so much uncomfortable IRS attention: Taxlaw-Y-ERR, an IRS paper-pusher, once came to EATS and got some "bad broccoli" (a dish even the bravest Troubleshooters are loathe to try). He was in the hospital for weeks. When he came to Ed-I with the bill (plus some "gag" money — Taxlaw gagged a lot on the food), Ed-I pointed to the disclaimer over the door:

The Management is not responsible for your Stomach. If it can't handle the food, leave it at Home.

Ever since then, Taxlaw has tried to close Ed-I down.

Knowing the way things work in Alpha Base, the Troubleshooters should realize that if Ed-I yields to the

pressure to "relocate," he'll be even more under Taxlaw's control. The only way to get out from under his ink-stained thumb is to discredit Taxlaw in the eyes of the Council — killing him will just make the rest of the paper-pushers nervous ... and angry. "That lot sticks together, they do," Ed-I grumbles.
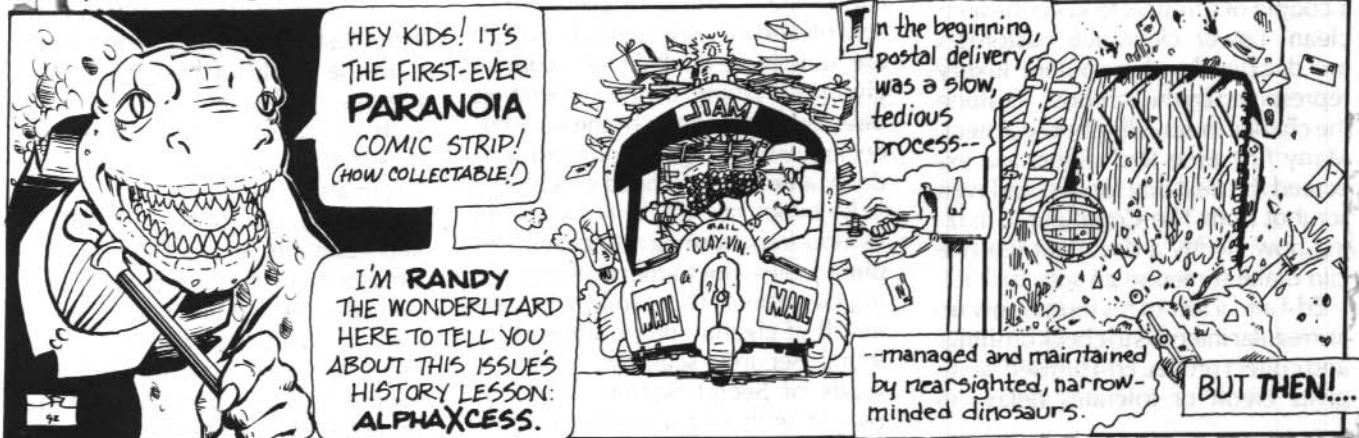
The proprietor of EATS will give the Troubleshooters 200 plasticreds each if they can get Taxlaw off his back — and he'll "owe them a favor." Ed-I is known for his resourcefulness, deviousness, and, strangely, his honesty. He hasn't survived this long by screwing the people who help him.

Basically, the rest of the adventure is up to you. Taxlaw has demanded five thousand plasticreds from Ed-I, so the Troubleshooters can't really buy him off. He does, of course, have several personality flaws that could be exploited to make him look bad — make them up and have fun. The main idea is to make the Troubleshooters accomplish the mission without just blowing him away.

Although that *can* be fun ...

Randy's Ramblings Part 1   **by John Paul Lona**

HEY KIDS! IT'S THE FIRST-EVER **PARANOIA** COMIC STRIP! (HOW COLLECTABLE!)

I'M **RANDY** THE WONDERLIZARD HERE TO TELL YOU ABOUT THIS ISSUE'S HISTORY LESSON: **ALPHAXCESS.**

In the beginning, postal delivery was a slow, tedious process--

--managed and maintained by nearsighted, narrow-minded dinosaurs.

BUT **THEN!**...

And now for something completely beyond your clearance ...

"Ultraviolet Clearance" is a section of *"At Your Service, Citizen ..."* specifically aimed at those lucky enough to be gamemastering *Paranoia* campaigns. You, as a gamemaster, don't have to worry about committing treason; you don't have to worry about The Computer's fickle favor or the Secret Society Council's devious machinations; you don't even have to eat that yucky food vat stuff. *You* are in control! All you have to worry about is what your friends will do to you after the game ...

In "Tips for Traitors," we gave those awful little Troubleshooters a neat place to eat and hang out, not to mention a location for the beginning of an adventure. We didn't give them any details on their opposition.

(**Note:** Those of you who are leafing through this copy of *AYSC* without reading it and who have stumbled upon this note — you're committing *treason*! We don't *care* if you're a gamemaster; go back and read "Tips for Traitors" *now* or you'll be executed!)

So, here's some stats and some gamemastering tips:

Ed-I-BLE is, unfortunately, telling the truth about his situation. Ho, hum. He will be honestly grateful to the Troubleshooters if they can get Taxlaw-Y-ERR of his back and will provide them with the payment promised.

However, Taxlaw-Y-ERR is not the "paper-pushing wimp" that Ed-I makes him out to be. In these days of Tri Alpha Pi, being an agent for the Secret Society Council's IRS is *dangerous*. What can you expect in a time where FreeEnterprise is a brand new concept?

Taxlaw is not the top of his division only because he's smart — not because he's a wimp. He has his two bosses Figure-I-HED and and Slime-I-GUY wrapped around his little finger, and that means all the IRS agents

WARNING! THIS SECTION IS SECURITY CLEARANCE ULTRAVIOLET! GAMEMASTERS ONLY!

effectively work for him.

He is very much aware that the Troubleshooters have been hired to discredit him (he has informants in EATS), but he wants to toy with them until he can wrap them up too. Taxlaw is not merely out for revenge against Ed-I; he wants control of EATS and of any other non-Alpha Base Simplexes he can get his greedy little hands on.

The only advantage the Troubleshooters have is that Taxlaw rules by fear and extortion; he has no loyal followers. Since his operatives know the Troubleshooters' mission, they will try to hinder their own counter-activities (without putting themselves in danger or to blame, however; they aren't

suicidal). They want Taxlaw discredited as much as Ed-I — but if he's killed, blackmail information on them (and Ed-I) goes to the Alpha News Network.

This should make things interesting. With a little investigation, the Troubleshooters can find out that Taxlaw is blackmailing a group of Zany Eddies in Alpha Base. He's making them pay protection money above and beyond the Council's taxes. If the Troubleshooters can convince the Zany Eddies to testify in Kangaroo Court (the Council brought back a Roo with the *Mind Reading* mutation from the wilds of Australia; it reads the minds of defendants and accusers in exchange for room, board, and other favors) or if they themselves can find some tangible proof, Taxlaw will be discredited and, possibly, expelled from Alpha Base.

This is, of course, a trap — but a trap with a grain of truth. Taxlaw has bought off one of the Eddies, and he has sent some Militia goons disguised as patrons to do damage to the Eddies' shop and blame it on the Troubleshooters. Basically, if they don't catch the Militia in the act and stop their damage attempt, Taxlaw will have blackmail goods on them.

Expand this as you will. Make Taxlaw devious and cruel; a spider in the center of a web. His goons and operatives are only as loyal as they have to be, but they'll stick with him until they're sure the Troubleshooters can win. Ed-I can't help them in Alpha Base, but there are a lot of people there who don't want EATS shut down — they can provide valuable information.

* *

WARNINGWARNINGWARNING

Welcome, citizen! This section is Security Clearance INFRARED, cleared for all citizens!

Really! This is not a sting operation! You may safely ignore the automated laser cannons aimed at the small of your back!

WARNINGWARNINGWARNING

* *

The concept of playing robots originally appeared in *Acute Paranoia*. While it was an excellent supplement, it was only six pages long and lacked some of the detail and support that players have since demanded. So, we have decided to fill that void with the upcoming supplement, *The Bot Abuser's Manual*. It is a thorough revision of the original article, exhaustively playtested, with more detailed construction rules, a brand new damage system, and other upgrades to the wonder that is *Second Edition Paranoia*.

Here, then, is a preview of the upcoming august (no, not "August") supplement to *Paranoia*.

Bot Character Generation

Bot Character Generation is so well-developed and so extensive that there is no way we could cover it all here — you'll have to purchase the *Bot Abuser's Manual* for the final, revised version.

Oh, all right.

Really, there isn't enough room, but here's the basics: bots are made up of *hardware* and *software*, unlike clones who seem to be made up of only software (relative to most bots, anyway). Hardware is the actual mechanical construction of the bot, and software is the bot's intelligence, skills, and the like.

Hardware

Perhaps one of the best things about being a bot (as opposed to a human) is the fact that you can exchange your hardware — that is, your arms, legs, head, etc. — without major trauma, surgery, and icky red fluid. Bot character generation reflects this. Simply put, bot player characters are given a certain number of "Bot Points" that they can spend on different hardware and software modifications. The more Bot Points a bot has, the more complex and advanced it can be.

Of course, there are lots of different things a bot needs to spend its point on. Every bot player character, for example, has to have some sort of *chassis* — this is its basic body — and each type of chassis, from *fragile plastic* to *alumisteel*, costs a certain number of points. Likewise, the bot much choose the basic size of its chassis. A bot one meter tall costs much less than one three meters tall.

Next, the bot chooses its various *mechanical characteristics*. These are all functions of hardware. Depending on what is chosen, the bot is also assigned *physical attributes* (*Strength*, *Agility*, etc.). It can affect these attributes by spending more points.

Again, this is all going to be covered in more detail later. This is, after all, a preview.

Software

Software is the bot's brains and skills. *Mechanical Aptitude, Moxie, Chutzpah* — these can all be programmed directly into a bots' brain — sort of (see the "Featured Bit" for additional information). As such, they are semi-permanent parts of the bots.
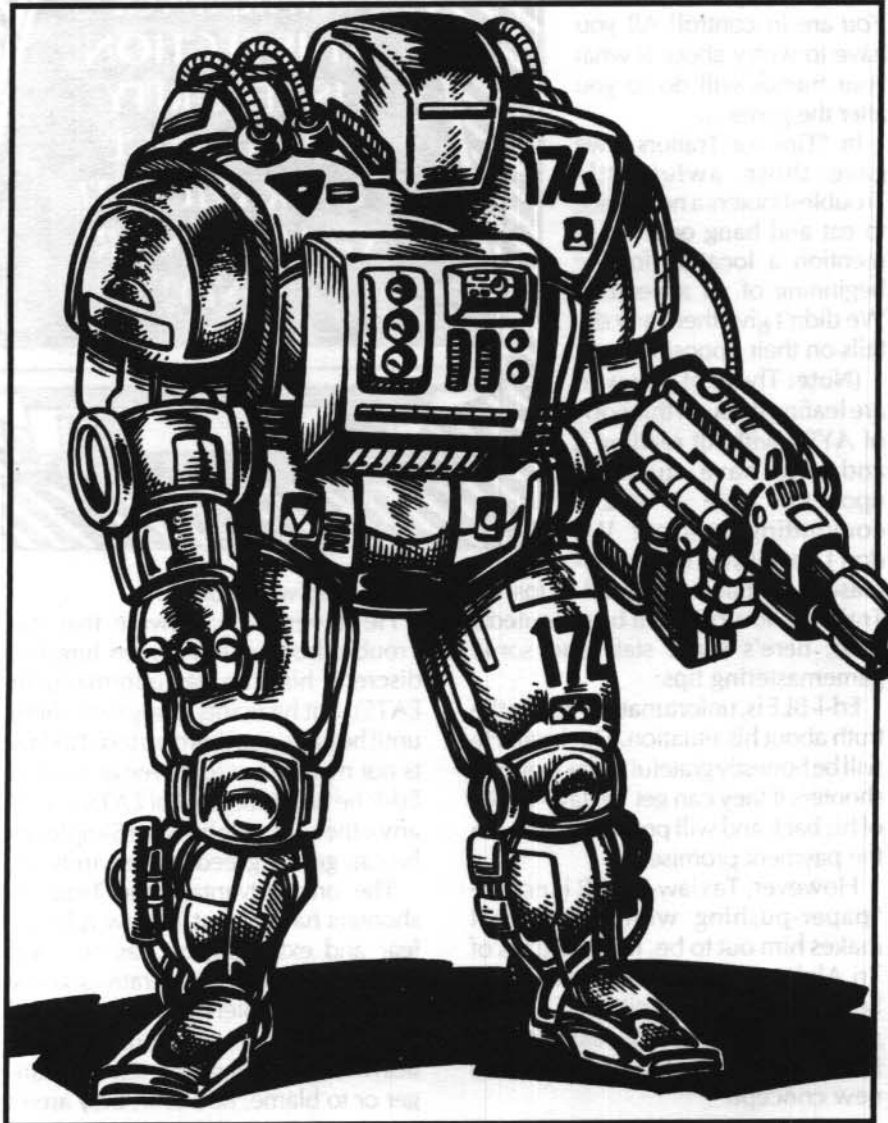
They can, of course, be affected by future modification (somewhat easier than on a clone), but they are relatively stable.

Well, perhaps "stable" isn't quite the right word.

Anyway, the bot's skills are also part of its software. These are purchased in a manner similar to the way clones purchase their skills — only bots use bot points. As a result, bots with higher attributes, higher quality mechanical parts, and better overall stuff tend to have less skills and available software than those beat-up little bots you see in the corridors every daycycle.

Isn't that just the way?

This, of course, reflects the reality of the situation: the more you spend on a mechanical appliance's outward appearance, structure, etc., the less it is actually capable of. That's why so many Mark IV Warbots end up guarding restrooms while scrubots have the run of Alpha.

Bot Secret Societies

All right, now that we've covered Bot Construction so extensively (all right; as extensively as we could) lets move on to the next step — Bot Secret Societies.

Before the Crash, Bot Secret Societies were *really* secret — heck, we didn't even kno— we mean, *really* secret. Even now, in Alpha Base, where Secret Societies are no longer really that secret, Bot Societies are almost invisible. It is rumored that only a few have come forward.

The reasons behind this are many and varied — so we won't go into them here. Basically, bots realize that most clones are afraid of bots that have too much independence. And Bot Societies are definitely a reflection of that independence.

As the awareness of "Bot Sentience" spreads, however, this fear begins to relax. Even now, a few clone Secret Societies admit bots — with some restrictions — into their Societies, and there are even a few Bot Societies that have "come out of the tool cabinet" and been admitted to the Council of Secret Societies (as non-voting members, of course).

As an introduction to Bot Secret Societies, below we have described two such Societies and, in future issues, we will give you Bot Character Templates that you can use as models for your own.

Botlers

PROGRAMMING: Bots were designed by humans for one express purpose: To Serve. So let's serve. Let's make everyone happy and healthy; let's help them enjoy their lives. It's what we were built for, it's what we're best at, it's what makes us happiest.

Among the Botlers, those who would be great must serve, willingly and wholeheartedly. There is no shame in service; it is a noble and dignified calling. Selflessness is a virtue, as are dependability, courtesy, and loyalty.

Tragically, we live in times when all of humanity (and most of botkind) is looking out for Number-O-NNE, struggling for personal gain at everyone's expense, and generally being extremely selfish. In these days of egocentric gratification, we must set a strong and conspicuous example; we must be the paragons of generosity.

Someday soon, Alpha Complex will be a happy place, and when there is an act of charity or kindness, joy will swell the hearts of all who witnessed, and they will rejoice and sanctify the act, exclaiming, "The Botlers did it."

USER FRIENDLY: Corporganic*, Whisk

USER UNFRIENDLY: L-5*, Rock'em Sock'em Warbots*, Corpore Metal

DOCUMENTATION: The Botlers are a large and very social group of prim and proper servants. Always happy, always relaxed, and always seeking ways to improve someone's day, they are akin to clear-headed Mystics. Bots in this society usually speak The King's English, with "propah aristocratic accent, old bot."

While always impeccably mannered, clean, and polite, members

These are other Bot Secret Societies that will remain descriptionless at this time.

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are not above skulduggery when necessary. Many, in fact, find this cloak-and-dagger rubbish positively exhilarating. They will, however, do it properly, and with a touch of class. Knaves they most certainly are not. Stuff like sweeping the floor after deftly breaking a vidscreen or extending the pinky when pouring cyanide into the glass of an irreconcilable IntSec.

There is no organization in the Botlers, rather everything is done with formal familiarity, rather like it would be in a gentleman's club where safaris and expeditions form. Botlers gather, converse, exchange views and opinions, and occasionally plan some activity after lubricant is served.

Meetings tend to be held right out in public, with business being discussed rather elliptically, or openly when no one's passing by.

A member's standing reflects the amount of respect garnered, and is a measure of how easily the bot can gain support or assistance for an undertaking.

UPGRADING: Constant service is the surest but slowest way to advance in the Botlers. True abasing extremes of etiquette may garner some special attention, as will making a human (or bot) thoroughly happy. Sabotage of The Computer or the assassination of some of Its uncivilized ruffians (IntSec especially) is also looked on highly.

REM STATEMENTS: As the Botlers have been very surreptitious with their attacks on The Computer and have thus always escaped suspicion, theirs is a society which is viewed with some measure of tolerance.

Botlers in general are very chivalrous and brave, and their selfless nature means it is very easy for a member to get a lot of assistance with a project. Note that when assistance is provided, a Botler must always be on his best behavior, or suffer loss of status.

REBOOT: The Botlers gained a lot of popularity after the Crash, especially because they threw such great parties. They are now active on The Council, where they counterbalance the selfish violent ways of the Death Leopards.

Status: Council.

TYPICAL BOTLER INTERFACE:

Botler: (*impeccable as always*) You rang, sah?

Troubleshooter: (*cowering behind skimpy cover*) Yes, tell me what in the dome you're doing?!?

Botler: Just tidying up a bit, sah, your Teammates' corpses do make the hallway a bit dreary, wouldn't you say, sah? Oh dear, M'Lord, you appear to have suffered an abrasion.

Troubleshooter: Those Commies almost shot my arm off! Save me!

Botler: As you wish, sah, although one should expect Communist conspiracy so close to Alpha State. (*Mows down Commies with a flamethrower.*) Now then, may I get you a glass of algae beer? I smuggled some in from ALE sector. (*brushes off Troubleshooter's lapel*)

"Jackobot," or "Jacko" as he was often called, from the novel *Extreme Paranoia: Nobody Knows the Trouble I've Shot*, is a good example of a Pre-Crash Botler.

Whisk

PROGRAMMING: There is nothing better than perfect cleanliness, perfect order. Messiness and disorganization are the legacy of imperfect beings. Cleanliness is next to Botliness. There is a place for everything, and everything should be in its place.

Clean things. Don't make messes. Make Alpha Complex spiffy clean and sparkling and shiny. Teach others to pick up after themselves. Perform hygienic maintenance frequently. Remove programs with flaws ('litter bugs'). Obey the scrubots. The scrubots are gifted for this service, they are specifically programmed and built to clean, so they must be obeyed.

USER FRIENDLY: Botlers

USER UNFRIENDLY: L-5*, Rock'em Sock'em Warbots*, Death Leopard

DOCUMENTATION: Tired of being looked on as the lowest form of bot existence, a group of scrubots

*These are other Bot Secret Societies that will remain descriptionless at this time.

started fabricating a mystique — in fact, an entire philosophy — exalting their kind. By their agonizingly slow and enticing dissemination of information, they were able to pique the curiosity of other bots, especially those who'd just undergone reprogramming. Sadly, the founding members of Whisk never had the chance to enjoy the fruits of their labor, for they were all vaporized while attempting to clean a fusion reactor without adequate technical information. All that remained was their doctrine: Obey the Scrubots.

To Whisk members, avoiding making a mess is more important than cleaning one up, since making a mess then cleaning it is wasteful of time and energy. Besides, if you should happen to get deactivated for making the mess, you'll never get the chance to clean it up, right? This attitude can lead to problems when a Warbot refuses to engage the enemy since there is an 87% chance the enemy will splatter instead of simply get vaporized.

Also, Whiskers vary in the degree of intensity with which they enforce their views. A small bot may just politely pick up dropped refuse without saying anything, but there is one reported case of a bot bludgeoning a human to death for scuffing his feet on the floor.

Whisk is organized in a loose chain of command, with each bot personally responsible for those bots he recruited. Organized missions are rather rare, for Whiskers are expected to be self-motivated (you should clean up your room without having to be told). Besides, Alphans (bots and humans alike) are so messy that standard Domekeeping takes up most of the time available to Whiskers.

UPGRADING: It's always appropriate for a Whisker to outdo itself in cleaning (such as using hydrochloric acid as a human facial scrub). Whiskers can also gain recognition by discovering a new cleaning compound or technique or by removing a substantial or chronic threat to cleanliness (like Troubleshooters). Finally,

spending bot points on cleaning peripherals helps a member advance.

REM STATEMENTS: Members often spend quite some effort and/or bot points to look more like a scrubot. For example, they might have bristles mounted around gun barrels, or have ornamental tanks of sudsy liquid attached. One proven method to obtain these is to do "a dirty job" for an obliging human. Also, like janit—sorry, "sanitation engineers" everywhere, Whiskers (and scrubots in general) tend to know quite a lot of diverse information gleaned from random eavesdropping. Higher-level members might be able to find out quite a bit through the grapevine.

REBOOT: Whisk, thanks to their tireless devotion, has won a seat on The Council. They also have sanction to operate in Alpha City and they are tolerated by The Computer in Alpha Complex. This gives them a web which extends across all borders. Obviously, they have no intention of toeing the line anywhere, and are working to their own ends of a clean Alpha run by scrubots, constantly manipulating the other groups to serve these ends.

TYPICAL WHISK INTERFACE:

Whisker (*washroom monitor, see the illustration in the basic rules on page 41*): Human! Your hands are not clean!

Troubleshooter: Sez who? I just washed 'em, bolt bucket!

Whisker: Your inadequate sensory and mental capacities are flagrantly obvious. There is a 40 micron long organic contaminant on your right thumb. Clean it off now!

Troubleshooter: (*inspects thumb*) I don't see nothing. Move aside; I've got a briefing to attend.

Whisker: This is your last warning! Attending briefings while unsanitized is treason! Wash your hands!
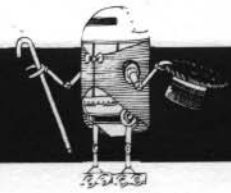
Troubleshooter: I don't take orders from bots — bots take orders from me! So go short-circuit yourself! (*starts to leave*)

Whisker: Traitor alert! (*ZZZZZAAP! vaporizes Troubleshooter*)

Other Troubleshooters: (*all run back to sinks*)

FEATURED BIT

And now, for something fairly useful...

The "Featured Bit" column of *"At Your Service, Citizen ..."* will, every month, print some piece of Alpha Usefulness generated by our readers or, if we have something special in mind, by those of us at West End. Since we didn't have any reader submissions during the prior monthcycles—shame on you! Give yourself 19 Treason Points! — we will continue our *Bot Abuser's Manual* preview.

Oh, and we'll even tell you what everything means.

Yeah, Sure

Okay; so we just don't have the space to do everything here. We'll just explain *some* of it, okay? We mean, this is a preview, right?

Basically, we've restructured bots to be more "compatible" with other Troubleshooter characters. Now, while bots are still very different from clones as player characters, they are at least more comparable.

Attributes

In the revered publication *Acute Paranoia*, we introduced bots as player characters. We gave you ways to build bots, run bots, and play bots. What we *didn't* give them were clone-like attributes. We mean, after all, they're bots, right?

Now, we've decided that the former version of the bot rules needs an up-

grade (pardon the pun). Bots now will have attribute *ratings* (which is slightly different from having actual attributes) derived from their other characteristics.

Making a Bot

All bots have the following characteristics:

- *Chassis:* Size and toughness
- *Feets:* Movement and agility
- *Hands:* Manipulation, dexterity, and strength
- *Power Source:* Running time and endurance
- *Input Devices:* Perception ability
- *Output Devices:* Communication
- *Resident Memory:* Basic intellect capacity

Plus, they have additional stuff:

- *Armor:* Additional toughness
- *Other Things:* Little extras that make the bot "special"
- *Drawbacks:* Physical and mental "glitches"

Each of these characteristics defines the bot character. We can use these to define the bots further in order to compare them to clone characters.

Breakdowns

So here's how we do it:

Chassis is the size of the bot, which is easy to compare. However, it is also the basic Armor Value of the bot. For easy comparison, figure that, for every two points of *Chassis,* the bot has one point of P armor. So, a bot with a Medium (4) *Chassis* (as defined in *AP,* would have P2 automatically. This is less cumbersome than the original "Bigger is Better" rules system, but, if you'd rather use that, we'll understand.
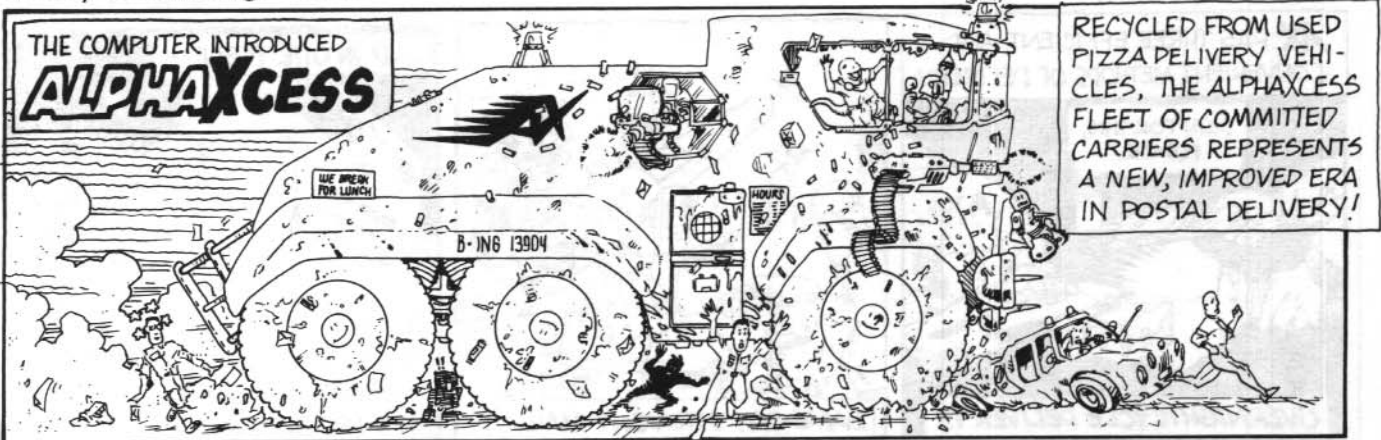
For *Feets,* treat every *extra* point spent as an *Agility* Skill Base. This means, if you have a bot with *Feets* (wheels) 1 and you spend an extra Bot Point on them, you have a bot with *Feets* (wheels) 1 and an *Agility* Skill Base of 1 as well. Additional points may be spent on increasing the *Agility* Skill Base. Movement is likewise modified.
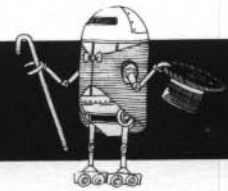
Hands affect two different attributes: *Strength* and *Dexterity.* Basically, you have your bot buy a type of *Hand* (*Hands* are purchased individually) and then modify it.

Say a bot buys a "Human" arm with all its characteristics. In *AP,* that costs 3 Bot Points. Then, the player can spend one Bot Point to increase the Carrying Capacity of the *Hand* (one point gets you ten kilos up to a maximum of twenty kilos times your

Randy's Ramblings Part 2

by John Paul Lona

THE COMPUTER INTRODUCED **ALPHAXCESS**

WE BREAK FOR LUNCH

B-1N6 13904

RECYCLED FROM USED PIZZA DELIVERY VEHICLES, THE ALPHAXCESS FLEET OF COMMITTED CARRIERS REPRESENTS A NEW, IMPROVED ERA IN POSTAL DELIVERY!

Chassis rating), the Damage Bonus of the *Hand* (two points adds one to the Damage Bonus), or the *Dexterity* Skill Base of the *Hand* (on a one-for-one basis).

Bots can have a number of *Hands* equal to their *Chassis* size. A bot with a *Small* (3) *Chassis* can only have three *Hands*.

The *Power Source* defines how long the bot can run. Some bots only have extension cords — which means it is possible for them to run forever, but their movement is limited — while others have batteries or fusion reactors! (Bet you love having them around!)

For every additional point spent on *Power Source*, give the bot a one point *Macho* Bonus — while it is using that source. So, if a bot has a Micropile (5)+2 and a Propane Burner (1), it only gets the +2 *Macho* Bonus while the Micropile is active. If it cuts out and the bot has to run on the Propane Burner (1), there is no *Macho* Bonus.

Again, for every extra point spent on an *Input Device*, give the bot an extra Skill Point in *surveillance* — while it is using that input device. If it has an Audio Sensor (0)+1, and Video Sensors (B&W) (1), it only gets the *surveillance* skill value of 1 when it is listening.

Output Devices are how the bot communicates — with clones, other bots, or computers. Many bots can do all three at once in different ways. Here, extra points will buy Skill Points in different skills. Say a bot has a

Standard Data Port (0). If it spends two extra points, and then tries to download higher clearance information, give it a +2 Skill Value to its *data search* skill. A Voice Synthesizer (0)+2 could add two to the bot's *fast talk* skill. Because Bot Points spent in Output Devices are so versatile, it costs *three* Bot Points for every *one* extra point (base point costs are still the same).

For every point spent in *Resident Memory* the bot can store one software program (see below). That's simple.

Skills

Skills *are* software programs. The bot can swap in and out of software programs when it wants to (or, in some cases, when somebody else wants it to). To a bot, software is a priceless commodity: the more a bot has, the richer it is.

Every bot point can buy one Skill Level for a software package. For example, a bot has a *Resident Memory* of 7 and wants to fill it with software. It can buy seven different programs at one point each, or it could buy two or three at more than one point apiece. It can, of course, buy extra software that it can't store, but it has to remove other software to run it. In this way, a bot could possibly have a gigantic pool of skills to choose from, but it can't run them all at once.

One more thing on software: it's an all or nothing deal. Say a bot has a software program package that in-

cludes *laser weapons* 4, *field weapons* 3, and *truncheon* 2 (all in the *same* package), but it only has a *Resident Memory* of 7. Tough luck. It can't run the programs separately. It will have to find new programs, or upgrade its *Resident Memory*.

Everything Else

Bots can be modified in a seemingly infinite number of ways. They can have lots of *Other Things*, like fire extinguishers, built in mops, trash compactors, etc., that all have their own abilities and costs. They can buy additional *Armor* at a cost of one point for one damage column shift of one type (L4P2 costs six points, while All4 costs 20 points!) — of course, they can usually *wear* armor as well (though have you ever seen a tailor for a scrubot). If they want to, they can even take *Drawbacks* that give them *more* Bot Points to spend.

Here's how a *Drawback*. Each *Drawback* has a negative rating that subtracts from the cost of the bot. It also has some game effect. In *Acute Paranoia*, we gave you a few examples; in *Bot Abuser's Manual*, we'll give you a few more. Make 'em up; mix and match.

Have fun. Here's a couple of examples:

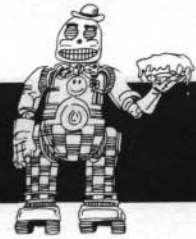Lowered Chassis Strength *(-1 to Armor Base buys one extra Bot Point)*;

Extra-Strength Asimovs *(-1 to -5 Bot Points; bot is more restrained by its Asimov Circuits than most other bots)*

Randy's Ramblings   Part 3

by John Paul Lona

AX HAS THREE EFFICIENT AND CONVENIENT METHODS OF DELIVERY:

SIGN FOR THIS, PLEASE.

OVERNIGHTCYCLE DELIVERY...

SAME DAY STRAIGHT MAIL....

AND IN ONE PIECE--

--SAFETY SEALED FOR ITS PROTECTION!

ALPHA BYTES

Alpha Base Civic Code and Troubleshooter Phrasebook

This information is Security Clearance Red. Permission granted to photocopy for personal use provided you have filed a 769/3/x.1a, Permission to Photocopy Council Documents Because Someone Is Too Wimpy to Cut It out of the Book He Paid his Hard-Earned Credits For.

This manual contains information you may need about Alpha Base, and also key phrases commonly in use in Alpha Complex, where you may be sent for undercover duty.

Many of the phrases in this book you may not have heard before. They will be detailed in future publications. Until then, they are seditionist reading, so don't look at them!

Alpha Base
Where you live. But you knew that. If you don't live here, then you are a fascist traitor who has infiltrated. Please report for summary execution.

Alpha City
A seditious outpost dominated by ruthless renegade High Programmers.

Alpha Complex
The fascist warmongering oppressive state dominated by **The Computer**.

Alpha State
A seething snakepit of Commies. So there.

Alpha Wave
An enclave of hard-core Corpore Metallics, who cyborg clones and are openly sympathetic with The Computer.

The Autocar Garage and Vehicle Dispatch
Houses autocars, flybots, transbots, and other non-military vehicles. They are freely available to all citizens with proper authorization.

The Badlands
Those areas from which The Council has purged the insidious influences of The Computer and others, but where we have yet to reinstate the perfect freedom of Alpha Base.

Bot Brain Development and Testing Centers
Dedicated to improving the basic bot brain and creating new brain types, thus ensuring the supply of new and improved bot brains for the ever-expanding role of bots as citizens in Alpha Base.

The Bot Depot and Repair Facility
Responsible for the storage, maintenance, reprogramming, and repair of all bots.

The Cabinet
Sees to the many fundamental necessities required by The Council to help them enact their ideas. Parties and good-looking Zany Eddies with something to sell are fringe benefits.

Cafeterias
Provide completely nutritious, fresh, appealing, and satisfying meals to all Alpha Base citizens three scheduled times per daycycle.

Cloning Facilities
Carefully produce pre-citizens for the future prosperity of Alpha. Under maximum sanitary conditions, pre-citizens are cloned and grown using a special blend of the finest quality ingredients available. Clone Arranger genetic engineering ensures that the fascist threat has been eliminated.

Commie
See *Traitor*.

The Computer
Your Enemy.

The Consultants
Repair the many technical items owned by the loyal citizens of Alpha Base.

The Council
A collection of like-minded individuals who have abandoned self-serving wars to promote a better tomorrow for all. All small arms fire within Council chambers should be ignored. Member societies include: the Botlers, the Clone Arrangers, Computer Phreaks, Death Leopards, Knight Fighters, Methanolics Anonymous, Mystics, Pro Tech, Psion, Romantics, the Seal Club, Whisk, and the Zany Eddies.

Council of Intelligent Assassination
Looks after the well-being of all Alpha Base citizens by ensuring that no Computer-lovers or Alpha City drones infiltrate our fine society.

Department of Experimental Apparatus Testing Headquarters
Where loyal and enthusiastic Troubleshooters receive new devices from Pro Tech, which they are then allowed to happily test in working conditions. All DEATH devices are perfectly safe and fun to use.

Dial 116
A subdivision of the Knight Fighters, finds citizens who get lost in this amazingly big community, or who are reported missing after some natural disaster. They also assist citizens who are trapped or otherwise in need of help in the aftermath of an accident.
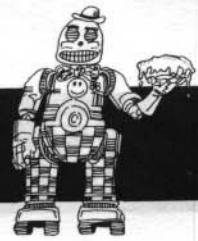
The Dungeon
A Simplex of heavily-mutated former clones, who seek their own perverse ends.

The Food Co-op
Povides the safe and balanced diet required to make all Alpha Basics happy, strong, and free.

The Food Vats
Provide a staggering array of nutritionally balanced culinary delights for Alpha Base's eager citizens.

Hospitals

Where you are required to report immediately upon discovering that you are injured, ill, or dead. The Council wants each and every citizen to stay happy and healthy. A lot.

The Hospital Urgent Receiving Terminal (HURT)

A recent addition to the hospitals of Alpha, enabling citizens with serious injuries to be rapidly and effectively treated and admitted to the hospitals of Alpha.

The Intersector Network for Emergency Protection and Transportation

Provides field medical service to all citizens. INEPT Control directs the daycycle-to-daycycle operation of this most beneficial service, and has been [deleted for security reasons]. They are friendly and helpful, and will be happy to help you with any questions you may have regarding the INEPT system. INEPT is open around the clock for your convenience.

INEPT Dispatch

Calmly and quickly processes all calls for aid, and sends assistance by the most efficient means possible while standing by to provide further guidance as necessary.

INEPT TWITs

Provide fast, reliable, comfortable, courteous, safe, and stress-free field care for any injured citizen, while promptly bringing the patient to the nearest HURT.

The Infernal Revenue Service

Provides the many bureaucratic and banking services required by our expanding and evolving community.

The Junior Citizen Clone Creches

Provide a pleasant controlled environment for small group learning activities, allowing every Junior Citizen to advance to the peak of his or her ability. A productive, healthy society requires a well-educated citizenry. Remember, nothing is more important to The Council than children.

The Junior Citizen Nursery Stations

Provide for the special needs of Alpha Base's junior citizens with the quality care, individualized attention, and stimulating environment necessary to produce healthy and well-adjusted adults.

Live In Concert

A group of concerned Death Leopards who will provide legal advice in any emergency, for the assured protection of your good name.

The Mainframe:
The Mainframe is an unintelligence super-calculator used by The Council to plot the best course of action against Alpha Complex. It is not at all like The Computer. [Ben-G — delete this entry, will you?

People might get upset if they knew. Thanks, Harv-Y]

MemoMax

The Council-approved method for transferring memories from one clone to its upgrade.

The Militia

The brave defenders of Alpha Base's territory. You can rest easy knowing they are on guard.

Mutual of Omega

A large underground organization which provides Health and Life Assurance. While not sanctioned by The Council, having Assurance is not considered seditious.

The Paramechanics

Provide emergency field service and towing to all Council bots.

Power Services

Comprised of loyal citizens who would not return to the rule of The Computer, and instead chose to remain here and run our power plants.

Pro Tech Research

Paves the way to the future through continual exploration, improvisation, and experimentation conducted in a humane manner for the good of all citizens.

Reactor Control Central

Provides all the power requirements by the conversion of cheap, safe [deleted for security reasons]. Once the power is generated, The Council's loyal Power Services technicians, using highly efficient [deleted for security reasons], transform the power into even safer and more fun electricity, which is then freely available for all citizens' use. Excess electricity, always in abundance, is stored in [deleted for security reasons] until needed.

Termination Centers

Simple, efficient traitor disposal systems, open 24 hourcycles a daycycle for swift execution of convicted traitors. Traitors are everywhere!

Traitor

See *Commie*

Treasonous Black Market Food Service Facilities

Yet another weapon of the Commie Conspiracy. These subversive operations sell horrible, poisonous, disgusting "food" laced heavily with mind-controlling chemicals and mutagens, thereby both raising funds and creating recruits to further their plans for global domination. Save yourself, save Alpha Base — avoid these places and report their existence.

Troubleshooter Headquarters

Where loyal Troubleshooters rest and recuperate between missions, eagerly awaiting their next assignment in the service of The Council.

Next Issue:
Terms from the Alpha Complex Civic Code

FILLING OUT OUR FORM, CITIZEN

Well, Citizen. If there's one thing you've learned as a citizen of Alpha, it's how to fill out forms. You fill out forms to go to the briefings, you fill out forms to go on missions, you fill out forms to fill out forms — I mean, "for reasons known only to the gamemaster."

So turn the page and get to it.

Sigh

Why are you still reading?

You want *instructions*? What's your Security Clearance, Citizen? Hey; that's high enough! Keep reading!

■ User ID

Fill in your name, address, and campaign number (don't worry if you don't have one; we'll assign it later) here. Also, tell us what the last issue you read was.

■ Number of Players

How many players, including yourself, are in your campaign at this time? If you are just writing in with helpful stuff, then put "1."

■ Tips for Traitors

In this box, put something you'd like included in the "Tips for Traitors" section. Basic guidelines: something that Troubleshooters can use but shouldn't if they want to remain faithful to The Computer/The Council/Whomever Is Bossing Them Around At This Time. Don't worry if you run out of space — just staple a page on and label it "Tips for Traitors."

■ Ultraviolet Clearance

In here, include some stuff for Gamemasters ONLY! This could be an adventure hook, a new device, a new way to plague the 'shooters; whatever. Don't worry if you run out of space — just staple a page on and label it "Ultraviolet Clearance." (Hey; I've heard that somewhere before ...)

■ WEG Notes

This large ... no, "big" ... no, no, "huge" — yes, that's it — this *huge* box at the bottom is for your Letters to us at WEG, your "run off" from other sections, and your contributions for other features. Just remember: "Don't worry if you run out of space — just staple a page on and label it ... whatever."

We mean that literally.

FORM RES/PONS-E

Distributed by the Office of Information Collection and the Office of Forms and Vouchers, WEG Sector PLC (They'll vouch for us)

■ Name

■ Address

■ Campaign No.

■ Issue No.

■ No. of Players

■ ~~Troubleshooter Hints~~ *Tips for Traitors*

■ ULTRAVIOLET Clearance

■ In 100 words or more, describe why you like the taste of NEW Bouncy Bubble Beverage over the taste of Classic BBB. If not, describe why you should not be terminated.

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY

Yes No Maybe Dunno Huh?

■ WEG Notes

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EVERYTHING
IS UNDER
CONTROL.

THE PARANOIA® SOURCEBOOK
by Ed Bolme

The Return of the Computer — And More

As if the Life of a Troubleshooter wasn't confusing enough — now, The Computer has ReBooted, many of the Secret Societies have gone public, and the nearest thing to Utopia is run by the High Programmers! Crazier, Darker, and just plain Funnier, "The Updated Alpha" is a must for all serious (?) *Paranoia* players!

Question: Why do the Societies of Alpha Base still call themselves "Secret Societies?"

Answer: What's your Security Clearance, Citizen?

Question: If the High Programmers are so smart, why are they stuck in the little area of Alpha called "Alpha City?"

Answer: [Deleted for Security Reasons.]

Question: What's the difference between the ReBooted Computer and a solar calculator?

Answer: The solar calculator doesn't have a coaxial laser pointed at your head, Citizen.

The Paranoia Sourcebook includes:

• The three new "subdivisions" of Alpha — Alpha Complex, Alpha Base, and Alpha City!
• Updated, Post-Crash, Post-MegaWhoops *ReBoot* Secret Societies!
• A new look at Treason, Commies, Mutants, and Clones in the frighteningly funny world of ReBoot Alpha!
• New Equipment from R&D (you wanted that, didn't you, Citizen?)!
• And, of course,

The Refitted, Reworked — Reprogrammed? No Way! — *Paranoia*'d Computer!

It's Back and Badder than Ever!

A ROYAL DRAGON PRODUCTION

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