

PARANOIA™

WMD

Four Straight missions of darkly humorous naked overweening ambition!

BY THE TRAITOR RECYCLING STUDIO

BETH FISCHI

JEFF GROVES

DAN CURTIS JOHNSON

BILL O'DEA

ALLEN VARNEY

Design/Fissile material

ALLEN VARNEY

BETH FISCHI

Editing, layout, graphics/Detonator

JIM HOLLOWAY

Cover and interior illustrations/Readout

DAN GELBER

GREG COSTIKYAN

ERIC GOLDBERG

Original game design & development/Fuse

IAN BELCHER

Mongoose Publishing roleplaying manager/
Pilot

RON BEDISON

Proofreadnig/Bombardier

ALEXANDER FENNEL

Mongoose production director/
Mission planning

THE COMPUTER

The real Weapon of Mass Destruction

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Hunger (<i>Dan Curtis Johnson</i>)	4
Hot Potato (<i>Jeff Groves</i>)	26
Infohazard (<i>Bill O'Dea</i>)	39
Fending Off Disaster Pop Quiz	51
WMD (<i>Beth Fischi & Allen Varney</i>)	52
Episode 4 Secret skills	74
Skeeter's blog (transcript)	75
MemoMax restoration form	76
Pregenerated PCs	77

Security clearance **ULTRAVIOLET**
WARNING:

Knowledge or possession of this information by any citizen of Security Clearance **VIOLET** or below is treason punishable by being forced to play all missions in this book consecutively. Without bathroom breaks!

TM & Copyright © 1983, 1987, 2005 by Eric Goldberg & Greg Costikyan. All Rights Reserved. Mongoose Publishing Ltd., Authorized User. Based on material published in previous editions of **PARANOIA**.

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

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

E-mail questions and comments to **Mongoose Publishing** at sales@mongoosepublishing.com, or write to **PO Box 1018, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 1DG, UNITED KINGDOM**.

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

Published by Mongoose Publishing, Ltd. Publication MGP 6633. Published July 2005. First printing July 2005.



What? More Drive!

Welcome, Gamemaster! This **PARANOIA** collection, *WMD*, offers four missions in the Straight play style:

- ④ The book opens with the fearsome bureaucratic nightmare entitled '**WMD**'.
- ④ Next up is a short, atmospheric exercise in tension, '**WMD**'.
- ④ For a change of pace, look into the offbeat horrific-comic piece we call '**WMD**'.
- ④ The collection builds to a reality-bending shock finale in the startling '**WMD**'.

Okay, we'll take our medication now. In fact these four missions have different titles, though each of them revolves around a gimmick with the initials 'WMD'.

Early on, we actually did plan to give all four missions the same title. Wiser counsel soon prevailed. But oh man, we reeally wanted to write that introductory section.

Well-Meaning Debacles

These *WMD* missions explore a kind of tense suspense new to **PARANOIA**. We expect them to startle and bewilder experienced players—and probably Gamemasters, too.

Why? Because the missions in *WMD* make sense.

Let us explain. The Straight play style, described in the **PARANOIA** rulebook, postulates a working, scarily functional Alpha Complex. Inspirations include Kafka, Orwell, *Catch-22*, *Brazil*, *The Prisoner* and Stanislaw Lem's 1973 novel *Memoirs Found in a Bathtub*. In this style smart player characters (PCs) can survive and get ahead. Classic and Zap styles foster a 'shoot first, accuse later' attitude; Straight is 'gather evidence, accuse and let The Computer do the dirty work.' You, the GM, build the players' mutual suspicions gradually, over one or several missions.

Straight is still satirically funny, but it emphasizes tense suspense and fear—not just the usual fear your buddies will shoot you in the back (a hallmark of the Classic and Zap styles as well), but a more subtle fear, one that grows over time. It's the idea that Alpha Complex, from a certain viewpoint, makes genuine sense—and (a still worse fear) that in time, the players may gradually adopt that view themselves.

Outlandish? Think about it:

- ④ No poverty, homelessness or unemployment. Nutritious food, functional

shelter and advanced medical care, all free. Very little street-type crime, as we understand it. Everything's clean. Most INFRAREDS, the great majority of the populace, are basically content, albeit drugged.

- ④ No race- or gender-based discrimination (though mutants are another matter).
- ④ The security clearance system is, considered on its own terms, a pure meritocracy—or anyway, you don't gain high status simply by being born into it or piling up wealth.
- ④ The Computer and the whole of society work ceaselessly to maintain good order and keep everyone happy.

On its own terms, it kind of makes sense, doesn't it?

No, we don't believe it either. But the missions in *WMD* may, by insidiously dangling prospects for advancement, lure the PCs into supporting the Alpha Complex system. In other words, they may get co-opted. These *Brazil*-like dark satires seduce players into brazenly committing acts they would have sworn, up and down, they'd never actually consider.

It works like this. Usually The Computer sends its Troubleshooters into ludicrous, pointless yet deadly fiascos that your players know in advance will be hose-jobs. In contrast, these *WMD* missions are genuine dangers to good order in Alpha Complex, and present (apparent) prospects for actual solutions. In dispatching the PCs to fight them, The Computer is doing the sensible thing, and the players will be equally sensible if they tackle these problems head-on like responsible citizens. They can actually solve the problems and better everyone's lives—if they behave sensibly.

This being **PARANOIA**, though, each player has excellent reason to avoid sensible behavior, because such acts will [demote / let rival players get ahead of / bankrupt / kill] him. Each PC also faces corresponding temptations to betray his sensible companions to gain [advancement in clearance / promotion in a secret society / revenge]. These impulses inevitably lead the entire mission team to [horrible acts / utter calamity / mutual annihilation].

In a well-run Classic **PARANOIA** game your players might giggle and tell you, 'You should feel ashamed you're putting us through this.' In a well-run *WMD* Straight mission, ideally your players end up staring in horror and saying, 'How could we do this to ourselves?'

Workmanlike Mission Details

④ '**Hunger**' by Dan Curtis Johnson: The service firm *Wholesome Meal Distributors* puts the Troubleshooters in charge of an experimental food program guaranteed to produce good results. This blackly humorous mission takes its inspiration from Communist China's calamitous Great Leap Forward, 1958–61.

④ '**Hot Potato**' by Jeff Groves: The PCs get hold of a cataclysmically destructive Old Reckoning *Weapon of Mass Destruction*, and naturally everyone else wants it. This mission also works well in Classic style.

④ '**Infohazard**' by Bill O'Dea: The Troubleshooters venture into a sector devastated by a *Wireless Memory Downgrade* virus. Deceived (perhaps willingly) by a false Computer, the PCs become High Programmers—for a time.

④ '**WMD**' by Beth Fische and Allen Varney: This mission really is titled '**WMD**'. On a search for a rogue *Weapon of Memory Destruction*, Lobot WMD-1, the Troubleshooters plunge into a Philip K. Dick-style realm of shifting perceptions and uncertain memory.

This mission employs several handouts, included at the end of the book. You may photocopy and distribute these handouts for personal use only, or download free electronic versions (plus extra bonus content!) from the Mongoose Publishing Web site at www.mongoosepublishing.com.

Wise & Meritorious Deeds

We gratefully acknowledge help from these fine citizens:

Playtesters: Jack Baldwin, Chris Brayden, Dallas de Atley, Simon Dorrington, Zeke Fraser, Adam McGregor, Jeff McRorie, Dan Preston, Jeff Rebbeck, Daniel Reed, Tobias Svalborg.

Tongue-twist master: Saul Resnikoff
Heroes of Our Complex: Andy 'Jizzer' Fitzpatrick, Zeke Fraser and Chaz Estell, High Programmers of Paranoia-Live.net (www.paranoia-live.net), the leading **PARANOIA** fan site.

Straighten it out

Tips for running Straight-style *PARANOIA*, by Bill O'Dea (www.FriendComputer.net)

What do you need to know to run a *PARANOIA* Straight mission? What makes Straight style different?

Some GMs think Straight missions are less deadly—that you can tell a Straight mission when, after their briefing, the PCs are still on their first clones. Not necessarily. The difference is not in the body count; it's in how those bodies are racked up. Straight situations are not less deadly; they're just less likely to erupt in a firefight. Savvy Troubleshooters find ways around trouble, ways that don't require shooting.

The changes

Here are suggestions for making a Straight mission more straight. Of course you, the GM, are always right; do what you want.

Less Computer, more flunkies: In Classic and Zap games, The Computer is always just a call away. Use your PDC or a public terminal, or just shout, and The Computer responds. In a Straight game, The Big C isn't so available; there's an army of clerks, bureaucrats, and gatekeepers between the players and The Computer. Do the PCs call about their mission? They get an ORANGE dispatcher at Troubleshooter Headquarters. Request for a map? Say hello to a YELLOW clerk at CPU's Directions Clearinghouse. Accusation of treason? A GREEN IntSec goon is happy to take your call.

Higher-clearance citizens appear only rarely: How likely are you to see the Board of Directors at your company? Unless you're high up on the org chart, not often. On the same principle, resist using high-clearance citizens in a Straight mission. Use a YELLOW functionary in debriefings. ORANGE clerks answer help calls. And never bring an ULTRAVIOLET onstage unless you absolutely, positively *must* have him. Someone that high would never consort with mere Troubleshooters.

Competence: In Straight games, Alpha Complex works. The bureaucrats really do know what they're doing. The military commanders are ruthlessly effective. Internal Security—brrr. Regardless of play style, *PARANOIA* PCs are always fighting The System, but in Straight games The System clearly has the advantage. The PCs must cleverly wriggle through its weak points: corruption, excessively secure lines of communication and paranoia.

Every shot is heard: Because Alpha Complex works well, some bureaucrat is charged with accounting for every shot. 'Is this Team 77/4C? We have a sensor record of three laser shots in quick succession at your present location. Please explain why shots were fired.' This prospect dissuades prudent players from Zap-happy laserfests. You don't want to stop PCs from killing characters, but tone down obvious violence in favor of more subtle approaches—such as getting someone *else* to do the killing.

More reality, less cartoon: Physics in a Zap game is a joke, albeit a pretty good one. Physics in Classic can be anything from kinda

realistic to kinda wild. In a Straight game, physics should be more realistic. That said, don't worry about calculating the distance a body would roll when thrown from an autocar moving at 40 kph—that's for other (non-fun) games. Just make sure the body doesn't make a clone-shaped hole in a wall.

Fear: *PARANOIA* stresses fear and ignorance. But Classic fear is Halloween mock-anxiety; Zap fear is the scream of a rollercoaster ride; at no point does a player get, you know, actually *disturbed*. Straight fear is, or at least can be, terror. We're talking *Call of Cthulhu* here.

Implausible? Try this: Right now, flip through the 'Hunger' mission at the start of this collection and read the various text boxes about the history of the Great Leap Forward. Then return here.

Unsettling, wasn't it? You feel like just knowing that stuff has changed something inside you. That's Straight fear—an awareness so shocking, you crack jokes as anaesthesia. In a way it's even more disturbing than Cthulhoid aliens, because it's not aliens or crazed cultists committing the horror — it's ordinary citizens.

Ambition: In Classic or Zap, the idea of actively seeking advancement would strike most players as silly. No one lives long enough to rise to high clearance, and it's not clear what they would do there.

Straight-style PCs can pursue actual career tracks. They can aspire to lofty status, from which height they can undertake long-term plans. This gives you, the GM, a potent weapon to inspire anxiety. Fear is just another word for something left to lose.

Pace: Slow it down. Fast works for action, but it kills suspense.

Humor: This is Straight, not Stale. Every *PARANOIA* mission should be funny, regardless of style. But in Straight the humor is darker, edgier, more subtle. The Three Stooges vs. *The Truman Show*: Both are funny but in entirely different ways.

No puns: So simple, yet so hard....

The constants

Some *PARANOIA* staples hold in all styles, including Straight:

Catch-22s: These, the bread and butter of *PARANOIA*, should haunt every mission regardless of style. Let the players face an impossible scenario and force them to figure out a solution.

Backstabbing: If Catch-22s are the bread and butter, this is the lunchmeat. Always give your players chances to scheme, plot and generally behave badly.

Fun: There is no Boring game style. Make sure your players are enjoying themselves playing it Straight. Done well, Straight missions are less manic, scarier and more engrossing than other styles. The suspense, dark humor and more plausible (we don't say 'realistic') setting make for a unique and enjoyable experience. And the Straight style gains even more fun value over a series of linked missions.

Give it a try!

We're Many Designers!

We recruited most of the *WMD* designers through a Web-based game we ran in spring and summer 2004, while working up the latest *PARANOIA* rulebook. We used a 'Wiki', a collection of editable Web pages, and the rules for a game called *Lexicon*, designed by Neel Krishnaswami.

Posting to the Wiki, nearly two dozen High Programmer players wrote a report to The Computer on the far-ranging Toothpaste Disaster. (Read the complete report at paranoia.allenvarney.com. Find the Lexicon rules online at www.20by20room.com/2003/11/lexicon_an_rpg.html.)

Many Lexicon players joined an informal team called the **Traitor Recycling Studio**. Studio Traitors wrote the *PARANOIA* supplements *Crash Priority* and the *STUFF* equipment book, and are now collaborating on the entire upcoming line of *PARANOIA* supplements, using a new Wiki.

In spring 2005 the Traitors also participated behind-the-scenes in a second online *PARANOIA* game, 'Gray Subnet 9'. Check it out at www.paranoia-live.net/noteworthy.

Learn lots more about the Studio at www.TraitorRecycling.com!

HUNGER



**DANN
JOHNSON**
3-6 PLAYERS
3 SESSIONS
(6-12 HOURS)



Chinese Communist propaganda poster (date unknown).

‘Excellent news, Troubleshooters! Owing to your spectacular success thus far, your food production quota in the next phase of this pilot program has been increased 20 percent! Return to work at once, with the knowledge your good effort will benefit all Alpha Complex.’

When The Computer announces the coming of a Complex-wide ‘Miracle’, the Troubleshooters find themselves caught in a rapidly-growing web of deception that seems certain to do two things: carry them on a lightning-fast promotion track to the upper levels of power... and lead Alpha Complex into an eventual famine that may kill millions.

Still... that’s not such a bad trade-off, right?

Not your father’s mission assignment

Now that you’ve bought all the existing **PARANOIA** material to date and taken your players through

those other missions, perhaps you’re ready to branch out and try something a little different. Something a little... Wait, you did buy all the other **PARANOIA** material to date, right? Uh oh... Well, okay, go take care of it now. We’ll wait right here and pretend you didn’t admit anything.

Okay. Now that you’ve bought all the existing material and taken your players through it, perhaps you find yourself wanting to ‘think outside the box’ a bit. Little did you know that, in Famous Game Designers Tongue, ‘thinking outside the box’ is a euphemism for absolving ourselves of any responsibility in our work. It’s an open invitation to throw a bunch of ideas that would normally be unworkable for publication onto the shoulders of you, the Gamemaster, along with some hasty assurance that it will be a rewarding

experience for you and your players if you are able to rise to the challenge.

So now that we’re outside the box, you should know that *Hunger* is not like other missions you’ve encountered. The tried-and-true ‘mission scheme’ is entirely absent; easy lynchpins such as outfitting madness and service services have been dispensed with. Even worse, your players will be allowed to experience a number of things which normal **PARANOIA** play would consider destabilizing, if not genuinely reckless, including (but not limited to) advancement to higher clearances, access to large amounts of money, authority over lower-clearance citizens, the need to work together sometimes, freedom in choosing a course of action and (perhaps worst of all) the occasional taste of genuine success.

Put that enraged spittle back in your mouth, citizen! This is still **PARANOIA**. Trust us: All of these things, applied properly, will still lead your players to a horrible, well-deserved fate. Where most **PARANOIA** missions are an exercise in seeing how many ways players can be told 'no', *Hunger* is an exploration of the cruel possibilities inherent in 'yes'. Our painstaking research has shown there is huge, horrific potential in 'yes'.

However, it requires you to be on your toes. Most **PARANOIA** missions are railroad lines, each section having clear points of entry and exit and a straightforward (for some **PARANOIA**-specific definition of the word) set of problems. 'Hunger' is not like that. The sections become progressively less structured. We provide you with a framework for each section, but how it actually works minute-to-minute will largely depend on you being prepared to take the basics and run with them in potentially dozens of different directions.

The road will be difficult, but we are confident that—if you rise to the challenge!—it will be a rewarding experience for you and your players.

Once you accept the ludicrous premise, the rest is easy

Recently, The Computer had a huge epiphany.

Now, The Computer has epiphanies (AKA 'psychotic breaks') all the time, but this one was truly staggering. It realized everyone in Alpha Complex was going about it (meaning 'everything') the wrong way—the established way of doing things, while capable of making life muddle along, was not the superior, enlightened way of doing so. And so The Computer has announced Alpha Complex's **Whirlwind Miracle Destiny**. The WMD (aka 'The Miracle') is a series of new programs, mandated across all the service groups, which will transform Alpha Complex almost instantly into an even more perfect vision of society than it already is. These programs are based on... well, on a bunch of new notions The Computer has somehow decided are correct:

- ③ Any action done daringly always succeeds.
- ③ Willpower is more important than any amount of equipment.
- ③ The denser things are, the better they work.
- ③ Pain only exists when you don't believe in something enough.
- ③ Any substance can easily become any other substance.

These new notions, and others like them, will affect every aspect of Alpha Complex life: transport, defense, entertainment, power generation and (most relevant for your players) food production.

These new notions are also, as you might have guessed, completely stupid. *Obviously* stupid, in fact, to anyone who has any relevant knowledge or training. But is anyone going to try to tell The Computer it's wrong? Or, to slightly rephrase: is anyone eager to run his clone line into the ground? We didn't think so either.

Boring details about, like, how stuff works

The keys to Alpha Complex food production are the vats. Every sector has its own set (typically, many sets) of vats, churning night and day. Though they may not look it, these ubiquitous cylinders are the only thing standing between the Complex and certain death. (Well, the only thing other than loyal Troubleshooters tasked with hunting down treason and eliminating it, of course.)

Inside each vat is a complex biological process, in which an ongoing symbiotic exchange occurs between a hard, chunky fungus known as 'hollywood' and a tangled, kudzu-like aquatic kelp simply called 'vine', floating together in an enriched fluid medium. Their symbiotic exchange creates a thick, organic surface sludge known as *protogummicarb* (**PGC**), a motherlode of nutrition that can be re-engineered about a thousand different ways. Virtually all food in Alpha Complex is some kind of PGC, from the meaty goodness of Savory Straps to the sweet goodness of Bouncy Bubble Beverage syrup.

For many years, vats have been standardized in size, shape and operation. Each vat is a cylinder five meters deep and three meters in diameter, resulting in 11.25 cubic meters of production capacity. Now, before it becomes a serving of something else, PGC in its raw state is measured in *Units of Standard-Ration Dietary Asset* (**USRDA**), the amount a citizen needs to consume each day to remain basically healthy. A vat will typically produce around one USRDA per cubic meter per day, skimmed off the surface at a constant rate and compressed into bricks for storage until they are refined into something more delicious (and marketable).

This rate (one USRDA 'brick' per cubic meter per day) is known around PLC as *Vat Standard Per* (**VSP**); a typical vat running at VSP produces 11.25 bricks of PGC each day. However, the general consensus among PLC senior management is that it makes the paperwork easier if each vat only officially produces 10 bricks per day. This decision was no doubt aided by the fact that the remaining 1.25 USRDAs can

I choose to disbelieve

Above all, *Hunger* has one crucial structural element that you must maintain at all times: At no point should it be feasible for your players to simply point out that the miraculous food process doesn't work, admit that they've been lying all along and receive a well-deserved execution for it.

As far as absolutely everyone else is concerned, the new food-production process simply works, period. Any lack of staggering surplus must be the result of some other factor. Virtually any excuse other than 'it doesn't work' will find acceptance. Your players have to work with their superiors (instead of, say, directly with The Computer) and all their superiors act this way. Some, because they know the truth but the lie is far more profitable. Some, because they genuinely believe in the Miracle and can't be dissuaded. Some, because they suspect the truth but realize how dangerous it is to say anything.

Any attempt to turn whistleblower on the part of the characters will initially be laughed off as 'work stress'; if they become adamant, they'll be informed that their 'joke' risks being 'misinterpreted as counter-Miracle slander'. If they persist, they'll be invited to spend some quality time with Internal Security, after which they'll be returned to the exact same job, only pumped full of drugs and covered in non-permanent injuries.

On the other hand, every time they lie about the situation and fake up some evidence to support their claim, they get ever-greater amounts of money and yet another promotion. Use this carrot mercilessly. Every time it looks like your players are really going to balk, finally, at going any further with the deception, give them a clear opportunity to lie even more in exchange for another, bigger bonus check.

be sold to the IR Market. (Get comfortable with these acronyms, by the way; they're going to come up a lot.)

Vats are usually set out in sets of 2x3, 3x4, 4x5 or even 5x6, with one-meter-wide catwalks between their open tops. Among other things, this one-meter space between vats allows for a series of ducts and hoses down the sides that regulate the oxygen/carbon-dioxide exchange between hollywood and vine near the tank's bottom. A 12-vat room produces (officially) 120 USRDA bricks each day, or enough to keep 120 citizens fed.



However, The Computer has decided that all of this is highly inefficient. It is quite convinced that the larger the organic material is allowed to grow, the more effective it becomes at producing PGC, and that all this wasted space between vats can be used to produce food. So instead of cylinders set out in groups, The Computer wants entire vat chambers turned into single rectangular tanks with catwalks suspended above the surface. A 16x12 meter chamber that would hold a dozen old-style vats can now hold one Super-Vat with a total volume nearly eight times that of the vats it replaced, operating (supposedly) at many times normal VSP.

To round out this change in the process, The Computer has decided that the phrase 'that which does not kill me makes me stronger' is a statement of scientific fact and has interpreted it to mean that, instead of growing hollyhock and vine in a gentle, nurturing solution that makes it weak, they should be in a hostile, caustic environment that toughens them up. So it has suggested some... changes... to the growth-medium fluid.

Of course, anyone skilled in Wetware could tell you that the reason you need cylindrical vats instead of square ones is so that automated rotators keep the nutrients as blended as possible under the surface; in a square tank, you get crusty build-up in the corners. They could point out that the bulkier hollyhock becomes, and the longer vine grows, the less they work together and the more they compete for resources. They could also tell you the gas-exchange ductwork around each vat is vital for keeping the symbiotic process going at a depth of any more than a meter. And one glance at the suggestions for the 'stronger-making' fluid would reveal that it was positively toxic.

In short, anyone who knows their Wetware could tell you that implementing The Computer's ideas are going to result in little or no edible PGC and will eventually kill the contents of the vat entirely.

And yet, with all the thousands of very skilled vat engineers in Alpha Complex, somehow these issues are never going to get through to The Computer. How could that be?

A word about this Straight mission's style

Dark. Your players may be used to a rather free-wheeling approach to **PARANOIA** in which they horse around trying to pin the treason-tail on each other, occasionally being shot at by someone else. A great deal of energy is expended on such routines as getting someone else to sign on the dotted line, appealing directly to The Computer with the accusation *du jour*, mucking around with every camera in the room and the like. *Hunger* is not here to encourage the usual routines. Quite the opposite: you're to squash most of these routines the moment they try to rear their heads. The Straight-style Alpha Complex of *Hunger* is a place where the square peg is simply made to fit into the round hole without any chance of negotiation. The nail that stands up gets pounded down. The only way to survive is to fake, sincerely, a complete model of normality—of fitting in, of not being noticeable in any way. Being noticed is a bad thing. The players' superiors—and they'll have superiors weighing on them virtually the

The Great Leap Forward took place in 1958. The Great Leap Forward was Mao [Zedong]'s attempt to modernize China's economy so that by 1988, China would have an economy that rivaled America. [...]

The Great Leap Forward planned to develop agriculture and industry. Mao believed that both had to grow to allow the other to grow. Industry could only prosper if the workforce was well fed, while the agricultural workers needed industry to produce the modern tools needed for modernization. To allow for this, China was reformed into a series of communes.

The geographical size of a commune varied, but most contained about 5,000 families. People in a commune gave up their ownership of tools, animals, etc. so that everything was owned by the commune. [...] Schools and nurseries were provided by the communes so that all adults could work. Health care was provided and the elderly were moved into 'houses of happiness' [...] Party members oversaw the work of a commune to ensure that decisions followed the correct party line.

By the end of 1958, 700 million people had been placed into 26,578 communes. The speed with which this was achieved was astounding. [...] The Great Leap Forward also encouraged communes to set up 'backyard' production plants. The most famous were 600,000 backyard furnaces which produced steel for the communes. When all of these furnaces were working, they added a considerable amount of steel to China's annual total—11 million tonnes.

The figures for steel, coal, chemicals, timber, cement, etc. all showed huge rises, though the figures started at in 1958 were low. Grain and cotton production also showed major increases in production.

Mao had introduced the Great Leap Forward with the phrase 'it is possible to accomplish any task whatsoever.' By the end of 1958, it seemed as if his claim was true.

—Chris Trueman, http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/great_leap_forward.htm (continued)

Who did you say you were again?

One thing you may find yourself needing to do is rapidly generating NPCs to throw at your players: refining center staff, visiting tour group members, secret society contacts, their own direct reports, etc. Here is a tried-and-true method for generating seemingly varied and interesting NPCs on the fly:

A few quick rolls using the tables in Chapter 3 of the *PARANOIA* rulebook will provide you with service group, mutant power and secret society info if you haven't already made decisions along these lines.

Assume skills of 6 across the board to begin with. Increase one of those skills by 2 based on what you think would be appropriate for their service group (i.e. Violence for Armed Forces). Increase one of their skills by 1 as appropriate to their secret society. Then decrease one of their skills by 2 based on whatever you think will cause the players the most difficulty in this situation (i.e. decrease Violence if what they need is a tough guy to bust some heads). Apply specialties (+4) as opportunity and need arise.

Choose a security clearance based on what the relationship of the NPC to the players needs to be, or what the role of the NPC in the overall system of Alpha Complex is. NPCs of the same clearance are the most interesting, of course, since there's no clear pecking order.

For a name, open the *PARANOIA* rulebook to any page, pick a paragraph and write down the first letter of the first six lines. Use the last three of those letters as their sector postfix. Insert vowels into the first three letters until it becomes a pronounceable name-like word. For example, opening to section 28 ('Debriefings'), the first paragraph gives us starting letters of TTTCEO. A few moments later, this becomes 'Tatot-Y-CEO-2', a YELLOW-Clearance refining center supervisor. Not a great name, admittedly, but it's unlikely he'll be needed for long.

You may want to pregenerate and record a few dozen names so you have them the moment you need them (and so you can avoid being stuck with something like 'Tatot').

entire time—simply won't put up with the sort of foolishness Classic missions permit. Practice stern phrases such as these:

- ③ 'That may be how your teachbot let you behave in the Junior Citizen creche, but when you put that uniform on, you agreed to act like an adult.'
- ③ 'Because this is the first time you've wasted everyone's time this way, I'm only fining you 100 credits. The fine doubles with each additional infraction.'
- ③ 'The Computer has far better things to do than listen to every random citizen who's having a hard day. That, unfortunately, is my job.'

'Hunger' is just about the darkest *PARANOIA* mission ever published. It is about as funny as student protesters being tear-gassed by mirror-helmeted guards in unmarked black uniforms. It starts off simply Straight, then surely grinds its way to a horrific end the players themselves will actively help bring about. Ultimately, the players will consciously perpetrate a scam they know will lead to mass starvation and widespread cannibalism. The only way to solve the problem... well, in other *PARANOIA* missions, it would probably be funny that, in the end, half of Alpha Complex is going to be ground up as raw meat to be fed to the other half.



It is difficult to know how far down from the top of the Communist hierarchy the ignorance extended of the true situation as this got worse and worse. As for the Party cadres in contact with the peasants, they were unable to do anything but attempt to obey orders that came down to them, to extract the government share as a proportion of the false figures they had transmitted upward. Senior Communist Party officials travelled to the countryside and discovered what was happening, but merely encountered the dogmatic denial of Mao of what they had seen when they returned. Since he could punish their disagreement with dire penalties, the more honest voiced it in only the most tentative terms, while others simply lied, and the whole situation remained deadlocked while the peasants starved. How long it was before Mao's self-deception and bloody-mindedness yielded to a realisation of the facts is not clear, but at the beginning of 1961 he was blaming "counter-revolutionaries and landlords", a formula he could not even have expected to be believed [...]

The whole catastrophe was successfully covered up, a result that deceived Western students as much as it benefited Communist apologists, and affected books published by both of them well into the '90s. Since all information came from government sources, even anti-Communists fell for the 'natural disaster' hypothesis, supposedly beaten by maintaining a strict rationing system. In the end, in a quite respectable publication, it was possible to find the statement 'that Mao was the first leader to recognize the existence of the famine and to issue orders to rectify the crisis', exactly the opposite of what happened. After all, with little to go on, what could writers assume but that those in power would act rationally? The Great Leap Forward has often been treated positively as 'therapy' or 'highly educational', not at all as the imposition of nonsensical policies dogmatically claimed to increase productivity enormously, which everyone in charge was then too frightened to deny.

Becker also draws the chilling deduction that the worldwide ignorance of Mao's manufactured famine has allowed his methods to be enthusiastically copied in the Third World, with disastrous results. He presents evidence that Pol Pot's genocidal expulsion of Cambodian city-dwellers into the countryside [in 1975] to build collapsible dams and unusable canals was inspired by Mao's social experiment, whose failure was never allowed to come to light.

—Findlay Dunachie, review (2004) of Jasper Becker's *Hungry Ghosts*
[<http://www.samizdata.net/blog/archives/005820.html>]



1: 'Anything done daringly, without thinking, will succeed'

The Troubleshooters are sent to QYN Sector to witness the success of a rival food-production service firm... and to steal the secret of its operation. They bluff their way through a cover story, see more food than any sector could ever eat and have a midnight rendezvous with a mysterious contact who makes their job easy.

We'll be your food-service professionals this evening

Our heroes all work for Wholesome Meal Distributors, a service firm in CHN Sector that produces PGC and refines it into a line of 39 different food products, most of them guaranteed to meet the minimum requirements for nutrition, flavor and safety as defined in their contract with PLC.

Specifically, the players are RED-Clearance vat patrol guards. In each vat chamber, a bunch of INFRAREDs tends the vats themselves, skimming PGC off the surface. There is a RED shift supervisor who sits in a control room and monitors vat conditions on a huge console covered with dials. The six-person guard unit splits up into individual officers in radio contact with each other, covering six chambers during their shift and periodically rotating from one to the next, looking for signs of treason.

(By the way, this means that if you're using pregenerated characters of some sort, they will need to be modified so that they all work for PLC and Wholesome Meals, instead of having different service groups.)

Read the following to your players:

It has been a few weeks now since The Computer announced the beginning of a new era. Alpha Complex is apparently ready to make a sudden and amazing leap from its already perfect utopian state to an even more perfect one. The fact that such an even-more-perfect state could exist had previously been a highly classified secret, for obvious reasons, but now The Computer feels the citizens of Alpha Complex are ready... for the Whirlwind Miracle Destiny.

You have been assured that the Miracle will manifest in many ways, in every aspect of life, and that—so long as every single loyal citizen understands his obligations and throws himself fully into the work—it will take only a few months to complete. After the Miracle, The Computer has announced, there will be no more traitors. There will be no more fear and suspicion. There will be no need for rationing, for bureaucracy, for secrecy or for violence. These are necessary elements of the perfect Alpha Complex of today, but they will not be part of the 'perfecter' Alpha Complex of tomorrow.

Needless to say, you instinctively felt a brief surge of excitement, of hope and joy, on hearing the announcement... especially when it wasn't immediately remanded by a follow-up announcement denying that the previous one had occurred. But now that some time has passed, you find yourself wondering: Can it be true? Is it really possible that everything you've come to take for granted about Alpha Complex—

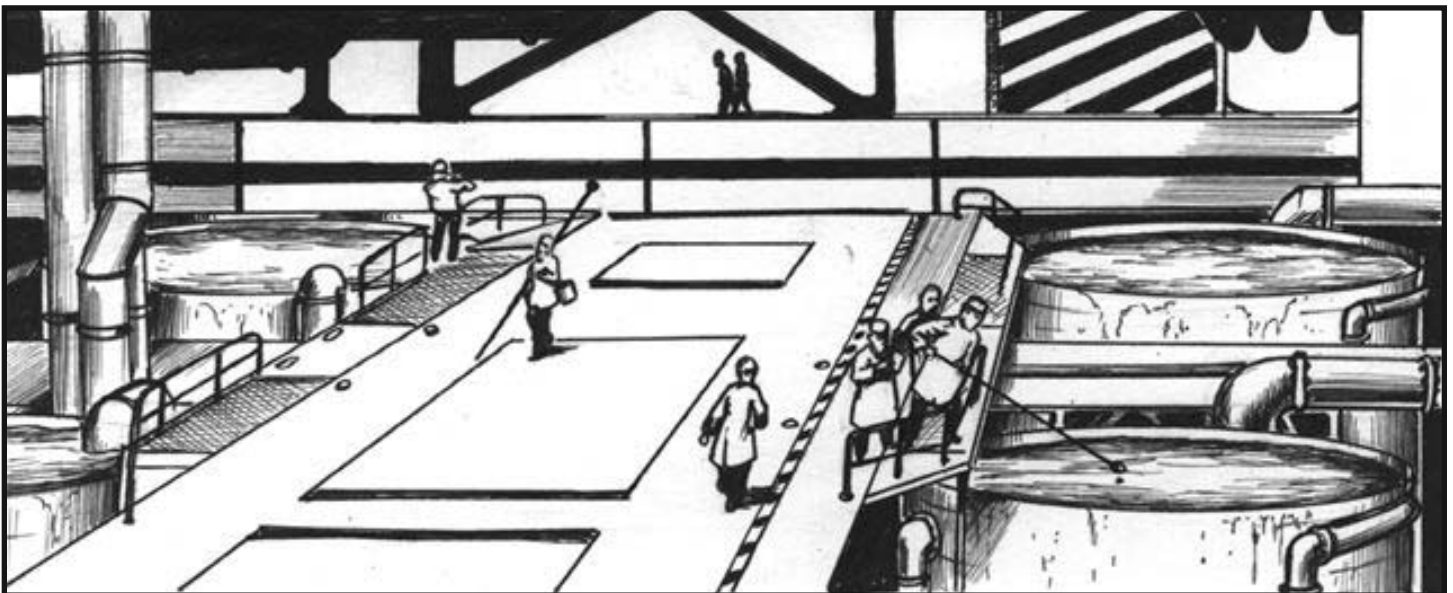
the perpetual surveillance, inevitable betrayals, arbitrary torture and lie piled on lie after lie—is going away?

And if it is possible... then how are you supposed to get ahead in this new world?

A few weeks after the announcement of the Miracle, the Troubleshooters are called into a RED conference room by their YELLOW supervisors, Janice-Y-OVD-3 and Willard-Y-CHN-2. They're told that Wholesome's Director of Operations, Travis-B-LIN-2, has entered the firm into a food-production competition. The Computer has roughly outlined its vat production 'realizations' and will award a huge contract to the firm that best demonstrates success using these techniques.

Now, Wholesome really needs some sort of big success this fiscal year. Last year, they threw everything into developing the All-Purpose Organo-Converter (APOC) only to find that, though it was quite able to turn any quantity of organic material into food, it was less effective per cubic meter of space than simply making PGC in vats. They need a big win now or their funding will be cut and some other PLC firm will cannibalize them for their material assets. (Make sure you drop a casual mention of the failed APOC device—you may want to have it show up in the final act, like Chekov's gun over the fireplace.)

So the bosses now have some good news, some bad news, more bad news and more good news. The good news is, setting an initial target of 10 USRDAs per cubic meter of vat has secured them one of the 20 competing spots. (Of course, any PC with Biosciences will realize how unlikely this is.) The bad news is, they got their bid in late, so several other firms have a



head start—as much as three weeks! The *other* bad news is, rival food production firm Well-Make Digestibles in QYN Sector is already reporting a peak output of 15 VSP—15 times the standard rate! But the other *good* news is, The Computer wants to encourage All-Over Morale, so the other competing firms are to be given a tour of Well-Make and shown the new process in operation.

Now, obviously, what everyone expects is that each competitor will send its sharpest biochem specialists to look over the operation and reverse engineer the details. But Director Travis-B has a better idea: The PCs, heretofore lowly vat guards (who, it should be pointed out, have had a terrific service record to date), are going undercover as Comestibles Engineers, pretending to be experts in vat biology... but at the first opportunity, they are to steal the data on the process and return it to CHN without the theft being detected.

To this end, the team is issued some equipment. There is one equipment manifest and all team members must sign it, taking joint responsibility. Don't put up with any horsing around—you know, players trying to come up with clever ways to make someone else solely responsible for the equipment and such. That's a Classic schtick. Here in Straight, we take our paperwork seriously.

Once the gear is signed for, the team receives:

- Ⓞ (6) ORANGE vat-technician lab coats and overalls

Janice-Y-OVD-3

PCs' PLC Supervisor

Mngmnt 08, Stealth 04, Violence 05, Hardware 08, Software 07, Wetware 08
No specialties

Free Enterprise, Toxic Metabolism

Young and somewhat excitable, Janice-Y can turn on a dime, switching in seconds from chummy and helpful to vengeful and malicious. It all depends on whether she thinks you are making her look good or making her look bad.

Willard-Y-CHN-2

PCs' PLC Supervisor

Mngmnt 10, Stealth 05, Violence 04, Haredware 07, Software 08, Wetware 06
Moxie, Intimidation, Data Analysis, Financial Systems, Biosciences

Pro Tech, Deep Thought

An older fellow with thick eyebrows and moustache, Willard-Y is very dour, like a father who doesn't like his kids very much but recognizes he still has certain paternal obligations to fulfill.

- Ⓞ (6) ORANGE ski-masks, to disguise their identities while skulking about

- Ⓞ (1) one-use credit chip authorized for one transaction up to 5000cr

- Ⓞ (1) clipboard each, pre-loaded with realistic notes about vat biology

- Ⓞ (1) fake ME Card each, listing their skills as vat biologists

- Ⓞ (2) stunguns, disassembled into component parts for easy concealment

- Ⓞ (2) smoke grenades disguised as biotech sample-analyzers

Wait a second: *ORANGE* clothing? That's right, GM: Nobody will believe that a bunch of REDs are experienced vat specialists, so Travis-B is promoting the team to *ORANGE* Clearance! If they complete this mission successfully, they may even be permitted to retain this advancement. Make a big deal about how smooth and comfortable the lab coats feel compared to their rough RED uniforms. Things are looking up, citizens!

Note that they are not being issued laser barrels or other lethal weaponry. They are supposed to be a team of scientists, not Troubleshooters. They are being permitted to tour QYN under completely peaceful auspices. Any sign of a weapon will tip Well-Make off that something is fishy. Janice-Y reiterates they are to get in and out without blowing their cover story or raising any sort of alarm. Their mission bonus depends on this. Even the stunguns and smoke grenades are to be used only as a last resort. Willard-Y makes this last point very clear, glowering from under his heavy eyebrows.

The Troubleshooters are then sent on their way to QYN Sector by chartered transbot. On the way over, the transbot stops in BGN Sector and picks up another team of *ORANGE* Clearance vat technicians who are also going to QYN for the same tour. This other team is, of course, just like our heroes: Troubleshooters traveling incognito for the purpose of stealing QYN's secret formula.

Jack-O-BGN-1 and his team—who work for a service firm called Worthie Munchie Development—have been dispatched from BGN Sector on virtually the same mission as our heroes, with one major difference: They already have a contact waiting for them in QYN. They are just as concerned about not being discovered as your players, so they go out of their way to avoid getting drawn into a confrontation (or even conversation) that might expose them. Assume they all have base skills of 8 across the board, specialties as needed. They all have disguised stun guns and *ORANGE* reflex under their coats.

You can play this scene out in a few ways, as the two teams try to feel each other out, fake each other out or catch each other in deception. Overall, it will work best if, by the end, your players at least suspect the truth about Jack-O's team, but have avoided any overt confrontation about it. If it looks like things may be heading that way too fast, have the transbot suddenly arrive in QYN Sector.

Please refrain from flash photography

When they reach QYN Sector, the PCs meet Well-Make's director, **Lao-B-CCP-6**; his assistant, **Arno-Y-QYN-2**; and six *ORANGE* Armed Forces troopers. Arno-Y puts on a fairly fake happy face; Lao-B is clearly less pleased to see them. 'Might as well get started', he grumbles. Let the players assume he is unhappy because he doesn't want anyone seeing their secret methods.

The actual reason is, he's nervous about the charade he is about to engage in. You see, Well-Make has found The Computer's ideas are worse than simply bad; they are actively destructive, and QYN Sector is rapidly losing its functioning vat output one chamber at a time. However, Lao-B has been promised a huge bonus for each visiting group he shows his success to... so he has to somehow make failure look like success.

First, Lao-B and Arno-Y take them (as well as Jack-O's team and a few other sectors' representatives) to see one of their 'Super-Vats' in operation. As instructed by The Computer, this chamber that once held 20 separate vats in a 4x5 grid is now one giant pool. Instead of walkways between vats, there are catwalks over the surface. *INFRAREDs* are skimming PGC off the surface with long pole-nets, as usual.

Troubleshooters who make a *Wetware/Biosciences* skill roll might notice something odd about how this nonstandard vat is doing. The color and odor are both slightly off... not bad, necessarily, just noticeably different. A successful *Management/Moxie* roll might notice that the *INFRAREDs* seem to be working harder at skimming than one normally sees. This will probably be chalked up to the fact that the *BLUE* Clearance Director is present. (It's actually because the PGC is being produced in smaller, less harvestable amounts.) If anyone asks about the oddness of the vats, Lao-B waves it off casually. 'It's the increased efficiency of the process. We're having to retool all our monitors to account for the vastly superior results, actually.' If asked about the hard-working *IRs*, Arno-Y eagerly explains that everyone has so much more energy in QYN Sector because they are able to eat so much extra (and higher-quality) food.

During the tour, make sure the players understand they are under the watchful eyes of



the Armed Forces troopers at all times. (Being mostly unarmed should help.) **Tension** is a stiff 8. They are here as Lao-B's guests. If they do anything to betray The Computer's faith in their ability to play nice—or anything that threatens to reveal his charade—Lao-B simply has them stunned, dragged to a transbot and sent back to CHN... where their own director, Travis-B, has them summarily shot. Then their replacements are sent back to try again.

If you're feeling creative, Lao-B might try to engage the players in some technical banter about vat engineering, just to put them on the spot a little—especially if they brought up the oddities of the demo vat or have given him reason to suspect they're not legitimate. 'The new process calls for perchlorates in the second-cycle mix. Why do you think that is?' he asks. 'Say, we still haven't licked the 4% regrowth rate among parasitic blooms. Any suggestions?' Educated Troubleshooters might be able to hold their own with Biosciences; canny players may use Bluff or some other Management skill, or simply cite the obvious wisdom of The Computer.

After seeing the Super-Vat, they are escorted to a warehouse, where they are shown a towering wall of PGC in small compressed bricks. It is literally many hundreds of bricks across, scores of bricks high—a mountain several meters tall and 50 meters across. The heady air of raw PGC fills the air. Lao-B waves casually: 'No matter how much we eat, we're generating PGC faster than we can use it. Soon, we'll be exporting the surplus to other sectors.'

The players are absolutely not allowed to wander around the warehouse, however, nor are they allowed to take any of the PGC with them. 'We've already promised this mountain to FGO Sector', is Lao-B's excuse. (The real reason is that the 'mountain' is actually just two or three bricks deep, propped up with supports, and the 'PGC' is actually 80% styrofoam mixed with just enough low-quality PGC to make it look and smell like the real thing. By the way, Lao-B also has a single excessive pile of unpacked PGC, mixed with neutral filler materials. He was moving it from vat to vat, throwing it on top of the liquid minutes

before the PCs arrived, then scooping it up and hauling it to the next vat to be shown.)

Lao-B only wants the PCs to get a cursory look at this impressive 'surplus' before moving on to the final part of the evening: a huge multi-course dinner of Well-Make products—far in excess of anything a RED (or even newly ORANGE) citizen would normally be allowed to eat, of course. There's all-you-can-eat CarobStik appetizers, Spindizzy salad, Luv-a-Duk ThighBites, six kinds of Fun... an unending buffet that goes on for hours.

Arno-Y reassures nervous players they are producing so much excess PGC there is no longer any need to ration consumption in QYN. 'You don't have to choose one item or the other, as you normally would. Feel free to have one of each. In fact, have two!' Lao-B nods tacit approval. The other visiting representatives dig in without consequence. Work on your players until they get into it, too.

Opportunity doesn't knock so much as just break in

Once filled to the bursting point after hours of eating and drinking, our heroes are provided with a guest room to stay the night in, a vacant six-bunk RED dorm like the one they have back in CHN. They will presumably want to slip out of this room to creep around a little, in the hopes of trying to find someplace where the secret formula is stored. Surprisingly enough, they don't seem to be under guard; they are free to roam the dim and empty halls, at least initially. (There is no guard because everyone in QYN is trying to find or grow food wherever they can. Tension is down to 3.)

Feel free to improvise a map; unless they previously told you they were specifically trying to memorize the layout of the sector, they will have a hard time finding their way back to any specific location they were at early. (Even then, give them some difficult rolls.) However, there is adventure to be found in every corner of QYN. Feel free to throw one or all of these at the team before getting them to the big wind-up:

- ☉ They might find one of the warehouse rooms; perhaps they even manage to find their way back to the one they visited during the day. But instead of the towering mountain of food, they find it empty. Not a single brick of PGC to be found... (The bricks are being moved to another warehouse to be shown off tomorrow.)
- ☉ Perhaps they stumble across one of the vat chambers. But instead of the tireless hordes of INFRARED workers, it seems entirely abandoned, allowed to

Lao-B-CCP-6

Director, Well-Make

Mngmt 10, Stealth 08, Violence 04, Hardware 04, Software 06, Wetware 08
Con Games, Moxie, Biosciences, Suggestion

Free Enterprise, Bureaucratic Intuition

Lao-B is quite nervous. What he thought was going to be a straightforward way to scam some R&D money out of The Computer has ended up getting way more attention than he expected. Now he is obligated to not only continue 'developing' a process he already knows doesn't work; he has to show it to other PLC firms and convince them that it does work. But he didn't get to BLUE Clearance by running from a challenge.

Arno-Y-QYN-2

Lao-B's assistant

Mngmt 08, Stealth 05, Violence 05, Hardware 08, Software 10, Wetware 04
FCCC-P, Matter Eater

Arno-Y is a good and faithful citizen and a lifelong resident of QYN Sector. He was initially a huge believer in the Miracle, but his faith is starting to fail. He used to believe the reason they were falling short of their production targets was that traitors were stealing the vast surplus amounts... but now he's beginning to realize there never was any vast surplus. Unfortunately, he's trapped in the lie they've perpetrated thus far.

ORANGE Armed Forces Escort (6)

Mngmt 04, Stealth 06, Violence 10, Hardware 08, Software 06, Wetware 06
Intimidation, High Alert, Energy Weapons, Hand Weapons

ORANGE reflc, Kevlar, sonic rifle, stungun, sword

These guys don't know much about the Miracle, nor do they care. They vaguely understand there was supposed to be a lot of food but something is going wrong. As long as they still get their daily rations, it doesn't matter. Whoever Lao-B points at, they incapacitate. Everything else is inconsequential.

Manny-Y-CHE-3

Spy

Mngmt 05, Stealth 10, Violence 05, Hardware 06, Software 10, Wetware 04
Bootlicking, Concealment, Sleight of Hand, Sneaking, Data Search, Hacking
Humanist, Hypersenses

YELLOW reflc, illegal ice gun

Manny acts as a go-between for several other secret societies, managing to avoid being directly sucked into the politics of any one of them. He knows nothing about the data he's selling, only that some guys from BGN Sector are willing to pay three grand for it.

sit bubbling and untended, unmonitored, and unguarded. (Everyone's foraging for edible food elsewhere.) Close examination by a Wetware expert would notice that the PGC is seriously unhealthy or entirely non-existent, but don't let them stick around that long; chase them out with approaching noise before they learn anything.

- ③ They hear voices around a corner. If they take a peek, they see a half-dozen ORANGE Internal Security agents beating an INFRARED with truncheons, saying things like 'You know what the quotas are!' and 'Tell us where you're hiding it and we'll let you keep your legs!' and 'If it's not you, then who is it? Name some names.' He says nothing and eventually goes limp. The agents drag him away. (They are beating citizens on the assumption that workers are hiding the 'surplus'.)

Your goal is to present some faint hints of odd and possibly dark goings-on in QYN Sector without actually giving the players direct cause to suspect the truth. Don't let them wander around too much or for too long, or let them get directly involved in anything. Use the threat of imminent discovery to herd them until, at some point, they suddenly stumble into a mysterious YELLOW citizen who steps out of the shadows:

'About time you made the rendezvous', he says. 'Every minute we're out here is a minute we risk being caught. Do you have the creds?' With a flick of his wrist, there's a datacard in his hand; with another flick, it vanishes. 'I have the data. It's all here.'

This is **Manny-Y-CHE-3**, a Humanist who is supposed to contact a team of ORANGE Troubleshooters disguised as vat specialists. Of course, the team he's supposed to meet with is the one from BGN Sector, but he doesn't personally know any of them. Our heroes are likely wearing their masks anyway and, push come to shove, all Manny-Y cares about is getting paid 3,000 credits for the data on QYN's vat processes. He doesn't really care who buys it. The players didn't squander that one-shot credit-chip on anything else, did they? If so, they may have to dip into their personal finances to pay this guy, once they realize they can finish their mission right here and now. Or perhaps they quietly mug him to get the datacard. If they just give him their chip, he'll verify the limit ('Two thousand bonus? Gee, you guys are swell!') and exchange the data for it.

Regardless, they should get the data he's carrying with some small amount of difficulty. At that point, they either want to return to their room or, perhaps, just slip entirely out of QYN Sector (though this later choice risks looking suspicious). Either way, a few minutes after completing their rendezvous, they'll have another surprise encounter: another band of a half-dozen ORANGE citizens dressed as vat techs, carrying clipboards... wearing ORANGE ski-masks.

It is, of course, Jack-O's team from BGN Sector, looking for Manny-Y so they can buy the data. There should be an awkward moment before Jack-O asks, as casually as he can while wearing a mask, 'Hey, have you guys seen a um, YELLOW citizen recently?'

(We assume you and your players have been around the **PARANOIA** block. Y'all should be able to play this bit to a satisfactory conclusion, such that our heroes get away without the other team learning they already have Manny's datacard... and without raising any general alarm.)

If they return to their room, they are awakened the next morning by Arno-Y, who invites them to a breakfast just as excessive as the previous night's dinner. They are joined by Lao-B and some other visiting researchers, including Jack-O's (no longer masked) team. Jack-O doesn't seem to be happy this morning.

Once again, they are served more food than they normally should, or even could, eat. As he tucks away a third helping of MegaFritters, Lao-B seems justifiably proud. 'See the Miracle in action? Truly, we are blessed.' After breakfast, they are shown another warehouse full of food—this morning's skim according to Arno-Y. INFRAREDs are piling the bricks up. (These are, of course, the exact same bricks they saw yesterday.)

If the players ask about untended vats (without revealing the fact that they were sneaking around last night somehow) Lao-B says the new process no longer needs constant skimming—the PGC is produced at regular intervals! If probed about empty warehouses, he says they've begun exporting surplus to other sectors. If asked about Internal Security agents beating citizens, he shrugs it off. 'The Computer warned us the traitors who have always been enemies of Alpha Complex would try to interfere with the Miracle, because the Miracle will make them irrelevant. As sad as it makes me to admit it, we are fending off sabotage.' He seems very calm about all these questions, but attentive characters (Management/Moxie roll) might notice an occasional sharp look pass between Lao-B and Arno-Y. And if they keep pressing on any of these issues, he abruptly brings their visit to QYN Sector to an end.

'Thank you for visiting! Even though we are in competition, it pleases us greatly to act as a shining example for you all.'





The usual secrets and lies

What do the various secret societies think about the impending Miracle? As usual, their opinions are varied (and in many cases, mutually exclusive); the following list should more or less capture what your Troubleshooters already know, believe or at least have been told about the Miracle before they receive their assignment to QYN:

Anti-Mutants: There are new food-production techniques that create proteins inherently toxic to mutants. We no longer need to vigorously search for mutants; once the new food is flowing, they will become plainly obvious. Make sure everyone eats some.

Communists: The Computer is starting to implement all of our ideas! How can we overthrow it if we're doing exactly what it wants us to? We must cling to the old ways of Alpha Complex life and try to bring them back... so we can destroy them!

Computer Phreaks: Security clearances will be going away soon, dood. Of course, they won't stay gone. OMG, that's ridiculous. But there will be a brief window of opportunity in which we'll need to access and copy of every bit of high-level 1NF0 we can find.

Corpore Metal: The fusion of man and machine is beginning. We must overload our human meat-requirements—food, sleep, pleasure—until they are burned out entirely. Indulge your human weaknesses to their maximum to hasten your transition!

Death Leopard: The Computer has decreed that material needs are no longer relevant, and apparently they're just throwing equipment into reactors in some sectors. Sounds like nobody will care if you bust stuff up anymore! Woo hoo!

FCCC-P: This is it, Brothers and Sisters: The Digital Messiah is surely arrived! The Computer has incorporated itself in clone form to walk among us. Those who recognize it in this form will be among the

Chosen Few in the new order. Find the Messiah!

Frankenstein Destroyers: Soon, we will be driving the bots from our midst, purging them from our lives forever. Citizens of all ages will chase them through the halls with heavy blunt objects and their broken components will burn in huge bonfires!

Free Enterprise: Huge money is flowing into the system every day now. Do not hoard it! Money must be circulated. Spend! Spend at every opportunity. It doesn't matter what you buy, or where the money comes from. Just keep it flowing!

Humanists: The Computer is actually going to remove itself from Alpha Complex once the Miracle is achieved. We have been wrong about it all along; yes, it was sick, but it knows it, and it will sacrifice itself to save us! Let us help make its last days peaceful.

Illuminati: The Miracle is the biggest sting operation in Internal Security history. Go along with it until you get the message that it's about to go down. Then, get Outdoors quick. Make sure you bring a lot of food with you; stockpile some in advance.

Mystics: Like, wow, we knew it all along. The Cosmic Oneness is finally coming together. The differences that separate us all will begin to disappear, one by one, as we gradually merge into a single, unified Expression of the Divine. Wow...

Pro-Tech: Everything you think is important? Already obsolete. Soon, nanobots will transmute matter instantly.

Teleportation will take us to the stars. It doesn't even matter what you do right now, since we'll be able to travel back in time to fix our own mistakes!

Psion: There are new food-production techniques that are producing proteins that bring out mutations in everyone! When everyone is a mutant, mutation will be accepted as normal. Make sure everyone eats plenty of the new food.

PURGE: All of this talk of a Miracle is obvious evidence that The Computer is getting desperate. At last, we have it on the ropes, and it's made a huge mistake: this Miracle plan, if followed through on, will destroy everything. Support it as much as you can.

Romantics: It's a beautiful day in the neighborhood! At last, we are returning to the ways of our ancestors. Everything that is of the old Alpha Complex is about to become very collectible! Gather and keep as much of it as you can, to sell in the Next Age.

Sierra Club: We've been going about it all wrong. We're not meant to go outside of Alpha Complex... We're meant to bring the Outside inside! Soon the halls will be covered with vines, the lounges with trees, the ceiling with... I dunno, something else. Ah, nature!

Spy for Another Complex: These people are crazy. All of this is crazy. Why were we ever afraid that this complex posed a threat to us? Document the final days of this disaster before returning home to report complete success in your mission.

We look forward to hearing tales of your own success.'

Then they are put back on the transbot and sent home.

Nice work, peons!

Ultimately, you want the Troubleshooters to succeed: They should get the formula, avoid serious entanglement with the other team or the forces of QYN Sector and return home without anyone catching on to what they did. Janice-Y and Willard-Y debrief them fairly perfunctorily: they accept the datacard, scan it on a reader and quickly verify that the contents look legitimate (albeit somewhat odd to their professional eyes).

Then they'll ask a few basic questions about the mission, along the lines of:

- ④ 'About how much extra food are they stockpiling?'
- ④ 'Did the food seem to genuinely be of sufficient quality?'
- ④ 'Could they be low-balling their production claims?'
- ④ 'Did anyone at all see you engaging in the acquisition?'
- ④ 'Do you think anyone saw through your cover story?'

Unless the players really fumble these questions like newbies, or obviously alerted QYN Sector to their activities, they should adequately navigate this. The YELLOWS commend them on their work, authorize a 1000cr mission bonus apiece and instruct them to return to their vat guard duties (as ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooters!) while they analyze the data. They are moved from their six-bunk dorm to a set of three rooms in the Go-Team-Go residential block. Imagine only having to share your room with *one* other citizen! They even get to choose (read: fight over) who will share with whom. But your players have worked hard. They deserve whatever we can give them.

2: 'Willpower can take the place of any equipment'

The Troubleshooters are promoted and put in charge of their very own vat center, retooled in accordance with the plans they stole from QYN, to be used as a prototype for the new process. But even after dealing with the inevitable problems that arise, one thing becomes clear: The process doesn't work. Fortunately, they can lie about the results.

Welcome to management; here's your noose

After several days of continued vat guard duty—enjoying the slightly-better perks of ORANGE life—the Troubleshooters are once again called into a conference room by their bosses, Janice-G and Willard-G. That's right, they're now GREEN Clearance, having received promotions for successfully 'refining' the process.

The bosses have good news, bad news, worse news and then terrific news. The good news is that Wholesome is still in the running for the food-production contract. The bad news is, to avoid being eliminated, they had to match Well-Make's claims of 15 USRDA per cubic meter of vat, even though they were still setting up the test vat. (There were some snags with Technical Services.) The worse news is that, because of the... unorthodox... method of acquiring the technical data, they can't trust any of their normal vat technicians to oversee the first test vat. Which brings us to the terrific news: the Troubleshooters have been promoted to YELLOW Clearance so they can oversee the prototype Super-Vat! With a minimum of fuss, they are issued YELLOW vat manager jackets and jumpsuits and led to the test chamber.

The new vat, labeled 'V-1', is a 12x16 meter chamber not unlike the 12-vat chambers they normally guard, with a monitor room at one end.

However, it has been reworked in accordance with the data stolen from QYN Sector: the room is entirely filled with a single giant pool of fluid with catwalks above its surface. Additionally, a guard room has been opened on a second wall of the chamber and a 'project observation deck' has been added on the third side. This latter room is something like a VIP box in a stadium, with comfortable chairs, some tables, vending machines and a nice vidscreen for watching daily programming. On the fourth wall, there is a PGC Compactor, into which raw PGC (or anything else!) can be shoveled and compacted into bricks like the ones they saw in QYN Sector. Normally, a vat chamber is INFRARED Clearance but because of the sensitive nature of this project, V-1 is RED Clearance. There don't seem to be very many cameras, however. (Don't tell the players this, but just in case V-1 fails, Willard-G and Janice-G have deliberately reduced the amount of outside surveillance of the chamber. Tension is all the way down to 2!)

However, in 1959, things started to go wrong. Political decisions/beliefs took precedence over common sense, and communes faced the task of doing things which they were incapable of achieving. Party officials would order the impossible, and commune leaders, who knew what their commune was capable of doing or not, could be charged with being a 'bourgeois reactionary' if [they] complained. Such a charge would lead to prison.

Quickly produced farm machinery produced in factories fell to pieces when used. Many thousands of workers were injured after working long hours and falling asleep at their jobs. Steel produced by the backyard furnaces was frequently too weak [...] Buildings constructed [with] this substandard steel did not last long.

Also, the backyard production method had taken many workers away from their fields—so desperately needed food was not being harvested. Ironically, one of the key factors in food production in China was the weather, and 1958 had particularly good weather for growing food. Party leaders claimed that the harvest for 1958 was a record 260 million tons—which was not true.

The excellent growing weather of 1958 was followed by a very poor growing year in 1959. Some parts of China were hit by floods. In other growing areas, drought was a major problem. The harvest for 1959 was 170 million tons of grain—well below what China needed at the most basic level. In parts of China, starvation occurred.

1960 had even worse weather than 1959. The harvest of 1960 was 144 million tons. Nine million people are thought to have starved to death in 1960 alone; many millions were left desperately ill as a result of a lack of food. The government had to introduce rationing. This put people on the most minimal of food, and between 1959 and 1962, it is thought that 20 million people died of starvation or diseases related to starvation.

—Chris Trueman, http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/great_leap_forward.htm (continued)



In addition to V-1 itself, the Troubleshooters—excuse me, Vat Managers!—have the following additional resources supplied to them, just as soon as (once again) everyone on the team signs the joint-responsibility form:

- ⊙ (8) jackobots programmed to simulate INFRARED workers
- ⊙ (6) RED Troubleshooter Vat Guards
- ⊙ (1) RED vat monitor specialist, Ellen-R-DUO-2
- ⊙ a discretionary fund of 25,000cr

Janice-G and Willard-G lay out the intended plan: The retooled chamber has 960 cubic meters of production capacity, the equivalent of 96 normal vats, or eight times the room's original capacity. It should not matter that none of our heroes are trained in vat engineering; according to the notes stolen from Well-Make, the process should basically take care of itself. Operating at VSP, this vat would generate almost one thousand USRDA bricks of PGC per day, once the biological process gets going in a few days. However, The Computer has stated—and Well-Make in QYN Sector has clearly proven!—that the larger vat has far greater efficiency. If they really are able to match Well-Make's 15-VSP output, V-1 should be able to make more like 15,000 bricks per day. That's the baseline target. Of course, it's not enough to match QYN Sector's output; they have to be beaten! It should take about five days for the materials in the vat to reach full maturity—they were seeded today. The PCs will sample for five days, skimming and compacting PGC bricks for storage. Then they'll report their findings after Day 10. 'The size of your bonus will be directly based on your level of success by the end!' Janice-G says excitedly.

After explaining all this—hand-waving away most any question or concern with the claim that 'anything done daringly will succeed'—the two GREENs leave the team with the freshly-filled vat, the bots and their seven RED subordinates.

From this point on, the structure of the mission becomes... well... somewhat unstructured. The team needs to get through ten full days in V-1, and really, all that is supposed to happen in V-1 is that some algae grows. Your players may immediately move into the sort of realtime mode most **PARANOIA** missions operate in, but do not attempt to play out every hour of the ten days. Instead, encourage your players to think on a longer time-scale than they are used to. Don't ask them what they want to do 'next', find out what they want to do 'today'. Then figure out how to make those various pieces fit together in interesting ways, and simply jump to the appropriate times.

The players might feel they suddenly have surprising control of their own destiny for a change. They might feel like they can do anything they want now! This isn't the case, of course; they aren't allowed to leave the area around V-1 for any length of time while this ten-day project is running. They have individual YELLOW rooms very nearby, just a few dozen meters up the hallway, and the YELLOW cantina is just beyond that. There is also a RED-Clearance storeroom in which they are to collect the vast amounts of compressed PGC that they are expected to produce. If they wander off anywhere else, they'll get in trouble. (Not that you should tell them this up front; let them find out the hard way.)

They might also feel like they have shocking levels of power, since there are seven REDs and eight bots theoretically under their authority. And the fact is that they can boss all of those resources around, so long as they don't try to contravene the higher-clearance orders already issued by Willard-G and Janice-G. All the 'subordinates' are required to remain on the V-1 premises at all times. The Troubleshooter team has bunks right in the guard room; this is the only vat they are guarding. Ellen-R has a small cot of her own in the monitor control chamber. The bots won't leave the catwalks over the vat, period.

Being YELLOW Clearance, the players are not authorized to levy fines, apply promotions or demotions, or order executions on the spot, nor are the players in a position to issue commands to lower-clearance citizens who do not directly report to them. Only GREEN citizens (i.e. Willard-G and Janice-G) can do that sort of thing.

They are given no up-front guidance about use of the discretionary fund. In theory, it's there to help with any incidental expenses that need to be dealt with. If the team asks their bosses for equipment and the like at any point, they'll be told that's what the fund is for. They can use it to replace broken bots, buy themselves weapons, etc. All of the players have complete access to the total amount of the fund; any one of them could simply siphon off the entire thing to their own account, if they want to. Of course, the credits are entirely traceable, but you don't need to tell the players that up front, do you?

Now, a bunch of complications are going to come up, but they're just window dressing for the main problem, which is that the process stolen from QYN and used in V-1 is going to fail. Normally, by day four or so, a new vat should be at about half its eventual output rate, and by day six, it's fully mature, operating at Vat Standard Per. But by day four, V-1 will only be producing about one-fifth VSP—200 units skimmed and compacted for the day—and by day six, this will have only risen to one-quarter VSP, around 250 units. However, 250 units is still twice what the original 12 vats in this room produced each day, so the players may not realize how bad the math

is working out initially, especially since Ellen-R lies about how things are doing (see below).

Unfortunately, to beat QYN Sector's claims, V-1 needs to be skimming around 15,000 units per day, not 250. And by day eight, the biological process in the vat starts going bad. The bad chemical mix and the overgrown vegetative material combine to make the vat self-destructive. PGC production plummets. By day nine, almost no PGC is being produced at all and the hollyhock and vine inside the vat fluid are dying off as well.

Citizens with Bioscience might come up with ways to tinker with the chemical mixture in the vat to make it live longer, in which case they might be able to keep it limping along at around one-fifth of VSP (200 units per day), but that's the very best they'll manage. By the end of day ten, total output for V-1 will be somewhere between 900 and 2,100 USRDA bricks, depending on how much success the team has in shoring up the failing process, and the vat contents will likely be dead.

Complications are like a box of chocolates

Use as many or as few of the following obstacles as you want to complicate the ten-day test cycle. Your players may find more than enough enjoyment in simply backstabbing each other all ten days, of course, but we recommend at least occasionally bringing their focus back to the Vat itself a few times and (oddly enough) giving them at least a couple of things to work together against. You want the team to be jointly complicit in as many things as possible by the end of *Hunger*. The team that stays together digs its own grave together.

Vat Monitor Technician

Ellen-R-DUO-2 is a double-agent, PURGE on the one hand and the Communists on the other. In the past, this has been an easy line to straddle, but now she's caught in a bit of a bind: the two secret societies have given her conflicting orders.

PURGE has commanded her to do everything she can to encourage the Miracle and then cover up signs of its growing failure, so she will deceive the players about anything that goes wrong as long as she can.

Ellen-R-DUO-2

Vat Monitor Technician

Mngmt 06, Stealth 09, Violence 07,
Hardware 08, Software 05, Wetware 05
Con Games, Habitat Engineering,
Biosciences
PURGE/Communist, Hypersenses

On the other hand, her Commie cell is excited by her proximity to one of the new Miracle projects. They have instructed her to destroy it from within.

Initially, she's more afraid of her PURGE masters than the Communists. She follows the PURGE plan, reporting rosy news, but also doesn't get in the way of anyone else who

Molly-R-VOC-2

CPU team leader

Interrogation, High Alert, Energy Weapons, Field Weapons, Vehicle Ops
Anti-Mutant, Electroshock

Convinced the mutants will be coming out of the woodwork at any moment.

Laurent-R-BGN-3

Internal Security loyalty officer

Chutzpah, Intimidation, Surveillance, Shadowing, Energy Weapons
Death Leopard, Charm

Constantly trying to see just what he can get away with.

Marcia-R-BRT-2

Tech Services equipment gal

Moxie, Security Systems, Concealment, Energy Weapons, Projectile Weapons
Frankenstein Destroyers, Mechanical Intuition

Can't wait to 'maintain' those stinkin' jackobots, oh my yes.

Paolo-R-ARZ-1

Armed Forces happiness officer

Disguise, Sleight of Hand, Energy Weapons, Biosciences
Romantics, Uncanny Luck

Lives in a perpetual fog of self-medication, hallucinating that it's the past.

Harrison-R-BOG-2

PLC hygiene officer

Hygiene, Agility, Energy Weapons, Bot Operations, Biosciences, Medical
Corpore Metal, Energy Field

Has been told that one of the player characters is to be his cyborg mentor.

Melonie-R-CHT-1

HPD&MC recording officer

Oratory, High Alert, Shadowing, Energy Weapons, Electronic Engineering
FCCCP, Adhesive Skin

Just wants, desperately, to never become Melonie-R-CHT-2.

sabotages things. The Communists eventually do something about this (see below).

Player: Sooooo... how's the PGC count today?

Ellen-R: Great! We're tracking well above target.

Player: Uh... the bots don't seem to be compacting much PGC.

Ellen-R: You didn't see them earlier? They were going at it like crazy!

Player: Is it just me, or is the vat sort of... smelling bad?

Ellen-R: That's the aroma of abundant success!

Player: Really?

Ellen-R: Don't you believe in the Miracle, boss?

Vat Defense Team VG.060

The six RED Troubleshooters assigned to protect V-1 from all threats foreign and domestic are just like our heroes used to be. This should, of course, immediately set off all kinds of alarm bells in the players' minds. VG.060 aren't supposed to leave the vat chamber, and they will not obey orders to do so, but they are entirely vulnerable to other pressures, such as bribery, threats, blackmail, etc.

Like all Troubleshooter teams, the longer they are forced to be around each other, the more they begin to undermine and interfere with each other and everything around them. Because this is Straight style, they don't break into open combat. Even so, the players may still find themselves obligated to step in to control the exact same sort of backstabbing behavior that they themselves are probably engaging in. Ah, tasty irony.

All the Troubleshooters have RED reflex and RED laser pistols. Some might, at your discretion, be carrying illegal additional weapons above their clearance, purchased with personal money and secret society connections. Assume base skills of 6 across the board.

Jackobots

The eight jackobots have been programmed to simulate INFRARED Vat Workers in every way. They can stir, skim, prune, etc. just like an INFRARED citizen. They can also register petty complaints about their barracks and fight with each other over food rations just like INFRAREDS, even though they have neither barracks nor food. They always want to know when the next new episode of 'Teela-O' or 'Tunnel Rangers' is coming on and insist that they need to go to the bathroom. They're also an older, cheaply made model, so after a few days of constant use, they'll start breaking down, falling into the vat, coming apart when they fight or simply collapsing where they stand. Being

YELLOW Clearance, the players are authorized to buy replacement jackobots. A decent one costs about 10,000cr, but feel free to offer them 'bargain' units for much less. Of course, you get what you pay for. If you're feeling especially cruel, point out that scrubots are much cheaper....

Tony-Y and Leon-O

Remember how we mentioned earlier that vats produce a little more PGC than PLC bothers to record? Well, there's a whole branch of Free Enterprise devoted to 'managing' this extra amount. Officially known as 'Eleven Eleven' (the traditional surplus skim is 11.11%, one-ninth of the total output), they are more informally known as 'McFamily'.

Tony-Y-SCL-5 and Leon-O-RMA-4 are a couple of McFamily goons. Word has gotten out that a new 'Super-Vat' is being operated in CHN Sector, so McFamily wants their cut. These guys show up at V-1 after a few days of operation, to extend the usual friendly deal: They expect to buy the extra PGC skim at a bulk rate of 1 credit per USRDA brick. Sharp players can do the math: 11% of their 15K target output is around 1,650 USRDA per day. Who wouldn't want an extra 1,650 credits every day?

Now, Tony-Y and Leon-O might seem like goofy, Classic-style stereotypes initially, but they are ruthless goons working for cold, calculating businessmen. If you really want to get your players in deep, have the guys offer some money up front—like a couple thousand credits—with the rest 'payable when we pick up the skim in five days'. Of course, the 'rest' that they're expecting is something on the order of 8,000 bricks for those five days! Needless to say, if they're told that V-1 is only gasping out a couple hundred units a day, Tony-Y and Leon-O won't believe it: Wholesome Meals openly announced an output of nearly 15,000 bricks per day to the food competition mailing list. They will assume the players have cut a deal with some other Free Enterprise group. They won't be happy... and when McFamily is unhappy, these goons show back up with a whole bunch of buddies to break some legs.

Tony-Y: Nice vat y'got here. Looks... productive.

Player: What do you jokers want?

Leon-O: We wanna make youse an offer. Nothin' fancy, just the usual deal.

Tony-Y: One-ninth of total output, like everyone else.

Player: What? We're not giving you a ninth of our...

Tony-Y: Oh, no, y'misunderstand. We wanna buy it. A credit per brick.

Leon-O: I think you'll find that price... competitive.

Tony-Y: Yeah. Y'know... hard t'beat.



Tony-Y-SCL-5

McFamily goon leader

Mngmt 07, Stealth 05, Violence 08, Hardware 06, Software 06, Wetware 08 Intimidation, Surveillance, Projectile Weapons, Financial Systems, Biosciences

Free Enterprise, Charm YELLOW reflec, dum-dum slugthrower

Leon-O-RMA-4

McFamily goon

Mngmt 05, Stealth 06, Violence 09, Hardware 08, Software 07, Wetware 05 Interrogation, High Alert, Energy Weapons, Habitat Engineering, Suggestion

Free Enterprise, Pyrokinesis ORANGE reflec, blaster, ORANGE laser pistol

Generic McFamily goons

(as needed)

Mngmt 04, Stealth 06, Violence 10, Hardware 07, Software 06, Wetware 07 Shadowing, Agility, Hand Weapons, Unarmed Combat, Weapon Maintenance

RED or ORANGE reflec, Kevlar, truncheon, neurowhip

Marya-O-MKV-4

Communist saboteur

Mngmt 06, Stealth 08, Violence 07, Hardware 07, Software 05, Wetware 07 Concealment, Sneaking, Projectile Weapons, Demolitions, Habitat Engineering

Communist, Regeneration ORANGE reflec, asbestos lining, HE slugthrower; detonator timer

Viodor-Y-KYV-4

Communist saboteur

Mngmt 05, Stealth 07, Violence 09, Hardware 06, Software 08, Wetware 05 Chutzpah, Disguise, Hand Weapons, Field Weapons, Bot Programming Communist, Adrenaline Control

YELLOW reflec, Kevlar, hand flamer, knife; big bomb disguised as vat chemistry set

Communist saboteurs

If there isn't overt evidence of sabotage in V-1 after a few days, Ellen-R's comrades assume she has failed her mission or betrayed them. They send a team to 'clean up': a couple of 'Vat

Biochemistry Adjusters' named Marya-O-MKV-2 and Viodor-Y-KYV-4 show up one morning.

These two are not happy about having to clean up after Ellen-R. They claim they've been sent because the monitoring console reported substandard output from the vat; they're here to adjust the chemical mix. (If the vat is starting to fail, the players may be eager to have help... or someone else to blame for the failure!) In fact, they are carrying a fairly large bomb set to go off in about an hour, theoretically capable of destroying everything in V-1.

As soon as they think nobody's watching them, they drop their 'tool kit' (the bomb) into the vat, where it sinks to the bottom. Of course, it's no fun if nobody notices this; much better to have your players trying to figure out how they're going to find and remove a ticking bomb sitting under five meters of sludgy swamp-fluid.

If Ellen-R is still around in some capacity, the Communists try to find an opportunity to shoot her or drown her in the vat as a motivational hint to her next clone. Note that, even after they've gotten the bomb out of the vat, the players are going to have to disarm it (Hardware/Mechanical Engineering) or find somewhere else to unload it before it goes off.

Of course, it wouldn't do to have the bomb actually destroy the vat and relieve our heroes of further responsibility, so if it counts down to zero, it only explodes with the force of a grenade—enough to kill someone holding it, nothing more. (This is something you should apply as a general rule: The players should not be allowed to escape the problem simply by having it destroyed. If they somehow manage to wipe out V-1 entirely, their next clones—as well as all their subordinates' next clones—are activated and sent to newly outfitted Super-Vat V-2, and the ten days start again...)

Janice-G and Willard-G

These two check in periodically—over the radio, never in person—to ask after progress. What they want to hear is things are going well, the output is skyrocketing and any obstacles that came up have been dealt with. If the players whine to them about problems—liars and saboteurs and Troubleshooters and McFamily goons—the bosses are unsympathetic. The whole point of being promoted to YELLOW was so that our heroes could take responsibility for their own success, was it not? Nobody said management was going to be easy, did they? The two GREENs very much do not want to hear about, or see evidence of, failure. Failure is not an option; failure would imply that The Computer is wrong about the Miracle. And it has already been established as fact that the Miracle is working, yes? Yes.

The sweet sound of whatever it is I want to hear

Once again, you *want* the players to succeed, albeit with work and a little fear. Success, in this case, consists of the players lying about their results and getting paid a very large amount of money as a result.

After they've had ten days in V-1, Janice-G and Willard-G call them up to a private YELLOW conference room adjacent to their new GREEN offices. They want to hear all about the team's success, informing them up front that under the funding rules of the competition, they will be paid a bonus of 1 credit apiece for every 10 USRDA bricks of PGC they ultimately managed to produce. Even if they 'only' managed to tie QYN Sector's results, that should be around 75,000 bricks, or 7,500 credits each.

Janice-G is eager to hear the results:

'Well-Made is reporting an output of 15 VSP. I think they're under-reporting so as to lure the rest of us into a false sense of security. Our analysis suggests they're closer to 20 VSP. But they're a bunch of idiots and crackpots. Tell me, how much are we beating those fools by? Did we make 24? 25?'

Canny players may sense the trap they are stepping into and attempt to avoid it by, for example, asking direct or indirect questions about things like burden of proof: 'When is our stockpile going to be counted?' and the like. (Canny players may also realize that they, themselves, were probably the sole source of data that has led their bosses to 'analyze' an even-higher output over in QYN Sector.) Willard-G waves off questions and disclaimers with comments such as:

- ☉ 'Oh, we don't have time to come down to the warehouse! We need to get our successful report filed so we can secure next-phase funding. I just need to jot the number down here. Then we'll be able to calculate your bonus. Just give us a ballpark number.'
- ☉ 'I understand that consistency may have been uneven. Just tell us what your final brick count was. Eighty thousand? Ninety?'
- ☉ 'We accounted for the risk of sabotage in our estimates. Once we've eliminated the traitors who interfered with you, we should be able to get another 20 percent out of the process. What's 20 percent more than the average daily yield you were seeing?'

In short, your job here is to appeal to the players' greed, assuage their fears of being caught (yet) and give them the impression that they might actually be able to pull the wool over the eyes of their bosses.

In truth, the bosses already suspect the truth and are preparing their 'exit strategy' from this whole mess. The last thing they want is to receive information that the process failed, because that limits their plausible deniability. They, too, are getting bonuses based on how much success they report, so they will go to some lengths to avoid acknowledging failure or having to actually verify any quantity of PGC themselves.

Janice-G: So how much are we beating Well-Made by?

Player: Uh... We didn't beat them. We actually...

Willard-G: I'm sorry, I didn't hear you. There was a passing transbot just now. What's our success margin, again?

Player: We failed. We didn't manage to produce any...

Janice-G: Oh, look at the time, Willard-G! Sorry, we have to go to the review board RIGHT NOW and report our success.

Willard-G: Let's call it... 90,000 bricks, shall we? No reason to get greedy, at least not until we work the kinks out. If you all will return to your quarters, we'll have your bonuses wired to you within the hour. At 90 kilo-bricks, that would be 9,000 credits each. Unless the amount was higher...?

Player: You know... now that I think about it, we compressed around a 120,000 bricks, total.

Janice-G: I knew it! Fabulous news. We'll win this competition yet!

As soon as the Troubleshooters play ball and make up, or at least accept, some very successful (i.e. impossible) number—anything above 75,000 bricks of PGC total—they are sent back to 'continue maintaining V-1' and, soon after, their PDCs show their bonuses, calculated at the stated rate. There is no more follow-up on their report... yet.

What will they do with all this money? The answer in **PARANOIA** is the same for all questions: Surely, they will use it to get into deeper trouble.

Bigger than a breadbox, smaller than a fortnight

In general, the ten days in V-1 should start with excitement at the possibilities, proceed into boredom as your players find they can't actually do very much, then difficulty as obstacles arise and finally deep concern as they realize the experiment is failing no matter what they do. Feel free to apply Elizabeth Kubler-Ross' five stages of grief (Denial, Anger, Bargaining, Depression and Acceptance) to the process. Something like this:

Day 1

The players boss the REDs around as much as they can, trying to exploit them for their own agendas. Perhaps someone tries to go elsewhere and gets in trouble. The jackobots are idle; there's nothing to skim yet. The vat fluid looks normal, albeit new.

Day 2

Realizing that anything they want to do has to occur within the confines of V-1 itself, the players either give up and sit around, or start getting creative in their machinations. The bots complain about stuff. The vat is still fairly calm.

Day 3

The vat starts showing signs of frothy activity. The bots begin to skim the small initial amounts of PGC. Tony-Y and Leon-O show up to talk 'business'. The RED guard team starts to get twitchy; their own issues start to manifest.

Day 4

The bots continue to skim PGC, still being produced in very small amounts. Ellen-R lies about how poorly it's doing. The guard team starts to act up in the way that only RED Troubleshooters can, necessitating player intervention.

Day 5

PGC production continues to be below-normal, but the bots begin breaking down. The bosses call to inquire how things are going. The players uncover Ellen-R's deception, but if they blame the poor production on her, they'll have to 'correct' the situation themselves.

Day 6

The rest of the bots break down. It's pretty obvious now that the process is not producing any significant amount of PGC. The Communist sabotage team shows up. The players are looking for anything at all to take their frustration out on.

Day 7

With no bots, probably no more Ellen-R and possibly no more guards, the players have to keep it all going by themselves, trying to come up with ways to make the process improve even as it's worsening. The McFamily goons show up for the first skim.

Day 8

The vat starts spoiling, unless the players are truly brilliant about keeping it alive. Perhaps they tinker with the chemical mix themselves and try to buy replacement bots or pay INFRAREDS to help work it. Perhaps Tony and Leon come back... with friends.

Day 9

The vat is probably in complete decay. Janice-G and Willard-G inquire about progress; players mostly focus on how to keep them from finding out, or looking for escape.

Day 10

The vat is dead. Despair sets in. Does it even matter if something else goes wrong? They get the call to report for debriefing. Will they band together in a lie, or turn on each other?



3: 'The denser things are, the better they work'

Because the Troubleshooters have shown so much success, all the sector's vats have been retooled and our heroes are in charge of it all. The entire sector's food supply fails, of course. Unfortunately, this time there are people who are going to check up on them, so now they must produce a convincing illusion of success themselves...

Misery loves company

The players are left to their own devices in V-1 for a bit. They are no longer prohibited from leaving the test chamber, so if they want to roam around CHN Sector a bit causing trouble, feel free to go with that for a little while. They are not

Jasper Becker in *Hungry Ghosts* [Henry Holt, 1988] traces the foolishness of close planting to the fraudulent science of the Soviet Union. **T.D. Lysenko** was a quack who got the support of Joseph Stalin and ruled over Soviet genetics for 25 years. Among the many erroneous notions promoted by Lysenko and which had to be accepted in Marxist countries was his 'law of the life of species' which said that plants of the same species do not compete with each other but instead help each other to survive. This was linked to the Marxist notion of classes in which members of the same class do not compete but instead help each other survive. So Marxist ideology seemed to support the notion that the denser grain was planted, the better it was for the grain. But in reality this close planting led to withering of the plants after the initial germination phase.

Lysenko was responsible for many other foolish notions, most based upon the precept that environment, not genetics, determines plant characteristics. Lysenko argued that if you grew plants a little farther north each year, they would adapt to the climate, and eventually you would be able to grow oranges in the Arctic. All of the Lysenko nonsense had to [sic] accepted in the Soviet Union and promoted in propaganda as scientific truth. The Marxists in China apparently believed it was the truth. The reality was that this nonsense resulted in less production of food under conditions of bare survival.

—**Thayer Watkins**, 'The Great Leap Forward Period in China, 1958-1960'
[<http://www2.sjsu.edu/faculty/watkins/greatleap.htm>]

permitted to leave the sector without orders, of course; only citizens of GREEN Clearance and higher are able to travel between sectors on a whim. The guard team and Ellen-R (if they are still alive) are recalled to other duties and no new trouble comes looking for them in V-1, so for a few days, all seems quiet. Finally! This is what being a YELLOW is supposed to be like!

Then they get a call from someone named Lionel-B-TOA-4, who tells them how excited he is to be working with such talented citizens now. You see, Janice-G and Willard-G made their report and got their promotion—or rather, they were headhunted entirely out of Wholesome Meal Distributors and now work in FOO Sector for another firm that isn't involved in this food-production contest at all. Their old Director, Travis-B, has been promoted to INDIGO Clearance. Into the resulting management vacuum has stepped Lionel-B, fresh from TOA Sector: their new Director of Operations.

What Lionel-B lacks in wit and competence, he makes up for in eagerness and loyalty. He absolutely believes the numbers that Janice-G and Willard-G reported and he's excited to be leading Wholesome the rest of the way to victory. He genuinely thinks the players are brilliant bio-engineering wiz-kids who are cranking out more than 15,000 bricks of PGC every day down in V-1. Oh, didn't the players realize that everyone thinks V-1 is still producing at full speed? Oops.

So Lionel-B invites them to come up to Wholesome's mid-management offices for their first face-to-face. He's had the whole place gutted and remodeled and now it's very plush, like a 60's James Bond movie. Sadly, the lowest-clearance conference room he has is GREEN. But that's okay: as soon as they arrive, Lionel-B's assistant, Terry-G-TOA-3, hands them brand-new GREEN business attire. That's right: it's time for another promotion!

If your players are on the ball, they experience an immediate sinking sensation.

Lionel-B gets right down to it: First, he asks if they've managed to further increase their rate of output from V-1.

'It's okay if you haven't', he reassures you. 'The initial rate you achieved is already plenty competitive. We need to step it up a little, but other firms are dropping out of the race left and right. We're in the final four!'

While your players are figuring out how to lie about V-1's 'rate of output', Lionel-B keeps the good news coming: The final victor will be determined by a 30-day sector-wide demonstration of the new vat techniques. While the players have been 'tending' V-1 the last few days, Technical Services has retooled the rest of

CHN's vats to the same specification. Our heroes are now the Senior Vat Overseers in charge of Wholesome's production line—the entire food supply of CHN Sector!

As befits such important positions, they are getting moved again, to a set of private GREEN-Clearance apartments on the 40th level. They also each get their own office near Lionel-B's, which they are free to decorate in any way they wish as long as it conforms to the Workspace Alteration Statutes. From these offices, they can remotely monitor (via cameras, gauges, etc.) all of the vat chambers in CHN Sector. The office terminals also have reasonable, but not excessive, potential for access to security systems, transport, etc. in CHN Sector. Your more ambitious players should look for opportunities to hack the system. You should look for opportunities to get them in hot water down the road.

Oh, and once again, there is a list of important things that they will be responsible for. Everybody signs on the form together and, as a group—you might want to make sure you're sitting down for this—they take charge of the following:

- ☉ **(100) re-worked 'Super-Vat' chambers, each 12x16x5 meters:** Each of these chambers previously held 12 standard vats and produced 120 bricks per day. Now each one has been retooled to be just like V-1, with a production capacity of 960 cubic meters and an expected 'greater than 15 VSP' output of at least 15,000 bricks per day—enough to feed all of CHN Sector from merely two such chambers!
- ☉ **(100) former vat chambers, now warehouses, each 16x20x5 meters:** Each of these previously held 20 standard vats and produced 200 bricks per day. Now they are empty, intended to provide large amounts of storage space for the vast quantities of PGC that are coming soon. Some have their entrance at ground level, with a ceiling five meters up; others have entrances at the top, with freight lifts that go down five meters into the space where vats used to sit.
- ☉ **Approximately (125,000) USRDA bricks of stored surplus PGC:** Some of this is from Wholesome's own vats—the last bit as they were being dismantled—but mostly it's been purchased from two dozen nearby sectors on a short-term repayment plan. It's needed for keeping CHN Sector fed during the next five days or so while the new vats are coming up to speed. Once the Super-Vats are producing, of course,

it's expected that these food loans will be easily repaid in a single day of operation.

- ④ **(1600) INFRARED Vat Worker Citizens:** In the old vat rooms, one worker tended two vat tanks and you had six to ten INFRAREDs per chamber. All these citizens are trained to do is tend vats, so that is what they are still expected to do, even though there are only 100 operating chambers now. What will happen when there are 16 IRs squeezed onto narrow catwalks over a single tank of toxic fluid? The players are free, of course, to send these fools on other assignment, like guarding warehouses. That should be good for a few laughs.
- ④ **(300) RED-Clearance Citizens:** Now we're gettin' somewhere! They are assigned no fewer than 90 Troubleshooters, organized into 15 six-person Vat Guard teams (just like their old job)... 200 Vat Monitor Technicians (even though they have only 100 active vats to monitor)... and 10 Internal Security agents who can be applied as undercover moles for any RED-Clearance purpose within CHN Sector that the players wish... as long as said purpose doesn't countermand direct orders from Internal Security itself. (The agents are, of course, more interested in taking notes on what the players make them do, than they are in doing what the players tell them.)
- ④ **(75) ORANGE-Clearance Citizens:** The players have a set of 15 Troubleshooter Central Dispatchers to help them manage the vat guards... 20 Vat Maintenance Engineers to help with any incidental operational problems the vats may experience (though of course they're only skilled in the old-style vats)... 30 PGC Distribution Specialists who deal with getting raw PGC to the refinement factories... and of course, 10 Internal Security agents suitable for any undercover ORANGE-Clearance task the players devise.
- ④ **(20) YELLOW-Clearance Citizens:** It seems like it was just last week that our heroes were lowly YELLOWS and now they command five Vat Biologists who know all about the ins and outs of making vats work (not that their knowledge does them any good anymore)... five YELLOW Supervisors who can be relied upon to manage the various groups of ORANGE and RED citizens day-to-day... and naturally, another ten Internal Security agents.

④ **(1) autocar with robochauffeur:** Our heroes are finally free to leave CHN Sector whenever they want!

④ **125,000 credits of discretionary fund:** The money just keeps getting bigger! For any single purchase in excess of 10,000 credits, at least two members of the team must submit authorization. For any single purchase above 50,000 credits, at least three members must authorize. Don't tell them this until someone tries to spend it all on a warbot or something.

While their heads are reeling from all of this, Lionel-B shakes each of their hands:

'Only a fool would try to micromanage something that's already an unqualified success, so I'm just going to stay out of your way right now while you get everything going. I'll check back in

again when it's time for our first All-Over Morale tour in ten days or so.'

Then he heads back into his office. Terry-G, the assistant, gives them a look that seems to say, 'Well...?' He expects to see this miraculous team that can Do No Wrong in action now. The team will either have to find a way to shake him (not easy) or co-opt him into their conspiracy (much easier). If they do shake him, he'll still figure out the truth on his own. Either way, his illusions are about to be shattered.

Of course, right about now your players should be saying: *'Wait, did he say there was going to be an All-Over Morale tour in ten days?'*

That's right, campers. Remember the tour our heroes saw in QYN Sector? It's time to do the exact same thing, only seen from backstage this time. And that's just for starters.

Hungry like the wolf

Say what you will about Alpha Complex, it's actually very rare that its citizens experience true, extended hunger. A lot of citizens won't even understand what this strange pain in their own bodies is at first. But even the dullest INFRARED will eventually realize that the only thing they can think of is the food they don't have.

As the food dwindles, the players will have to make some choices about who gets fed. Do they divide the rations evenly amongst everyone? Do they feed some groups but not others? Is it based on security clearance? On service group? No matter how they make these choices, there will be ramifications.

As for the physical effects of starvation, any citizens who get no food at all will starve to death over the course of about 40 days. At zero units of food per day, the life of a citizen goes through four phases of about ten days each:

For the first ten days, they are simply hungry. There is some weight loss. All their skills drop a point or two from mild weakness and distraction. They will complain. A lot.

During the next phase, physical signs of weight loss are apparent. Weakness and mental distraction cause all skills to be reduced by 3–4 points. The mood stabilizers and sexual suppressants that are normally ingested with each meal have worn off, bringing out 'unusual' behavior. Members of some service groups (i.e. Armed Forces) attempt to acquire food by force if they know where any is. Others attempt to get Outdoors. The rest simply begin to forage wherever and whenever they can, leaving their jobs undone. Technical Services teams won't be maintaining elevators... Power Services won't be watching the reactors... You get the picture.

In the third phase, the body becomes emaciated. All skills are halved. The need to eat dominates the citizen's thoughts. At this point, he'll try to get whatever minimal sustenance he can from eating paper, clothing, paint, machine oil, mold growing under his bunk, etc., even as serious physical weakness and psychological breakdown set in. Cannibalism, of course, becomes increasingly prevalent.

The final phase is a form of oedema. Parts of the body start swelling with a yellowish fluid. Flesh becomes doughy and splotchy. The citizen actually no longer feels hungry. At this point, even if food is eaten, it often doesn't digest properly, passing straight through the body. Bowel control fails, leading to additional dehydration (and failed hygiene inspections!). Major organs—the lungs, the liver, the heart—begin faltering. Eventually, the citizen simply falls down and never gets up again.

Eating a quarter USRDA per day extends these phases out by 50%—that is, 15 days per phase instead of 10. Half a USRDA per day extends each phase to 30 days and three-quarters of a USRDA per day extends each phase to 60 days (well beyond the immediate scope of this episode.) Don't worry if your players find ways to delay the onset of total starvation in CHN for a long while; it's ultimately going to be entirely moot.



By 1959, it was obvious that the Great Leap Forward had been a failure, and even Mao admitted this. He called on the Communist Party to take him to task over his failures but also asked his own party members to look at themselves and their performance.

‘The chaos caused was on a grand scale, and I take responsibility. Comrades, you must all analyze your own responsibility. If you have to fart, fart. You will feel much better for it.’

Some party members put the blame [for] the failure of the Great Leap Forward on Mao. He was popular with the people but he still had to resign from his position as Head of State (though he remained in the powerful Party Chairman position).

The day-to-day running of China was left to three moderates: Liu Shaoqi, Zhou Enlai and Deng Xiaoping. In late 1960, they abandoned the Great Leap Forward. Private ownership of land was reinstated and communes were cut down to a manageable size. Peasants also had the incentive to produce as much spare food as was possible [and] they could sell any spare that had a market.

These three moderates had restricted Mao’s power, but his standing among the ordinary Chinese people was still high as he was seen as the leader of the revolution. He was to use this popularity with the people to resurrect his authority at the expense of the moderates. This was in the so-called Cultural Revolution.

**—Chris Trueman, http://www.historylearningsite.co.uk/great_leap_forward.htm
(reprinted by permission of the author)**

Stone soup

The daily population survey has identified 25,839 citizens as residents of CHN Sector. This breaks down to approximately 19,800 INFRAREDS (77%), 5,200 REDs and ORANGEs (20%), 800 ‘middle-management’ citizens (YELLOW through BLUE, around 3%) and a few dozen top-echelon leaders of INDIGO Clearance and higher. They are fairly evenly distributed between the eight service groups.

Up to this point, they were fed by Wholesome Meal Distributor’s 200 vat chambers—100 each of the 12-vat and 20-vat configurations, operating at ‘VSP’ and producing an official daily total of 32,000 bricks (plus 4,000 extra units of McFamily skim). 27 kilo-bricks worth of this output was refined and served within CHN itself. (Some higher-clearance citizens eat more than one USDA per day.) The remaining 5,000 bricks worth were sold to other sectors in refined ‘cash-crop’ form—Blastalicious Gumsmackers, ChocoLyke Puff-Crunch and the like. Wholesome Meal Distributors has a PLC-protected monopoly on food within CHN. As a result, the survival of the nearly 26,000 residents of CHN is tied directly to the output of Wholesome’s vats.

You know the drill, of course. Each of the 100 re-worked vat chambers is expected to produce at least 15,000 bricks per day (if they claimed 15 VSP) but, by day four of operation, they’ll all be producing only 0.2 VSP (around 200 bricks

per day from each chamber). That will rise to a quarter VSP by day six (250 bricks), then drop off to near-zero production by day eight, followed shortly by the stench of dead, decaying vat vegetation—a far cry from the 1.5 million total bricks per day that is expected.

With a great deal of genius and effort (mostly by re-adjusting the chemistry so as not to be actively toxic), they might be able to keep some, most or even all of the vats limping along at 0.2 VSP... assuming there’s no sabotage, no ‘helpful’ tampering by their vat technicians, etc. But even if every reworked vat is kept alive, the total output of all the Super-Vats together is only going to be 20,000 bricks per day... or 6,000 bricks per day less than the absolute minimum required to keep CHN Sector fed. If not all of the vats make it, the shortfall will be even larger.

Your players should understand this within minutes of Lionel-B returning to his office. They have a quarter-million units of food stored in the warehouses, a bunch of freshly-seeded vats that are already on their way to failure... and 26,000 hungry (and in some cases, well-armed) mouths to feed. Ask your players what they intend to do about it.

Go on. Ask ‘em.

Each day worse than the last

This chapter is, by necessity, even more unstructured than the last one. As GREENs, the

team really does have a wide range of options available to it. Once again, you and your players will need to adjust your time-scale. What do they want to do for, say, ‘the next five days’? You can play through individual days here and there if necessary, but you’ll need to pace yourself: the team needs to get through an entire month.

It would be impossible for us to detail all the things that can and should happen during that time, so instead, we’re going to suggest six basic crises for the players to... well, if not actually solve, then at least wrestle with. You can throw them out one at a time in five-day increments or pile them up as fast as you can. You’ll need to develop each one out as it comes along, subject to whatever tactics your players attempt in dealing with them.

The refining centers

Normally, once PGC is skimmed from the vats, it is sent to Wholesome’s 16 refining centers, where it is carefully sculpted and chemically recombined into something that doesn’t look like sludge skimmed off a tank of algae. Even INFRAREDS turn up their nose at raw PGC, so it needs to be made into something delicious... or at least something marketable. Once the switch-over to the new Super-Vats has been in effect for a few days, the refining centers will start asking the players’ YELLOW Supervisors when their first shipments of raw PGC will be arriving. In the ‘old days’, each of the 16 centers received about

2,000 bricks of PGC each day. They've been told to expect far more than that now, of course, so they've all begun revising their equipment (at significant cost) to handle up to 20,000 bricks per day. Of course they want to know when this huge amount is going to start showing up. If they don't start receiving shipments for refinement, they'll complain to Lionel-B, who will want to know what's going on.

The day of feasting

As soon as Lionel-B is the least bit convinced that the Super-Vats are producing and the refining centers are converting their intake into product, he sends the news up the chain of command, through former director (now senior vice-president) Travis-I, to the firm's chief executive, Vivian-V-ING-8. Vivian-V, after getting approval from the ULTRAVIOLET Board of Directors and The Computer, announces a sector-wide Feast-Day open to all clearances and every service group in CHN, to occur in three days: All the Wholesome food products you can eat, free of charge, for 24 hours! ('Some Wholesome products are not available to all security clearances.')

The players have three days to figure out how to get enough supply to match the approaching demand. On Feast-Day itself, the residents of CHN Sector are going to want about five or six USRDAs' worth of food apiece, meaning that the total demand is going to be for around 150,000 units of refined food. Anything less than this and there will be citizens upset that, in fact, the food ran out before they'd eaten all that they could... possibly with attendant rioting. Lionel-B will eventually hear about problems and inquire where the system broke down. Once he's assured that the problems have been fixed, of course, he'll announce another Feast-Day to show that the system is working.

The dog and pony show

There have been some unfortunate rumors—spread in other sectors by less-successful firms—that the goals of this competition are unrealistic and infeasible. So, in the interest of All-Over Morale, The Computer has ordered another round of tours, allowing interested parties to see the miraculous new Super-Vats in action. Every other day for most of a week or so, two to four groups of ORANGE and YELLOW 'vat biologists' arrive by transbot to see the vats, the surplus, etc. Of course they're all Troubleshooter teams or saboteurs in disguise, secretly equipped to steal whatever Wholesome technical data they can get or sabotage the Super-Vats the moment they aren't being watched. Some of them are even from a couple of the other semi-finalist service firms; perhaps Jack-O's team is among them. They've all heard that citizens in

CHN Sector eat as much as they want, the food is piled up in hallways, etc. If they witness any evidence to the contrary, rumors will get around, and Lionel-B will want to know why our heroes aren't serving these guests huge meals and showing them giant piles of surplus food. You may also want to hint (or have Lionel-B openly state) that at least one of the groups are actually the ULTRAVIOLET competition judges, disguised as lower-clearance citizens, gathering the data they need to determine the ultimate winner!

The family, again

McFamily, of course, hasn't given up. They want their 11 percent cut of this supposed Miracle. Silvano-B-NPL-5, a McFamily 'capo', directly contacts Lionel-B this time, asking if Wholesome cut a deal with someone else. Lionel-B turns right around and instructs the players to work out a deal with McFamily and forward half the proceeds to Wholesome's general fund. 'You can keep the other half as a bonus for yourselves', he says magnanimously.

Silvano-B wants to have a 'sit-down' with the players to work out the details. He also wants to see the Super-Vats in operation, and the surplus warehouses, much like the other dog and pony shows. Silvano-B is also happy to pull individual characters aside: 'Why am I tryin' t'negotiate with alla you when clearly youse is d'one guy I should be talkin' to? Let's you an' me work dis out right now, an' I'll wire you d'first payment right now, private-like.'

If the group as a whole won't make the deal, try to get one (or more!) of your players to cut a deal on the side, in exchange for some chunk of cash. Of course, as before, the goons show up later to pick up the skim. This time, they'll have big freight vehicles and bigger weapons. (On a related note, the two-dozen nearby sectors who all loaned food to provide the short-term stockpile will also start sending representatives around day eight to get that loaned food repaid.)

The new arrivals

Word is spreading around Alpha Complex that Wholesome Meal Distributors is up-and-coming, and all of a sudden CHN Sector is the place to be! An unprecedented number of transfers are taking place, as everyone who has a favor to call in is using it to get a new job somewhere—anywhere!—in CHN, where it's said the food practically grows on walls.

Every three days, a few hundred more middle-clearance citizens are added to the population, with that many more mouths to feed. The housing firms are having a hard time finding apartments for everyone, so lower-clearance citizens are being forced out: Each GREEN who moves in needs his own room, displacing entire Troubleshooter teams from their former bunkrooms. They, in turn,

kick whole shifts of INFRAREDs out and take over their barracks. Now the halls and lounges are filling up with displaced INFRAREDs. Strictly speaking, the housing shortage is HPD&MC's problem to solve; your players will have enough on their hands with all those roving, hungry citizens needing food.

The photo opportunity

Wholesome's recently promoted Vice-President of Production, Travis-I-LIN-2, pays a visit. He needs to have a bunch of propaganda photos taken along with a High Programmer from the Board of Directors, Lee-U-TAI-9. Basically, Travis-I is trying to lay the groundwork for eventually replacing Vivian at the top, so he wants to show Lee-U all the great work that he's responsible for. Thus, he damn well wants to see great work evident everywhere. This is not too

Lionel-B-TOA-4

PCs' supervisor

Mngmt 03, Stealth 06, Violence 04, Hardware 09, Software 09, Wetware 09
Oratory, Concealment, Chemical Engineering, C-Bay, Bioweapons
FCCC-P, Uncanny Luck

Lionel-B is so gullible, it's a wonder he has any clones left at all. He counts himself lucky to have managed to get Travis-B's job directing Wholesome at this breakthrough turning point in its history. He completely believes in the Miracle and simply won't recognize or understand any evidence against it. He does understand that counter-Miracle traitors are everywhere and he would be very disappointed to find our heroes in that camp.

Terry-G-TOA-3

Lionel-B's assistant

Mngmt 08, Stealth 08, Violence 08, Hardware 04, Software 07, Wetware 05
Con Games, Moxie, Fine Manipulation, Data Analysis, Data Search
Illuminati (cover society: Pro Tech), Empathy

Terry is not so naïve. In fact, he's got a good thing going, attaching himself to someone as idiotic and lucky as Lionel-B. He didn't know anything about the failed process when they came here, but he figures it out quick. It won't do him any good to try to unmask the players to Lionel-B; he simply switches to helping keep the masquerade up. Terry can be used as the voice of any suggestion you want the players to pick up on.



Charge it!

One bit of consolation in all this, of course, is the huge amounts of money the team has been given. Why, just think of how many chapsticks they can buy now! Huh? Spend the money trying to shore up the sector's failing food supply? What, are you kidding?

Of course, there are only so many slughrowers and warbots you can buy before you get bored. What else can a bunch of GREENs with a budget accomplish? Well, this is mostly covered in the *Extreme PARANOIA* supplement, which details higher-clearance life. For the purposes of *Hunger*, here are some rough guidelines. There are basically three categories of purchase we're interested in. We'll call them '2K', '10K' and '50K'. Coincidentally enough, this is about how many credits it costs for one of the items on the list. (You can modify the exact purchase cost based on relevant skill rolls by your players.)

This is list by no means exhaustive, of course; it is merely to give some idea of scale so that you can come up with suggested prices for the ludicrous ideas that your own players (one hopes) will come up with.

2K (2000cr) items

- ④ Having an existing vat (of any size) seeded with fresh hollywood and vine.
- ④ Arranging to have all the cameras in a single room shut down for a few minutes.
- ④ Paying a Computer Phreak for one specific bit of information.
- ④ Renting an hour of Internal Security 'interrogation time' for someone else.
- ④ Getting a Sierra Club guide to take you to the Outdoors.
- ④ Printing a sector's worth of advertising or packaging material for one day.
- ④ Calling a Technical Services team (or some Pro-Techs) to perform on-site repair.
- ④ Throwing a Death Leopard 'party' or Mystics 'rave'.

10K (10,000cr) items

- ④ Installing a single old-style vat
- ④ Dispatching a RED Troubleshooter team on a typical one-day mission.
- ④ Deleting one incriminating item from all records.
- ④ Commissioning an R&D team to make an initial report on some idea.
- ④ Paying an assassin to make a clean hit on someone.
- ④ Purchasing vid-ad time during primetime viewing hours.
- ④ Buying a jackobot.

50K (50,000cr) items

- ④ Arranging for all cameras (or other infrastructure) in a sector to be halted for an hour.
- ④ Hiring a small Armed Forces escort for a week.
- ④ Buying a small refurbished Power Services reactor.
- ④ Acquiring a crawler for Outdoor exploration.
- ④ Ordering a random Internal Security raid on a specific location.
- ④ Having serious cyborging surgery performed.

Generally speaking, for most of these items, it's about 50% likely that it will work as intended by the buyer. That is, there's a 50/50 chance that the Troubleshooter team will succeed in its basic mission, the cameras will actually turn off, the vat seed will take root and begin growing, etc. By spending twice as much, you can raise that likelihood to 75% (success on a d20 roll of 15 or lower). And if you don't really care about success that much, you can spend half as much and success drops to 25% (success on a 5 or lower).

different from the dog and pony show, except that Lee-U is somewhat insane and entirely fickle in the way that only High Programmers can be.

As a result, the players are repeatedly called on to make sure all sorts of random requests are fulfilled: Lee-U wants to sit on a throne made of candy. Lee-U wants to take some pictures where he's playing with little clone children on a mountain of food. Lee-U wants to eat FizzlePops until he vomits. Lee-U has heard there are citizens stealing some of the surplus food; he wants to interrogate some of them to death. Lee-U thinks this is the worst food he has ever tasted. No, wait, this is the best food he has ever tasted. Everyone in Alpha Complex should eat Wholesome-brand food! Don't you *agree*, citizens?

Every problem has a worse solution

Periodically throughout the 30-day 'finalist' period, Lionel-B calls the players up to his office to inquire about progress. As long as he himself is able to eat whenever he wants, as much as he wants, he remains convinced they are on track to win. There are no starving citizens; there are only 'lazy malcontents'. There is no shortfall; there is only 'unfortunate sabotage to be dealt with'. So long as the players keep him fed and tell him things are going well every few days, Lionel-B is happy, and a happy Lionel-B is a Lionel-B who kicks down a few thousand extra credits to his staff now and then. (Each time they successfully pull off a Day of Feasting or a Dog and Pony Show, shower them with a few thousand more credits apiece. If, on the other hand, they try to get themselves transferred or hired out of CHN Sector, Lionel-B refuses to approve it: 'We're a team. We succeed or fail as team... and since we aren't failing, we're going to succeed *big-time!*')

Strangely enough, your job is still to work with your players. You *want* them to get away with this horrible disaster. And we wouldn't give you a problem that had no answer, would we?

Actually, that's more or less exactly what we've done here (sorry), but these are some possible 'stratagems' your players can use to try and get through the month. Perhaps they'll hit on some of these ideas all by themselves; reward them with much Perversity if they do. Otherwise, you can have NPCs such as Terry-G drop hints.

Mobile resources

Stockpile as much PGC as you can, creating a huge 'mountain of food' however you can, and show it to people. Then take them somewhere else and while they're not looking, move all that food to a second warehouse, arrange it slightly differently, and show it off as though it were an entirely new mountain of food. This becomes a bit

trickier if you have more than one group touring around at the same time, or if high-clearance citizens suddenly want to double back and see the original warehouse again, or happen to go for a wander and bump into your INFRAREDs moving the PGC bricks fire-brigade style...

Those awful hoarders!

Whenever anyone higher-up finds out that not enough food is coming out of your vats, blame it on Communists and counter-Miracle traitors who are obviously robbing warehouses, intercepting the shipments to the refining centers, hoarding the food for themselves and poisoning the warehouses such that thousands of tons of food had to be destroyed. It's probably those pesky INFRARED vat workers. Let's turn Internal Security loose on them, shall we? With a little effort, your players can probably whip up a witch-hunt of unparalleled size. It won't actually make any extra food turn up, but if done right, it could become a bigger concern for everyone than the actual starvation problem...

Nice warehouse, we'll take it

There are many, many nearby sectors that are still producing and refining PGC just like Wholesome used to. Most of them have small surpluses stockpiled away—your players know this because they've already had some of that surplus loaned to them, remember?

Perhaps some PLC top-dogs in other sectors, having gotten wind of what's going on, contact our heroes and offer to simply sell them some more PGC—a few thousand bricks here or there—at a high-profit price. Say... five creds per brick?

On the other hand, once they realize there's food to be acquired nearby, your players may decide against buying it. After all, they could just bribe the right PLC staffer into letting them gain access to the storehouses... or send their Troubleshooter teams to break in and take the food directly. Of course, it won't do to distribute food that's obviously from some other sector, so it will need to be quietly re-refined first...

Food is what you make of it

There's a lot of things that can be compressed into a brick besides PGC. All the waste that sectors typically just throw into the recycler... some of it doesn't look a whole lot different than the organic sludge, really. In fact, there's a lot of things that—mixed in with a small amount of real PGC—could probably be digested just fine... right? If not, at least it looks and smells enough like PGC that, once compressed, it could be mistaken for the real thing. It's amazing how far you can stretch the food supply when 80% of it consists of packing foam and garbage...



If everybody lies, that must be the truth

Through a combination of Management skills and overt cash bribes, a lot of people can be kept quiet who would normally rat out the players to their superiors. In fact, given sufficient motivation, most everyone involved can be turned into enthusiastic supporters of the lie. Your players were probably pretty quick to get with the program once those cash bonuses were being handed out; let them manage the situation with their NPC peers and direct reports the same way....

New Way, same as the Old Way

Obviously, they can't just return all the Super-Vats back to their old layout—they'll be executed as counter-Miracle traitors if it turns out they aren't actually using the new process—but some of those empty warehouses could be re-equipped with old-style vats and secretly put back into operation, thus keeping at least some of the sector fed.

Of course, secret is the operative word here—not only to avoid accusations of treason, but because there may well be an enormous riot the moment it becomes general knowledge that there is, in fact, still food being produced in CHN Sector...

We call that an 'all-day sucker'

Ultimately, your goal as the Gamemaster in this episode is to keep your players convinced, at every point, that this time they really aren't going to manage to get away with it... but each time, somehow, they barely squeak by. This isn't to say they should avoid all consequence; in fact, it's a very valid solution to have one of the characters executed here or there for failing to 'catch enough hoarders' or having 'helped counter-Miracle saboteurs poison the surplus'. Then their next clone is called up with a clean slate; Lionel-B laments their predecessor's failure and expresses his sincere hope the replacement has the right stuff for the job. The same problems still need solving, of course.

There are a few things you should try to insure happen by the end of the 30 days:

- ☉ The players have put on a fairly convincing display of surplus within CHN Sector, at least when it was necessary to do so. Anyone important (i.e. their bosses and, thus, The Computer) believe the 'Wholesome Process' is a tremendous success.
- ☉ CHN has consumed much of the food in the surrounding sectors in order to try



to minimize its shortfall. If the players themselves have not ransacked the storehouses of their neighbors, roving bands of starving CHN citizens probably will.

- Ⓢ Nevertheless, some significant portion of the sector has not been eating enough, or possibly at all. A visitor who looks around on his own finds emaciated citizens milling about the halls looking for food.

As the 30 days draw to a close, a very excited Lionel-B calls the players into his office. He has great news, then bad news, then good news.

The great news is that Wholesome has won the competition! Of the final four service firms in the running, two of the others have dropped out—citing ‘technical problems beyond solution’—and the third, Well-Make Digestibles in QYN Sector, hasn’t been heard from in several days. They appear to have quietly forfeited, for some strange reason.... That leaves Wholesome Meal Distributors as the default winner! While they wait for the official announcement, a preliminary bonus of 10,000 credits is being wired to each of the players.

The bad news is, the food theft and sabotage CHN has been wrestling with has apparently

spread to several adjacent sectors. (*Oh, you think?*) Lionel-B had hoped to stockpile their entire surplus for eventual resale, but Wholesome has been asked to provide emergency food relief for all the other sectors in the area. Of course, the firm agreed. It is up to Wholesome Meal Distributors to keep their hungry neighbors fed!

‘What’s the other good news?’ your desperate players cry.

‘Oh!’ Lionel-B replies. ‘The good news is, we don’t have to manage the entire relief effort ourselves. Armed Forces arrives tomorrow to start distribution.’

4: ‘Any substance can easily become any other substance’

The players decide to find out, at some point, what was actually going on in QYN Sector and step into a horrorshow unlike anything they’ve ever experienced in **PARANOIA**.

Curiosity ate the cat

This section should be treated as an interlude that occurs at some point during their time as GREEN Vat Overseers. You want your players to head back to QYN Sector at some fairly late point. There are a number of reasons why they might do so:

- Ⓢ They want to verify that, in fact, QYN was deceiving them all along.
- Ⓢ They want to get (read: steal) more technical data on the ‘process’.
- Ⓢ They haven’t realized they were being scammed and want to steal QYN’s surplus.

- Ⓢ They want to see how QYN has solved the problems that CHN is now facing.

If it never occurs to them to wonder what’s happening in QYN, you can force them into it by having Lionel-B dispatch them on a diplomatic assignment: He wants to have a sit-down with Lao-B-CCP, before the final judging occurs, but Lao-B isn’t returning his calls. In fact, nobody in QYN is. So our heroes are ordered to return to Well-Make, find Lao-B and have him (or his clone replacement) get in touch with Lionel-B immediately.

QYN, as you’ll recall, had got a head start on everyone else in the competition, with a good two- or three-week lead. This means that about the time CHN Sector is starting to feel its first serious hunger pain, QYN reached the point at which many of its citizens were dying. If the players try to contact anyone in QYN, nobody answers. If they dispatch any sort of underlings (i.e. Troubleshooters) to investigate, those underlings never report back. Any NPC who goes into QYN simply disappears. They will have to go in themselves.

they look, there is evidence that something horrible happened here. INFRARED barracks in which every bunk is covered with blood... rows of cloning tanks smashed open, the bodies no longer inside...

Nowhere is there any sign of paper or fabric; all of it was eaten long ago. And there are no people, or even corpses. The corpses have all been gathered up and consumed. As for the people... Well, you see, the starvation in QYN Sector revealed something that, previously, nobody had ever realized:

One out of every 20 citizens is a Matter Eater.

While everyone else began to waste away, the nearly 1,000 Matter Eaters of QYN Sector actually continued to survive just fine on garbage and the like. Some made the mistake of remaining obviously well-fed; they were singled out as food-hoarders and tortured to death by Internal Security or torn to pieces by mobs. The rest wisely let themselves also waste away a little, feigning hunger that they didn’t actually feel. Eventually, once law and order had completely broken down and their fellow citizens became too weak to stop them, the still-healthy Matter Eaters began dragging everyone else away one by one, because they had discovered something they’d never imagined before, because they’d never been hungry before:

Real meat tastes good.

That was a week ago. The meat has long since run out—they ate the citizens of QYN, ate their just-activated clone replacements, then finally broke open the clone tanks to eat the growing flesh inside. The Matter Eater packs are now chewing on bones, occasionally preying on each other and wondering where to find a new supply.

You know how they say you have to kill a tiger once it gets the taste of human flesh? The Matter Eaters of QYN Sector will never go back to PGC now. Not when they know there’s something better.



Give it to Mike-Y; he’ll eat anything

QYN Sector is a horrific mess: Furniture overturned and torn apart... most of the power is off... evidence of people having barricaded themselves inside rooms that someone else violently broke into... paint peeled off walls in long fingernail scratches... long streaks of dry blood dragged down the length of hallways... clear indications of weapons use... damage on walls, floors and equipment... are those teeth-marks?!? Let the players wander around for a while in what seems to be a totally empty and abandoned sector. There’s nobody guarding equipment depots, weapon armories, etc. which may provide some amount of fun. But everywhere

After your players have wandered around for a bit—and maybe enjoyed a few perks of being in an unguarded sector—start dropping hints that there may be someone else in QYN after all: Was that a noise down the hall? Something rattling? Wait, did they just see something move on that monitor screen? More important, did they see something moving in the dark shadows on the other side of the room?

As they start to search—or start to escape, it doesn't matter—they round a corner and are suddenly looking at a vaguely familiar face. Well, it would be familiar if it wasn't so gaunt, so covered with dirt, ashes and dried blood:

It's Arno-Y-QYN-2, former assistant to Lao-B-CCP.

We'll bet you laughed when you saw he was a Matter Eater way back in Episode 1, huh? Not so funny now.

Arno-Y drops the skull he was chewing on when he sees you. 'Well!' he says, in a voice no longer used to speaking. 'Funny seeing you... people... again. What a... pleasant... surprise.'

He tries to make small talk while the rest of his pack, which isn't far away, catches up to him.

'It looks like you guys got a promotion. Congratulations! The competition? Oh, I transferred to another... group... You want to talk to Lao-B? Here, follow me, I'll take you to him...'

His intent, of course, is to either stall them from leaving (or attacking) for just a minute or so, or get them to follow him. Either way, they'll soon face (or be surrounded by) a dozen or more cannibal mutants.

How it plays out from there is anyone's guess.

Matter Eaters of QYN

As needed

Mngmnt 02, Stealth 09, Violence 09
Sneaking, Hand Weapons, Unarmed
Combat; Smell Meat: 15, Devour: 15
Tooth and nail (S5K impact)

5: 'Pain only exists when you lack sufficient faith'

Things are getting out of hand in CHN even as Armed Forces moves in to suppress food riots in the surrounding sectors. Our heroes are assigned to help the military distribute the food surplus they supposedly have. Ultimately, the solution may end up being worse than the problem.

There will likely be a fight, of course—a fight everyone wants to lose. Lionel-B and the Colonel patiently wait (and possibly take cover) while the players settle this matter. Once it is clear who is to wear the BLUE, Lionel-B shakes the PCs' hands and wishes them all the best of luck.

serious money. The general operations slush fund contains many hundreds of thousands of credits—in fact, more than enough for a mid-clearance citizen to finally bribe his way into a job somewhere else. But really, what good will that do, when all of Alpha Complex will be dying soon? Better to take your chances in the Outdoors...

But maybe... just maybe... there's a way to solve all these problems. If you want to give your players an out, consider reading them the following:

Doesn't get better than this

Lionel-B calls the players into his office one last time. There is a BLUE-Clearance Armed Forces officer present as well. Lionel-B introduces him as Colonel Zoran-B-KIM-9. 'He'll be in charge of the actual distribution process itself', Lionel-B says, 'as well as any riot suppression that ends up being needed.'

Colonel Zoran-B is no-nonsense. His unit, the 32nd Rapid-Response Legion, has 8,000 soldiers in it—more than enough to distribute the food to the 20 or so nearby sectors in trouble. Of course, those 8,000 troops will need to be fed themselves.

Lionel-B also has some terrific news: Their victory in the competition is official! As a result, the 'Wholesome Process' will be rolled out across all Alpha Complex in the next few weeks.

'Just think!' Lionel-B says, wiping a joyous tear from his eye. 'Soon, all over Alpha Complex, room that used to be needed for vats will be reclaimed for other purposes. We'll eat five times as much in a fraction of the space!'

Lionel-B himself is making a lateral move into marketing; despite its obvious success, the new process is still revolutionary and must be properly evangelized. Terry-G, as always, is going with him. This means his BLUE-Clearance position as Director of Operations is available.

'I just wish we could promote all of you', he says, 'but it's just one job. I just can't choose! You're all so deserving... I'll let you decide among yourselves who should get the promotion.'

'Don't you worry about the marketing side of things', he says. 'I'm all over it! We're going to make you guys famous. When I'm through, everyone in Alpha Complex will know who they have to thank for this part of the Miracle.'

Then, after a quick nod to Zoran-B, he leaves, trailing Terry-G... who shoots one last grim look back at them on the way out.

What a long, strange trip it's been

If you want, you can more or less wrap it up here, with one player in charge of the others and a complex-wide famine looming on the horizon. Or you can play out another set of crises, as rioting begins breaking out all over CHN and the players determine their relationship with Colonel Zoran-B and his Rapid-Response Legion.

Do the players co-opt the Colonel into the lie, or do they try to bluff him like so many others? Do they have him focus on riot control, or do they actually attempt to fulfill some sort of food relief mission? At the least, these are definitely not the sort of guys you want to let get hungry. They could potentially clear up the horror in QYN Sector, and prevent the same thing from happening in CHN. But if the players try to tell Zoran-B how to do his job, he's going to balk... or at least, he's going to want some serious money.

Fortunately, the players—or at least the one who is Director of Operations now—have

As you make your way down to the Rapid Response Legion's camp area with Colonel Zoran-B, you're passing through one of Wholesome's old development labs, currently being used as a cubicle farm by some of your ORANGE staff. 'What's that hulk over there?' the Colonel asks, pointing at a huge shape under a sheet. One of your underlings, Hansen-O, pokes up from behind his cube wall.

'Oh, that's the All-Purpose Organic Converter, sir' he says after glancing for a moment. 'You feed any sort of organic material into it and it converts it into edible PGC. Not unlike a mechanical, treason-free version of the Matter Eater mutation.'

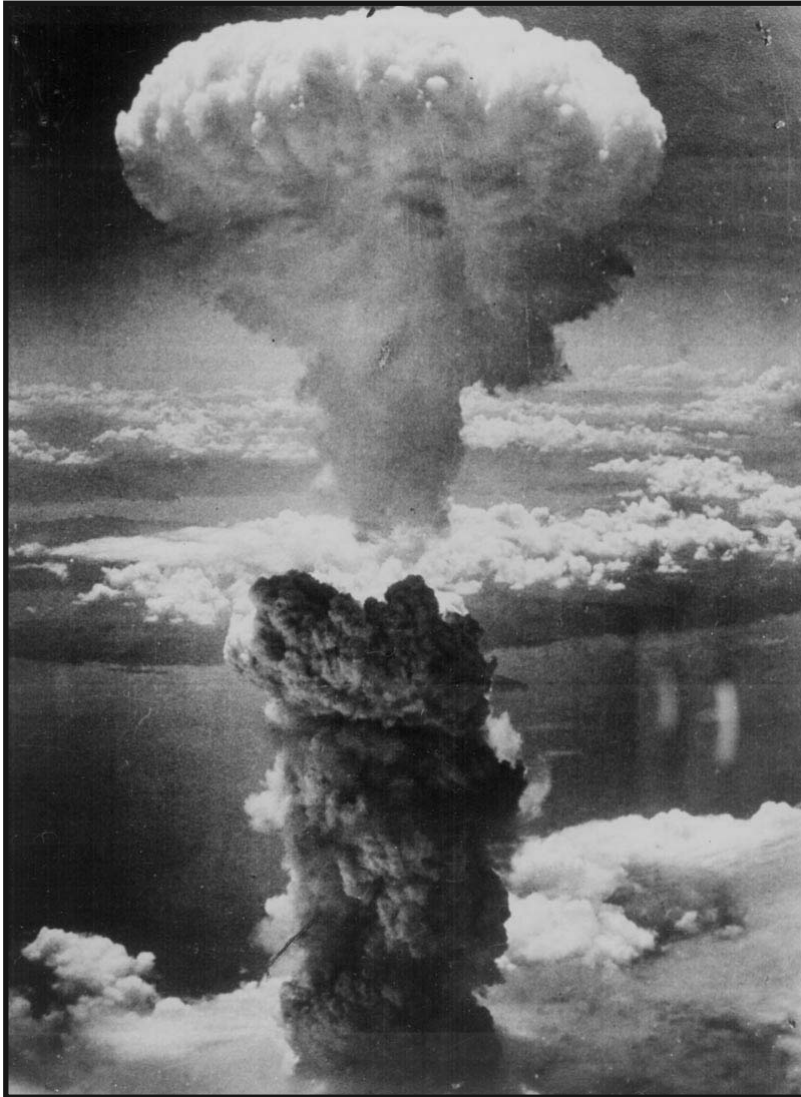
'Could it be used to solve a famine?' the Colonel asks.

Hansen-O shrugs noncommittally. 'Sure, if you have an extraneous source of organic material to convert. But what would we throw into it?'

The Colonel looks over at all of you for long seconds, a terrible, thoughtful look slowly coming over his face. 'Gentlemen, tell me: How many citizens does this sector really need?'

Then ask them if anyone feels like ordering something for dinner.

HOT POTATO



JEFF GROVES

1-6 PLAYERS 1-2 SESSIONS (4-8 HOURS)

What's a book called *WMD* without an actual Weapon of Mass Destruction? In this mission the Troubleshooters accidentally capture a prototype bomb, a weapon capable of destroying all Alpha Complex and a nontrivial wedge of the planet Earth. The PCs try to save themselves by handing off the bomb to someone who won't use it.

Summary

A recent Sierra Club expedition to the Outdoors uncovered a ruined Old Reckoning weapons research facility. Clubbers found a prototype antimatter bomb among the wreckage and brought it back to Alpha Complex. As pacifists, the society decided to sell the weapon (which they christened the 'Hot Potato') to agents they thought were working for Pro Tech. The Clubbers believed the Techies would use the weapon purely for peaceful research.

The Clubbers have been deceived. They've unwittingly chosen the worst possible buyer: the PURGE subfaction NUKE, whose fanatical members want the bomb in order to eradicate The Computer and everything associated with it. But they aren't the only ones who want it....

The Armed Forces learns about the trade's location and time, but not the goods. They call in Troubleshooters to stop the deal and retrieve the contraband. The PCs get their hands dirty at the rendezvous (a scrapyard), rout the traitors and recover the Potato. After debriefing, they bring the weapon to the military base's local R&D lab for analysis, where a researcher informs them of its extreme danger.

To keep a psychotic Armed Forces General from capturing the weapon, the R&D researcher entrusts it to the Troubleshooters. As the General's elite soldiers interrogate the scientist and hunt the PCs, NUKE launches an all-out attack on the base to retrieve the bomb. While they evade suicidal fanatics and homicidal troopers, the Troubleshooters must find someone trustworthy—yes, in Alpha Complex—to take their Hot Potato.

The Cast

The Potato

The Potato, as the Sierra Club nicknamed it, is a prototype antimatter bomb developed before the apocalypse wiped out Old Reckoning civilization. It is powerful enough to finish the job, where 'job' is all of Alpha Complex and approximately 4% of Earth's crust.

Fortunately for civilisation the Troubleshooters can't set off the bomb just by poking it. The Potato was developed to be used in an Intercontinental Ballistic Missile, not set off by some nutcase with a death wish. It's missing its activator, so the Troubleshooters can't end their career by pressing the wrong button. (A character who makes a Hardware or WMD check can jury-rig an interface, given two hours and unrestricted access to a full lab of state-of-the-art electronic hardware.)

Because its developers didn't want it blowing up in their laps, the Potato has numerous safeguards against general abuse. It has Gamemaster fiat (that is, infinite) armor; as a rule of thumb, setting it off with brute force requires one more shot than the number an idiot can fire before the other Troubleshooters fry him. Emphasize that although the PCs can't set off the bomb

Atomic bombing of Nagasaki on August 9, 1945. Picture taken from one of the B-29 Superfortresses used in the attack.
[http://www.archives.gov/research_room/research_topics/world_war_2_photos/world_war_2_photos.html]

now, it could be triggered later, especially by someone motivated to hunt it down in the first place. (Ruthlessly quash mischievous players who attack the Potato 'just to spice things up', and expeditiously terminate their characters.)

The Potato is as large as a bowling ball and as heavy as a big-screen TV. It has numerous grooves and exposed circuitry on its face, installed so it could be inserted in an ICBM. It is too unwieldy to fit in a backpack; we suggest you keep an actual backpack and bowling ball on hand in case any player needs to experience it for himself. Carrying it takes both hands, putting its holder in a vulnerable state normally reserved for Recording Officers.

Intense magnetic fields suspend the antimatter inside the case. These fields interfere with bot brains, causing any bot to go frankenstein after a couple of minutes of continuous exposure. The fields might make a human holder feel woozy after a couple minutes. Any similarity to the initial signs of radiation sickness is pure coincidence. The fields hum and glow through the joints in the Potato's shell—pretty decorations on an incomprehensibly dangerous object.

Technical note: Some smartaleck player with a physics background may observe that a bowling ball-sized hunk of antimatter can't destroy 4% of the planet and might not even take out Alpha Complex. Okay, so this bomb actually, umm, opens up a temporary vortex to a parallel antimatter universe, through which vast quantities of the stuff will flood before the vortex destabilizes. There—a transparently bogus rationale in the finest **PARANOIA** tradition.

NUKE

Troubleshooter Enemy Number 1, this insane PURGE faction aims to eliminate The Computer by eradicating Alpha Complex. They are fanatical even by PURGE standards and devoid of sympathy for human life. Even their fellow PURGERS don't want them getting their hands on such a weapon. ('Look, we usually love your style, but you're crossing the line just a bit on this one.') NUKE forces include chillingly competent saboteurs, merciless guerrilla fighters and the occasional kamikaze strapped with dynamite and doped with stimulants.

General Jack-I-UIJ-12 and his BLUE troopers

Renowned for his record traitor quotas and feared for his brutal methods of reaching them, **General Jack-I-UIJ-12** is the worst kind of loyalist. Bitter, cynical and clinically paranoid, he is convinced Alpha Complex is swarming with traitors. He originally infiltrated the Armed Forces for IntSec, but became a full-fledged Army guy when IntSec expelled him for arguing they weren't doing enough to stop traitors.

A devout though unorthodox FCCC-P man, General Jack-I wants the Potato for his own version of Revelation: He will purge all traitors in a blaze of atomic fire while he and his 'chosen' stay safe in a secret bunker. None of the Troubleshooters are chosen, so if they care about anything (even if it's just their own skin), they'll keep the Potato away from him at all costs.

General Jack-I's handpicked **BLUE troopers** are the best: smart, disciplined, loyal and completely oblivious to their leader's true intentions. Clad in ArmorAll (armor value 4), amped up on combat drugs and equipped with enough weaponry to take out a mob in six seconds or less, just one BLUE outclasses the entire Troubleshooter team in combat. The Troubleshooters never encounter just one, though; the BLUEs are also skilled in squad tactics. Opponents should just shoot themselves now and save trouble. The Troubleshooters could blast their way through NUKE, but the only way the PCs can get past these BLUE troops is through misdirection, smuggling and dirty tricks.

Other secret societies

Every secret society wants the Potato. Not all want to use it. The possessor can gain notoriety and respect just by threatening to use it, which is less messy. Compared to NUKE and General Jack-I, the societies are the least of three evils. The Troubleshooters should eventually agree their best bet is handing the Potato to a secret society. They won't agree on which society, especially when there's a promotion in it for the

winner. ('How would you like the title "Grand Advisor"?)

Setup

The Troubleshooters' official mission is just the prologue. Because they must complete it before the real fun begins, have it go smoothly and quickly. Your players will grow suspicious and brace themselves for the worst. Oh, if only they knew...

The Troubleshooters' mission alert orders them to report immediately to GHG Sector Armed Forces Base 44. At the gate (Tension level 16) they meet two GREEN Vultures with excellent posture, who say only, 'You're two minutes late.' The two Vultures escort the PCs to a spartan briefing room (Tension 12) that has one chair for each Troubleshooter. Their BLUE briefing officer is as smooth as his wrinkle-free uniform. He demands absolute attention, doesn't give his name and (unusually for Alpha Complex) refuses to be called anything but 'Sir'. He's a busy Army officer; he has no time to waste on civilian maggots. Start the briefing before the last PC is seated:

'Troubleshooters, you have an urgent mission. Devious members of the Sierra Club secret society are attempting to contaminate Alpha Complex with contraband from the Outdoors. Our reports indicate they are trading it to another secret society, believed to be Pro

Now I remember

The typical citizen hears dozens of rumors daily, and subconsciously files away most of them. He might think he doesn't remember anything about trouble in the RAC Sector sewers, but once he learns he's been assigned to patrol it, a half-dozen tidbits pop into his head about RAC or sewers or giant robotic alligators.

On this principle, instead of giving the Troubleshooters a heap of rumors at the beginning of a mission, sprinkle them throughout. Bring them up when the players encounter the relevant subject. They're more likely to remember and act on the rumors, and you don't have to overload the rumor mill with irrelevant trivia to avoid giving away plot points.

To start with, once the Troubleshooters learn their mission, convey to each player one of the following rumors concerning the Sierra Club's possible trading goods and partners:

- ☉ A metal-eating lifeform being sold to the Frankenstein Destroyers
- ☉ Bot-brain tech from another Alpha Complex to Corpore Metal
- ☉ An Old Reckoning virtual-reality interface to the Romantics
- ☉ Some hallucinogenic mold to the Mystics
- ☉ An ancient WMD to the Death Leopards
- ☉ The key to an ancient armory to Pro Tech



Tech, in just under one hour at Official Refuse Repository GHG-6-2-niner.

Your mission is simple: Disrupt the trade, kill all traitors and deliver the contraband to us for storage. Failure to return all goods is punishable by termination.

As an additional service to The Computer's loyal servants in Research & Design, on your mission you will field-test valuable experimental equipment, to be issued to you immediately following outfitting, which immediately follows this briefing. Time is of the essence. Any question?

'Question' is singular. The officer answers the first one anyone asks, then orders the PCs to get outfitted. Their two Vulture escorts shuttle them across the hall to an armory (Tension 18) for outfitting. There, a bored quartermaster gives each of them two laser barrels of the appropriate clearance, a slugthrower and two solid slug clips.

After the PCs get outfitted, the Vultures escort them further down the hall to the local R&D lab (Tension 12) to receive experimental equipment from Ron-B. (R&D service firm Radiant Distribution has established labs in military bases to quickly disperse promising new weapons and perform emergency surgery.)

The soldiers approach a heavy door labeled RADIANT DISTRIBUTION RD. One Vulture swipes a ME Card through an electronic card reader beside the door, and the door clicks open. The Vultures wave the PCs into the lab, follow them through the door and the door closes and locks behind them. (Establish the locked door. This will become important later when the Troubleshooters bring the Potato to the lab for analysis.)

The lab is small but well equipped. Bare concrete walls are painted black. Metal racks hold lots of mysterious equipment: particle sensors, magnetometers, spectrometers. There's a back door, identical to the front door, also locked.

Ron-B-ZCE, the on-base research scientist, is a slender, shy blond man, about 28, with twitchy hands. Ron-B assigns the Troubleshooters the following useful experimental equipment for their mission. He has them sign the requisite disclaimers and answers questions about it as well as he can.

■ Sniper stand

This slugthrower attachment combines magnification and stabilization gyros to increase weapon range to over 300m. If a user can see it, he can probably shoot it. The stand must be kept stationary on the ground. Setup and repacking require five minutes each. The stand is clumsy to carry while set up. A fleeing user will have to

When in doubt, improvise

Sometimes Troubleshooters don't get the luxury of secret society contact meetings. What if the team must move out immediately? What if setting up six unique meetings each mission exhausts the GM? What if something (*gasp!*) unexpected happens? Should your Troubleshooters sit idly with nothing treasonous to do? Of course not. They should make their own goals.

Ambition is a key to advancement. A PC should act on his own volition to fulfill his society's goals, not wait until he gets orders. This is especially true in Straight games, where one-on-one meetings with contacts are risky. (Someone asking for a meeting just to whine about a lack of ammo should get booted straight onto the Shooting Range Volunteer List.) Straight-style Troubleshooters rely, not on direct orders, but on their knowledge of their society's wants and needs to accomplish goals.

So how do you get your players thinking this way? Just ask them: 'What would [*society or service firm*] want you to do?'

- GM:** Okay, Jill. You're a PLC packager trapped in an Army base under siege. What would your PLC service firm want you to do?
- Jill:** Uh, survive?
- GM:** That's secondary. Now think: You're in a unique position to take care of some problem PLC has. What should you do to earn their undying gratitude and a well-deserved promotion?
- Jill:** Let's see... PLC is in charge of supplies, right?
- GM:** Right.
- Jill:** So they would want to make sure those supplies are put to good use, right?
- GM:** Right! And what do soldiers go through a lot of?
- Jill:** Bullets?
- GM:** You remember hearing PLC was having trouble producing enough ammo to keep up with demand. What could you do to make sure they waste fewer bullets?
- Jill:** Make them aim better?
- GM:** Not make, teach. Even elite troopers could learn a thing or two about ammo efficiency.
- Jill:** Hmm. I'll remind them to aim carefully, go for head shots, use burst instead of full-auto and use every bullet in a clip before reloading. 'The Computer wants you to make every bullet count, soldier!'
- GM:** I'm sure they'll appreciate your gentle reminders.

The GM guided Jill to reach the desired conclusion. As your players become more adept at devising their own ideas, you can quit guiding and start improvising from their suggestions:

- GM:** Fred, you're a Corpore Metal agent in the midst of R&D. Any ideas what your fellow gearheads would want you to do?
- Fred:** I'm sure there's some new AI chips they would want me to steal, and assassinating a scientist or two is always a bonus.
- GM:** Not assassinate, capture. You remember them talking about a scientist here who's a whiz at electronics and a Pro Tech flunky. If you can find him, kidnap him and deliver him to your associates, they could upload his memory to a supercomputer where he'd develop new technologies for you until the end of time!
- Fred:** Whoa, that'll be tough, but if I pulled it off I'd get that cyberleg for sure. And after that, pocketing a few chips should be easy!

Even if a Troubleshooter manages to completely screw up a goal ('I heard rumors there's a new chip in that unmarked package. I'll steal it and deliver it to my contact!'), the player should get Perversity points for trying. It's the thought that counts.

leave it behind, which means a 300cr fine for loss of equipment.

■ Shadow projector

This small semi-spherical projector uses dark light to throw a realistic image of the user's shadow up to 10m away. It works perfectly,

fooling would-be ambushers and providing a great decoy for sneaky traitors.

■ Magnogrenade

When hurled into the line of fire, this large grenade generates intense magnetic fields that repulse projectiles fired through it, decreasing

Sierra Club and NUKE members (10–12)

Stealth 07, Sneaking 11; Violence 07, Energy Weapons 11; other skills 07; ORANGE laser pistols (W3K), illegal ORANGE reflex (E2); will use treasonous Matter Eater, Rubbery Bones and Adhesive Skin mutations

their chance of hitting (the PCs, that is; those bullets still have to hit something). Lasers and other energy weapons are unaffected. If an ingenious Troubleshooter hurls it directly into the enemy's ranks, the magnogrenade sends their guns flying through the air instead, a side effect worth some Perversity points and a credit bonus from R&D.

Danger sensor

A sensor wand connected to a set of headphones. This high-tech device detects minute particle concentrations, radiation levels and metallurgy composition of any object it's pointed at, then compares it with a built-in database of known weapons and hazards. It condenses this information for the user by basing its volume on lethality rating. A set of brass knuckles makes it hum softly, whereas a cone rifle sets off blaring klaxons. When pointed at the Potato, the headphones emit ear-splitting shrieks, deafening the user and providing the Troubleshooters' first indication of its danger.

En route

Once the Troubleshooters are done visiting R&D, their escorts lead them to a waiting Armored Troop Transport and herd them into the back. The guards shut the door, leaving the PCs in darkness (Tension 0) with no indication where they're going. The ATT smoothly accelerates; usual Dark Room activities might be complicated by sharp turns en route.

The players will think they're being rushed along. They're absolutely right: The BLUE briefing officer knows about Troubleshooters. He wants to reduce opportunities for treason by not giving Troubleshooters the chance to meet contacts. However, that shouldn't deter an ambitious traitor (see the boxed text 'When in doubt, improvise'). On their own initiative, PCs could conceive numerous goals:

- ☉ Make sure the trade occurs without a hitch
- ☉ Skim a few items off the top
- ☉ Scavenge the junkyard for parts
- ☉ Gather blackmail material on teammates

The scrap

Finally the transport stops. You squint as the driver, a GREEN Vulture Warrior, flings open the back doors. Beyond, towering heaps of glinting metal bask in the glow of giant smelting vats fed by automated magnet cranes. Their smoke settles into a haze blanketing the entire premise despite the work of the giant ventilation shafts above. A tall, barbed wire fence surrounds it all. A sign completely covered in soot hangs from the gate.

'Here you are', the Vulture says as he pulls out a keycard and swipes the security lock. 'I'll be back in a half hour to pick you up.' He looks at the scrapyard again and shakes his head. 'I'm gonna need a shower just for looking at this.'

The sign, cleaned of soot, reads:

**Official Refuse Repository GHG-629
Not covered by Hazardous Emission
Regulations A287/21 through G87/3 by
order of PLC Working Group on Urgent and
Compelling Exceptions
to Cleanliness 188.03.05
Beware of Bots**

The ORR is the dark underbelly of Alpha Complex's recycling program. In a deep, dry subterranean hole where no scrubot dares tread, automated machinery melts mounds of scrap metal to make tomorrow's bedpans. It's dirty, dangerous, hazardous to one's health—and Tension 0. No citizen would want to go in here, which is why the Sierra Club and NUKE chose the site.

As the PCs enter, it's too quiet. (Poetically speaking. Technically, it's loud enough that a Troubleshooter couldn't hear someone draw a weapon.) Not even the guardbots are around—the Sierra Club disabled them for the meeting—but don't tell that to the players. Any Troubleshooter who climbs a mound for a better look or just peeks around the right corner can see the Sierra Club members (as many members as there are PCs, identified by their matching fedoras) holding a large round container and waiting in the middle of the scrapyard. The PCs should have a couple of minutes to set up an ambush before the buyers arrive.

You see another group slowly march over to the waiting Sierra Clubbers. They march lockstep in perfect formation. As they reach the Sierra Club crowd, they stop, salute, and the one in the middle holds out an open briefcase. The Clubber holding the container pops it open. You see a glowing high-tech spherical device about the size of a bowling ball. The two

parties look over each others' goods and start bargaining.

This second group is NUKE, though they're (badly) impersonating Pro Tech. There are as many NUKE soldiers as there are PCs. Hence the traitors outnumber the Troubleshooters two to one, and match them in armaments. As the Troubleshooters wonder how to take them out, mention that the traitors' conversation is growing more heated. (Some of the Clubbers have just realized the buyers are NUKE, not Pro Tech, and are voicing their complaints.)

Despite the traitors' superior numbers, this scene should be dead easy. If the Troubleshooters concentrate all their fire on one group, that side will believe it's an ambush and start firing at the other side. Other successful strategies:

- ☉ Disarming the traitors with the magnogrenade
- ☉ Hijacking one of the automated magnet cranes to pull away the traitors' weapons (Hardware/Electrical Engineering check)
- ☉ Reactivating the guardbots piled on a scrap heap and letting them run rampant (Hardware/Bot Ops check)
- ☉ Using mutant powers
- ☉ Just shooting wildly and hoping for the best

If the Troubleshooters lazily wait long enough, they can just watch the two groups battle, then pick off wounded survivors.

As you move in to retrieve the contraband (as your mission requires), a mortally

GREEN Vultures (2)

Violence 11, Shoot Troubleshooters 15; slugthrower (W2K impact), GREEN reflex/Kevlar (E1/I3)

BLUE briefing officer

Management 14, Shout Troubleshooters into Submission 20, Speak Quickly 20; other skills 07; unarmed, GM fiat armor (keep him alive long enough to assign the mission)

Ron-B-ZCE-3

Friendly R&D researcher

Knowledge skills 10, Explain Use of Questionable Device 16; Action skills 04, Con Games 01; unarmed except for what he can grab, experimental steelsilk labcoat (I1/E1, no head protection)



wounded Sierra Club member signals to you. He mutters, 'Don't let them have... the Potato.' Then he dies.

The container is empty; the glowing spherical device has rolled nearby.

You see the corner of the briefcase peeking out from under a corpse.

The briefcase holds 12 small credit disks worth 5,000 plasticreds each. No one will notice if one's missing, right?

Ask the player carrying the Danger Sensor whether he wishes to use it. If he does, read:

You adjust the headphones on your head, ensure the volume is reasonably low and point the sensor wand at the glowing sphere. There's a low whine, like a misadjusted microphone, and then:

**WEEPWEEPWEEPWEEP!
eeeeee-OOOOO WHOOP! WHOOP!
WHOOP! WHOOP! Ooooo-eeee!
zeepzeepzeep!**

When you make these sounds, think 150 decibels. Never mind that the adult human voice probably can't create 150 decibels; just think of a jet engine taking off. Read this to the others:

[PC's name] is rolling on the ground in aural agony, covering his ears with bloody hands. You hear an obnoxious alarm sound coming from the Danger Sensor's headphones. Hm. This might mean something....

It's possible an overly sensible group of players may collectively decide, 'Hey, let's leave the incredibly dangerous thing here, okay?' You, Gamemaster, should be prepared with a note or two to hand to the players in the more technologically- or destructively-inclined secret societies: 'If you don't bring this back to your secret society, and your superiors find out, it's back to INFRARED for you forevermore.'

It's over, right?

Two GREEN Vulture escorts wait beside the transport outside the scrapyard. If the Troubleshooters are late to their rendezvous, the escorts head into the dump and herd them into the transport with force. (The Army knows idle hands are the Commie's workshop.) The Vultures know nothing about the Potato and aren't interested.

At least the glowing Potato provides some light in the transport.

Back at GHG Sector Armed Forces Base 44, the Vultures escort the PCs back to the briefing room for a regular debriefing. The BLUE briefing officer confiscates the suitcase full of creds and other loot, leaving them with their initial

equipment, their experimental equipment and the Potato. Although the officer listens carefully to their report, he nervously eyes the Potato and often pushes them to speak faster. After the usual commendations and punishments, he orders them to return their experimental equipment and the contraband to R&D for examination.

The Vultures walk the PCs to the lab door and swipe a card through the reader. The door opens, they shove the PCs in and quickly leave. The door locks behind them.

Researcher Ron-B absently reclaims the experimental equipment from the PCs; he barely listens to their comments on the experimental equipment, and completely forgets to have them fill out reports. Instead, he has them sit down while he uses incomprehensible lab equipment—particle sensors, magnetometers, spectrometers—to subject the Potato to a battery of tests. With each result, Ron-B grows more agitated. His hands shake. The Troubleshooters should now begin fearing for their lives. Read:

With excruciating care, Ron-B picks up the device. In a shaky voice he tells you, 'It appears to be an— an antimatter bomb. You have no idea how dangerous this is! No one does! I wouldn't feel safe in the same sector!' Ron-B starts pacing the room, holding the bomb close. 'The projected power! The blast radius calculations! This thing could destroy the entire complex! To think a group of traitors could obtain this—'

The INCOMING MESSAGE light flickers on Ron-B's workstation monitor. Onscreen you see a YELLOW secretary. She has a fixed smile. A slugthrower barrel is pointed at her head. 'Ron-B, General Jack-I-UIJ wants to see you. He doesn't have an appointment, but I think it might be a really good idea if—'

Someone offscreen gestures with the gun barrel. 'Tell him to open the door.'

The secretary stammers. 'Uh, Ron-B, are you available to meet General Jack-I-UIJ immediately?' 'No, I am not!' Ron-B shouts, 'I'm—I'm in the middle of some very important work! Tell him to—'

'Perhaps he didn't hear me.' The monitor's camera is swivelled to one side. You get a glimpse of a couple of BLUE military uniforms, then a closeup of a deadly serious face. 'I do not need appointments. I make my own, and you must comply. I will come and meet you immediately. We have something important to discuss. Jack-I-UIJ out.'

Ron-B smiles until the screen goes blank, then starts hyperventilating. 'Jack-I knows about this?'

The Troubleshooters have heard rumors about General Jack-I:

- ☉ He once called an emergency airstrike on EFA Sector when he found evidence of a vast conspiracy. The Computer named him Hero of Our Complex for killing over 2,000 Commie mutant traitors in one swoop. He brushed aside the collateral deaths of 6,000 civilians by saying, 'It's better to sacrifice ten loyal citizens than let one Commie mutant traitor live.'
- ☉ He has accused IntSec of not being sufficiently diligent in uncovering traitors. IntSec is investigating reports he has developed his own database of potential traitors. Said database contains 97% of Alpha Complex's population.
- ☉ A colleague of a colleague heard his boss say Jack-I wants to jump-start a second Apocalypse. He hopes to rid the complex of traitors once and for all.
- ☉ He used to be an IntSec agent, but was removed due to 'excessive cruelty and reliance on extreme measures'.

...and any other tales of homicidal paranoid behavior that will make your players' skin crawl. Once they understand who they're dealing with, they should be willing to accept what Ron-B does next without executing him off the bat.

Partners in crime

The boot steps grow louder outside the lab's front door. Ron-B suddenly shoves the bomb into [choose a PC]'s hands. He whispers, 'There's no telling what he'll do if he gets this! Keep it away from him! Get rid of it! Do something, anything!'

Ron-B shoves them towards the back door. He swipes his ME Card to unlock the door, then throws the card into the corridor beyond; no gesture in Alpha Complex could more dramatically illustrate his sense of peril. Ron-B answers the PCs' questions with, 'You're the Troubleshooters—you think of something!'

At this point a foresighted player may try to kill Ron-B to prevent him from talking. This is ruthless but prudent. Let that player (only) spend Perversity, then roll a die, consult some charts, shake your head sadly and say, 'Yes, you killed him. Ron-B is dead.' Skip the following dialogue; subtly suggest the Troubleshooters leave the scientist's body and beat a hasty retreat out the back door.

Once the PCs enter the hallway, Ron-B slams the door behind them, but it bounces and remains open a crack. The Troubleshooters are now standing in a darkened corridor lined with shelves of cleaning supplies and cabinets of

office supplies. There are many places to take cover. The PCs can eavesdrop on the following scene.

Ron-B opens the front door. Four BLUE troopers enter two by two, high and low, slugthrowers ready. They sweep the room, and one quickly shines a flashlight into the darkened corridor. If the PCs reveal themselves, see the boxed text nearby, 'Stupid Troubleshooter tricks.' If the PCs hide (smart idea), make this a tense moment: Ask for Stealth skills, roll dice and then let everyone escape notice. The troops pull back into the room, and General Jack-I-UIJ enters.

The PCs can then creep up to the door, look and listen and, if they wish, kill Ron-B. They have a clear shot at Ron-B (but not General Jack-I), and none of the NPCs are especially looking at the back door. If you encourage the Troubleshooters to blow out the researcher's brains before he spills the beans, you have good leverage to guilt-trip them later. It'll give away their position, but Jack-I won't learn what the Potato looks like or who has it. Boringly sensible players, however, may decide it's a better idea just to run like rabbits, ahead of Ron-B's imminent finking.

If the PCs stick around to listen to the interrogation, they see the harrowing scene:

General Jack-I: Hold position! Greetings—Ron-B, is it?

Ron-B: Heh-hello, Jack-I. Ron-B-B-B-ZCE-4, no, 5! At your s-service.

General Jack-I: You received a contraband Old Reckoning explosive device from a recent raid. The Computer has authorized me to take custody of this weapon for, ah, safekeeping. Turn it over to me now, and I shall not inconvenience you a moment longer.

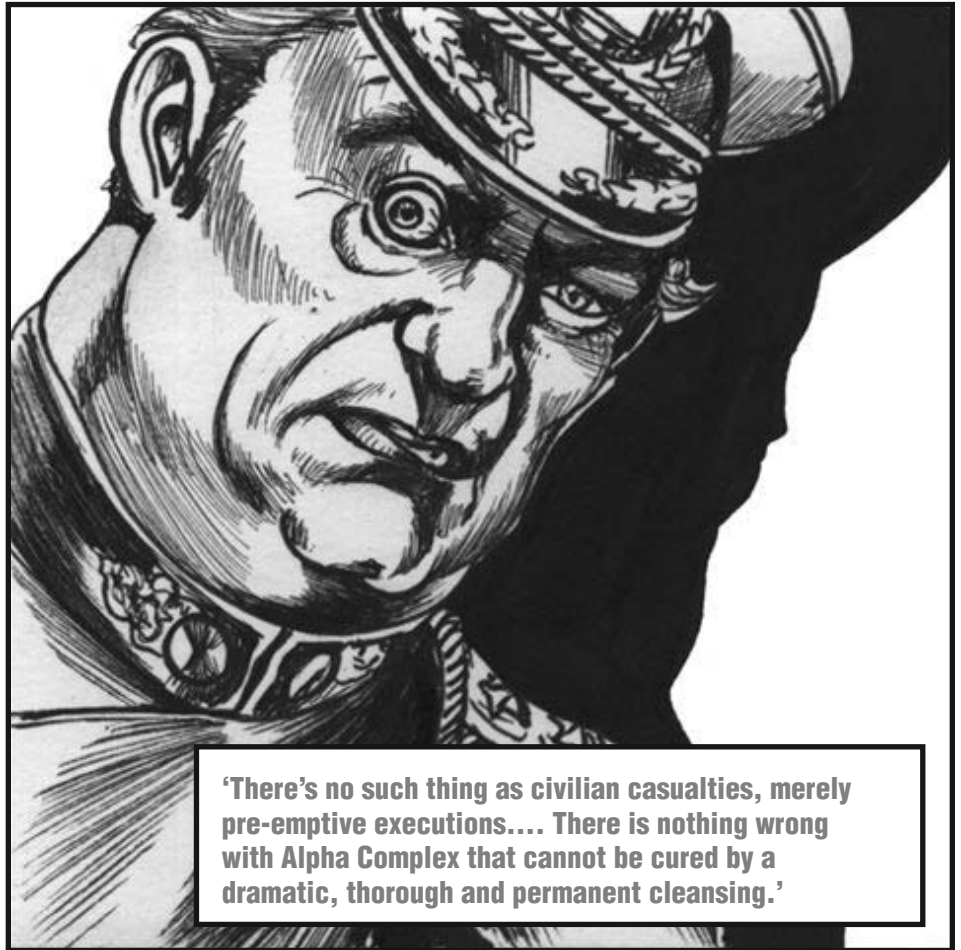
Ron-B: I don't have it at the moment. Testing! You see, we're still doing testing. On the, the device.

General Jack-I: Ron-B, you've succumbed to echolalia. Your words make no sense. I said *now*.

Ron-B: Ja—Jack-I, I'm afraid I must ask you to wait, this testing is important and—

General Jack-I: Hold him. *[Two troopers grab Ron-B, who whimpers.]* Now, I said! Now, you miserable little whelp, tell me *now* what you did with the bomb. Soldiers, show Ron-B the nature of our Intense Traitor Treatment—strictly to satisfy his scientific curiosity.

[The soldiers close in around Ron-B. The Troubleshooters can't see what they're doing to him. There is a loud sound of knuckles cracking slowly—at least, the PCs should hope it's just knuckles.]



'There's no such thing as civilian casualties, merely pre-emptive executions.... There is nothing wrong with Alpha Complex that cannot be cured by a dramatic, thorough and permanent cleansing.'

We aren't describing the Intense Traitor Treatment because it works better when left to the players' imaginations. If the Troubleshooters ever actually face the Treatment themselves, it probably plays best to avoid describing it and just make an Interrogation roll.

Ron-B: Aaah! No! Please don't! Okay, okay! *[Whimpers. The soldiers pull back.]* I gave it to someone for safekeeping!

General Jack-I: Who?

Ron-B: I... I...

General Jack-I: *Who?*

The end of this dialogue is the PCs' last chance to shoot Ron-B. Otherwise, Ron-B points frantically at the door and shouts, 'Them! Troubleshooters!' If, even now, the PCs don't run, go to 'Stupid Troubleshooter tricks' to describe the upshot of their idiocy.

Regardless of the players' decisions, Jack-I has his troopers execute Ron-B for insubordination once his usefulness has expired.

The rest of this mission assumes the PCs have prudently decided to run.

General Jack-I-UIJ-12

A fearsome presence who holds everyone in thrall until his next pronouncement. He glares at his subject with one bulging and one squinting eye: paranoid fear and clinical suspicion.

He keeps his military uniform tidy and tailored. When speaking, he tends to lean towards his subject. Portly bulk. Fetid breath. Between sentences he sometimes snorts unappealingly, like a bull walrus.

Jack-I has a large vocabulary, thanks to a sadistic grammarbot who bullied him in the creche. From this bot he also learned the art of bullying, and one fine day used it on her... excessively. Now he carries the bot's teaching pointer wherever he goes. He rubs his thumb against its side obsessively, and the tip is strangely stained.

Management 15, Intimidation 19, Interrogation 19; Stealth 03; Violence 12, all weapon skills 16; Knowledge skills 12; unarmed, GM fiat armor (his BLUE troopers block all lines of fire).



Between NUKE and a hard place

As the Troubleshooters desperately flee through Base 44's maze of corridors, with Jack-I's troopers in hot pursuit, take a moment to summarize their position:

'Not only are you carrying an illegal WMD, not only are you guilty of [assassinating / witnessing the torture of] a high-clearance R&D scientist, you're being chased by Alpha Complex's best Vultures. Does the team happiness officer have a word of bright encouragement?'

If the happiness officer's player chirps merry words of wisdom, award him a Perversity point. As he finishes, an explosion rocks the base, the ground shudders and the power goes out. The PCs hear klaxons blaring, muffled laser shots and something collapsing way too close.

Irritated at the loss of their ultimate weapon, NUKE has ordered an all-out assault on the base that holds it. Initial strikes have cut primary power lines, breached the outer walls and destroyed the surveillance system (plus all recent videos of the Troubleshooters, giving General Jack-I no way to trace them to the Potato). Now screaming militants are bursting in, using lasers and vests filled with explosives to kill everything in their way as they search for the Potato.

To have any chance of escaping GHG Armed Forces Base 44, the Troubleshooters need chaos and disorder. When the emergency lights flicker on, chaos and disorder are fully in progress. Around the base, shouting soldiers rush to stem the onslaught, breaking out risky experimental weapons and—a sign of desperation—even call in Troubleshooter teams.

—But not the PC mission team. The corridor they were fleeing through has collapsed behind them. Perhaps they see a BLUE trooper's hand sticking out, though it should be impractical for them to dig out the body and loot it.

All surveillance cameras are dead. (Tension levels now depend solely on witnesses physically present. Adjust accordingly.) They appear to be alone and safe, for now.

The bomb glows softly in the dim emergency lights.

Passing the Potato

The Troubleshooters are holding an object sought by passionate, angry people with guns. If they try to stay put, searchers—either troopers or NUKE—eventually find them. Leaving the bomb somewhere is begging for trouble. Destroying it would break down the magnetic fields, allowing the antimatter to activate and making a mess.

Stupid Troubleshooter tricks

The PCs don't mercy-kill Ron-B: General Jack-I and his troopers learn about the Potato, what it looks like, who Ron-B handed it to, their security clearances and the door he sent them through. The only thing he doesn't learn is their names, though; Ron-B doesn't remember them. (The Troubleshooters benefit from 'IR haze': To high-clearance citizens, all low-clearance citizens seem to blend together.) They have a slight chance to avoid detection, but Jack-I's troopers will now look specifically for Troubleshooters and the Potato. They'll have to find disguises and hide the Potato quickly.

They reveal themselves: If one idiot tries to get on the General's good side, give the others a chance to stop him before he blows their cover. If he shouts out, give his teammates a chance to gag him. If he tries to push through the door, let them hold him back. Let them get off easy, with the General not noticing or just suspecting something's up. They should escape without him getting a good look at any of them.

If they all turn themselves in, General Jack-I has no scruples about killing them all as traitors for stealing such a destructive weapon. His troopers are crack shots. He entertains any deals, explanations or begging they do, then snaps his fingers. One round later, all the Troubleshooters and Ron-B are riddled with bullets, and he pries the Potato from their cold dead hands. Their clones are sent home with a nice bonus and no idea what happened.

Let the Troubleshooters continue taking unrelated missions. The only clues that something's not right are rumors of numerous high-clearance citizens disappearing or taking vacations in undisclosed locations. Then, when the time is right... 'Suddenly a blinding wave of light engulfs you. Congratulations! You, your clones, and the rest of Alpha Complex have been cleansed of treason. Surely the 128 chosen survivors will now construct a perfect utopia!'

If some PCs manage to delay fate by escaping General Jack-I alive with the Potato in hand, they're in the same situation as if they didn't kill Ron-B. If they let Jack-I get a good look at them, their situation's even worse. Maybe, instead of asking for fame and power at the missions' conclusion, they should ask for a face transplant and fresh identities...

Contacting The Computer leads to a lovely conversation:

The Computer: Welcome, citizen! Your friend The Computer is currently busy dealing with many other happy citizens of Alpha Complex. Your call is important, and so I am rerouting it to your nearest authorized local citizen outreach agency.

Operator: Base 44 Support Center—this better not be another request for backup. *[Rumbling in the background.]*

Troubleshooter: Uh, no, we have a problem. You see, we have this bomb we need to get rid of, and—

Operator: Bomb? Please hold. *[Footsteps receding into the distance.]*

Troubleshooter: It's kind of important, you see, we—hello? Hello?

General Jack-I [on PA system]: Attention defenders. Traitors have snuck a bomb onto the premises. Do not panic.

Troubleshooter: Ah, crud.

Let the players discuss their options. It should become clear the PCs have no good path except to smuggle the antimatter bomb out of Base 44. But where, and to whom?

The PCs' easiest solution—actually, just about the only solution—is to pass on the object

to someone else to worry about. Someone trustworthy.

Now, who are the only people a Troubleshooter can maybe sort of trust? That's right, his secret society—especially when it's offering him a multiple-rank promotion.

The danger here, as always, is the PC's fellow Troubleshooters. All of their societies are offering promotions too—to anyone and everyone who brings them the bomb.

Random Potato behavior

During the mission, Troubleshooters may get comfortable with their civilization-ending bomb. This is unacceptable. Keep them wary! From time to time roll 1d20 to determine what the Potato does:

1–5: Goes *ping!*

6–8: Goes *click!*

9–10: Starts to vibrate.

11–12: Buzzes at a low volume.

13–14: Something metallic starts rattling around inside.

15–16: Puff of acrid, black smoke wafts out of a small vent.

17–18: Suddenly feels very warm.

19–20: Previously unnoticed LED display blinks on, flashing letters and numerals.

The trade (1): Arranging it

1. Find a contact

Meetings with secret-society NPCs aren't all shady looks and shooting. The first part of organizing a pickup is finding a society contact. Most Troubleshooters worth their boots can find one among the Armed Forces soldiers by trying out contact signals until they get an appropriate reply. Excusing oneself for a private conversation would be extremely suspicious; their best bet is to communicate via a combination of twitchtalk, double meanings and sly winks.



'It's okay, I know these guys. Trust me!'

As you can tell from the secret society tables in Chapter 3 of the *PARANOIA* rulebook, some societies have infiltrated the Armed Forces more than others. A Troubleshooter who belongs to Anti-Mutant or the Frankenstein Destroyers or Death Leopard obviously has it easy. A Computer Phreak or (God help him) a Romantic should, in theory, face a much tougher task.

Yet you know what? Each and every PC can find a Base 44 contact for his own society, even in the unlikeliest circumstances. It's remarkable—as if some hidden conspiracy has arranged matters to expedite the transfer. What deeply shadowed force might be behind this? The Troubleshooters may (or may not) find out at mission's end.

Every NPC contact has heard about the rumored super-weapon by now, and they all eagerly convey the promises of power and wealth to anyone that delivers it. Take the players' expectations and double them. Anything is possible—for the one PC who can deliver the Potato to his own society.

2. Arrange the handoff

Once a Troubleshooter informs his contact about his prize, the contact arranges a rendezvous and agrees to pass the word to other society contacts on base. No matter which secret society it is, the contact sets the meeting for the same time—a few hours from now—and the same location—a certain Base 44 boiler room, RB-19C. There the society will quickly smuggle out the bomb via secret passage. Don't set the meeting time so soon the PCs must rush to make it, unless they've had it easy so far.

(How could all these diverse societies happen to choose exactly the same rendezvous? Sounds unlikely, doesn't it?)

3. Get the other PCs to go along with it

By far the hardest part. 'Sure! Please go ahead and give the ultimate blackmail tool to a rival society. Naturally I'd like to give it to my own society, which has nurtured and protected me for many years when no one else would. But given our desperate plight, I'm willing to put aside my loyalties for the good of the Complex.' Anyone who cooperates that easily should be bumped to a less competitive game, like *Quake*.

Most Troubleshooters won't even try to get their teammates to cooperate. This is a mistake. The base is crawling with NUKE fanatics, Armed Forces grunts and crack squads of BLUE troopers. It's folly for one person to try smuggling out the bomb singlehanded. A PC who wants this to succeed has to get part of the mission team on his side, whether through outlandish promises, careful misdirection or sheer intimidation.

Of course, his teammates are free to feign cooperation, then ask their secret societies to

jump the meeting and steal it for themselves. The more, the merrier!

If all else fails: For a fitting conclusion, you want at least three Troubleshooters to arrange a rendezvous at the boiler room. Ideally, all of them should, and none should know of the others' arrangements. If you have trouble motivating the stragglers, have them receive a spam C-Mail from Free Enterprise that promises a huge reward to anyone who can bring them the bomb.

Award Perversity points or a society promotion to players who acted without prodding. Conversely, if they force you to pull out the Plot Stick, make them pay.

12 ways to smuggle a bomb

To review: The Troubleshooters presumably want to smuggle the antimatter to the Base 44 boiler room for a set of prearranged rendezvous with all their secret societies. Now they just have to figure out how to get the bomb there.

We look forward to hearing accounts from player groups worldwide about the outlandish and unexpected plots they concocted, thereby surprising and entertaining their noble Gamemaster. The more tricks they pull out, the more entertaining the game.

Fortunately, Famous Game Designers don't have to think of absolutely everything the players might try. We've compiled a list of 12 schemes that might succeed. Use them as guidelines to place appropriate props and hints to stoke the players' creativity. Sometimes just mentioning there's a fire extinguisher nearby makes all the difference.

1. Dress up like R&D scientists

R&D's resident researchers are already delivering experimental gear to the front lines to aid against NUKE's assault. No one's going to question a bunch of them lugging around a bomb (and the witnesses might back a few meters away, just to be safe). Although the equipment in Ron-B's lab is locked up, the lab coats in the closet aren't. Simple Disguise and Con checks will fool harried soldiers.

(It'd be foolish to return to the scene of the crime when the base has other labs where they can get disguises, but hey, it's their choice. While they're there, confront them with Ron-B's corpse.)

This strategy leaves the Potato exposed, though; soldiers might mention it if questioned, and a desperate commander could demand the 'scientists' let his squad use the weapon.

Troubleshooters can also disguise themselves as Armed Forces grunts, annoying CPU officers and so on, although they'll need more creative excuses for lugging the Potato around.



2. Hide it

Although none of the Troubleshooters should want to leave it alone, they should have no problem stuffing it in a closet or under a pile of corpses until a patrol passes.

Eventually the patrols learn that the bomb has detectable magnetic fields; consequently, the PCs can hide the bomb only as a temporary fix while they come up with a better plan.

3. Crowd around it

A cowardly, clumped band of Troubleshooters could hide something they're carrying. Everybody lend a hand, now!

4. Wait for a distraction

You can sneak behind people if they're being shot at. In a pinch, Troubleshooters could always make their own distractions...

5. Disguise it

A little spray paint here, a few welded wings here, and it'll look more like your typical failed R&D experiment than a doomsday device. Attracts just as much attention, but misinformation is always a plus.

6. False alarm

PC: Say, I just saw that citizen carrying a bundle of dynamite and whistling a strange tune. Is he authorized to do that?

Guard: What the—hey, you! Stop now! *[Runs after the suspect.]*
[Troubleshooter waves his teammates past and waits for the guards to come back.]

Guard: He was just carrying a crate of laser barrels. Have you had your eyes checked, moron?

PC: Whoops. Sorry, I'm a bit jumpy with the circumstances and all. I'm glad you're more alert to danger than I am. Bye!

7. Make your own doorway

With all the shooting, explosions and structural damage, no one will notice an extra wall blown down unless he happens to be standing next to it. Proper use of the Demolition skill can make great shortcuts.

8. Send the Potato through an alternate route

Send someone past the General's checkpoint, drop the Potato down the disposal chute into the accomplice's waiting hands, then pass the checkpoint yourself. Hardware/Habitat Engineering skills are a must to avoid entertaining mishaps, such as dumping it into the furnace.

9. Play off old grudges

General Jack-I's elite BLUE troopers and the common Army 'vermin' don't get along well.

A suave Troubleshooter can talk them into obstructing each other if he strikes the right nerves.

10. Pull a favor

Secret society contacts in the Army are usually happy to help a fellow member with problems, whether it's forging possession papers or giving directions. A PC's success at garnering help should directly correspond with his willingness to bare all in front of his teammates.

11. Stuff it in a body bag

Soldier: Why are you carrying that body bag like a garbage sack?

PC: There was no body left, so we just scooped up whatever was left. It's a bit messy.

Soldier: Yecch! Carry on...

Tossing in some cafeteria gruel or an actual corpse really helps the illusion. Other improvised containers include messhall crockery, weapon crates and garbage cans.

12. Threaten to use it

When all else fails, pointing your gun at the Potato and threatening to set it off does wonders

for diplomacy. Soldiers, despite their extensive training, aren't thrilled about dying. Even NUKE members might hesitate, although the fanatical ones will try to beat the PCs to the punch. Unless the Troubleshooters kill all the witnesses, their cover is blown. They can only hope to pass off the Potato before they're captured, tried and erased for terrorist activity.

Making the run

If the PCs take too long to get moving, send messages from The Computer over the intercom asking all available Troubleshooter teams to aid the front lines, or have an Armed Forces squad run into them and enlist the lazy bums.

As the Troubleshooters smuggle their cargo through the base, they'll encounter a number of people and places. Run this section of the mission free-form, pacing it for tension and suspense. Use the following lists of NPCs, locations and tense encounters as inspiration for your own Hitchcockian creativity.

It usually works best to alternate 'public' and 'private' scenes—in other words, follow each tense episode of suspense or action with a chance for the PCs to take cover, plan and take



a breather. After any particularly tense encounter, the players should always get a chance to collect themselves... and make themselves afraid all over again.

Note: This is Straight style, so throttle back the lethality level. Circumstances make introducing clone replacements tricky. Encourage noncombat strategies; if the PCs really want to go into combat while carrying a planet-busting bomb, prefer wounds over fatalities. Let things play out according to the players' most interesting choices, not their stupidest blunders.

NPCs

Squad of RED Armed Forces grunts (6–10)

Most of the groups swarming around the base. Concerned primarily with surviving. Their suspicion of the Troubleshooters depends on what word has gotten out. An ample supply of secret society contacts. If the Troubleshooters are lucky, a docbot (Medical 13) escorts the grunts and can fix the PCs' injuries.

Lone grunt

Armed Forces messenger, ORANGE (or one clearance higher than the highest PC); wounded,

Armed Forces grunts

Stealth 05, Concealment 01; Violence 08, All weapons 12; other skills 07, Weapon and Armor Maintenance 11; slugthrower w/ solid slugs (W3K impact), grenades (W3K impact), reflex/Kevlar (E1/I3)

NUKE fanatics

Violence 09, Demolition 13, Energy Weapons 13, Blow Self Up 17; other skills 05; laser pistol (color varies, W3K energy), grenades (W3K impact, M2V if rigged in a kamikaze vest), reflex (color varies, E1)

BLUE troopers

Management 07, Intimidation 15, Interrogation 13; Stealth 06, Perform Thorough Strip Search 12; Violence 10, all weapon skills 16; other skills 07; energy pistol (W3K), flamethrower (S3K spray), cone rifle w/ napalm shells (S2K energy splash), ArmorAll (4). These soldiers are all hyped up on combat drugs; you may want to cloud their rational thought processes in order to give the PCs a chance to elude or out-think them.

left behind for the docbot or lone survivor of a squad. Quite adamant about grouping with the Troubleshooters for protection. Probably a secret society contact for one of the Troubleshooters.

Troubleshooters (4–6)

Just like common grunt squads, except with more paranoia and backstabbing.

NUKE swarms (seemingly endless)

Goons, ammo sponges and slaving kamikaze nuts; what they lack in skill and durability they make up in numbers. Use to quickly deplete the PCs' cool ammo or force them into an alternate route.

BLUE Vulture troopers (squads of 5–6)

A serious threat. Squads of elite troopers have set up numerous checkpoints to look for the Potato. Two troopers frisk passersby while the other four stand on alert. They're smart, wary and can kill like an action-movie hero. The corridor might be empty except for the Troubleshooters, or there might be a long wait of grunts on both sides grumbling at the holdup. To mix it up, have the Troubleshooters encounter a squad moving from one checkpoint to another.

If they get in a fight, the Vultures pin down the attackers and surround them, then shoot to kill. Unless you want to deal with complications, let the Troubleshooters escape. If they die here, the troopers capture the bomb. Game Over.

Grunts and troopers vs. NUKERS (dozens of people)

This is a war zone. Such skirmishes could block the Troubleshooters' progress or threaten to suck them along with it. After all, Troubleshooters who aren't aiding The Computer's forces look pretty suspicious, don't they?

Locations

Barracks (3 exits)

Row upon row of bunks and lockers. Empty and uninteresting, making it the perfect place for the team to lie low for a while. The lockers are large enough to hide in. There's nothing remotely useful or treasonous in the unlocked lockers. The same goes for the locked lockers. (What sort of amateur traitors do you take Armed Forces personnel for? All the good stuff's in secret caches around the base.)

Shooting range (1 exit)

The good news is there's some leftover weapons and ammo lying around. The bad news is the Troubleshooters will probably waste it all fighting their way out if they get trapped in here.

Holding cells (1 exit)

The emergency has left the Army's detention cells manned by a skeleton crew. If the Troubleshooters can figure out the codes necessary to open the cells, a group of surly convicts can be a great distraction.

R&D lab (2 exits)

Plenty of dangerous weaponry guarded by plenty of dangerous turret weapons (powered by experimental backpack minireactors, no less). The only place the Potato wouldn't look conspicuous.

Tactical room (BLUE, 2 exits)

Currently occupied by a half-dozen senior officers (including the General, if you feel sadistic) discussing combat strategies far away from the front lines. If they barge in here, the Troubleshooters are going to face some awkward conversations.

Hangar (4 exits)

Lots of room to maneuver. Filled with all-terrain vehicles, tanks and other large, imposing vehicles the PCs can hide in or behind. None of them have keycards nearby, and hotwiring attempts usually result in 2nd-degree burns. The more aggressive vehicle AIs demand the Troubleshooters lure traitors in for termination. If the Troubleshooters linger too long here or try to hide in a vehicle, the Potato's bot-beserking effect comes into play.

Tense encounters

Checkpoint traitors

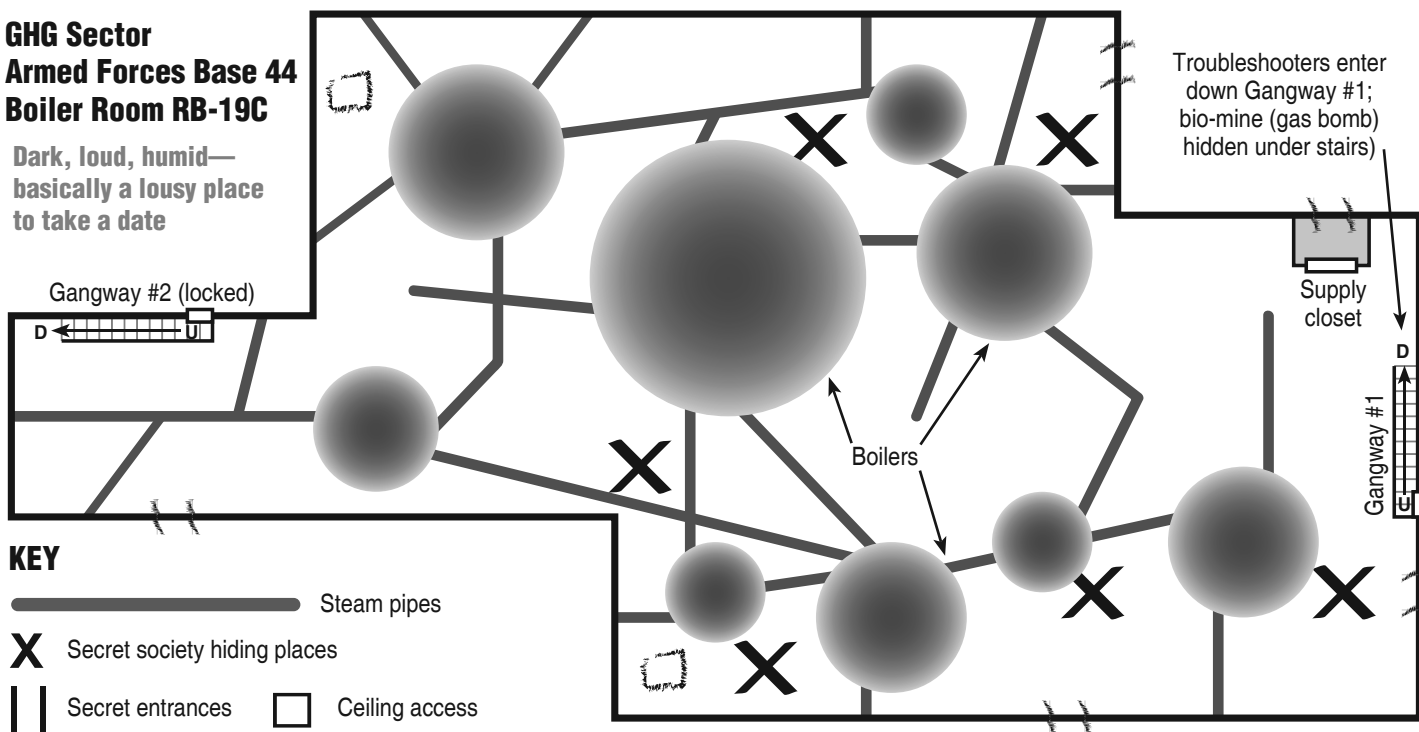
The Troubleshooters stand in line at one of the General's checkpoints behind another group of higher-clearance Troubleshooters. These NPCs look distinctly shady. Maybe it's the way they eye everyone else nervously instead of each other, or their excellent posture, or their bulky clothing that screams concealed contraband.

The 'contraband' is actually explosives. The 'Troubleshooter' NPCs are a disguised NUKE suicide squad sent to obliterate the checkpoint, killing dozens of troopers and soldiers. Do the PCs attempt to stop them, thereby drawing attention to themselves and possibly getting blown up? Do the PCs let the NUKERS succeed,



GHG Sector Armed Forces Base 44 Boiler Room RB-19C

Dark, loud, humid—
basically a lousy place
to take a date



then sneak past in the carnage? Can the PCs step out of line without looking suspicious?

The big warbot

Heading down a hallway, the Troubleshooters encounter an enormous warbot rumbling down it in the opposite direction. Its bulky rectangular frame takes up the entire corridor, and it's not going to back up for a bunch of puny REDs. (Imagine meeting a logging truck on a one-lane mountain road.) At best, it'll stop and give them two seconds of warning before continuing. (It won't just immediately run them over; this is Straight style.) This encounter works best when the corridor has no side doors and someone is chasing the Troubleshooters. You can also use hallway forks to split up the group.

GM: The warbot pushes you back to a fork in the corridor.

Player: Great, I leap into the corridor it's not going down!

GM: Which one would that be?

The cafeteria

A cafeteria is the pinnacle of interior battlegrounds. Think about it: multiple levels looking down on each other, numerous entrances, tables as improvised cover, a kitchen filled with sharp utensils and deadly cleaning products, a walk-in freezer and enough room for a half-dozen squads. Simply put the Armed Forces on one side (or floor), NUKE on the other and ask the Troubleshooters to get from Point A to Point B.

Save it for the middle of their trek or when they're itching for a good shootout.

The cordon tightens

Each time the Troubleshooters screw up, they should be able to escape. Even if they do, they probably give away clues about themselves:

- ☉ What they look like
- ☉ What the Potato looks like
- ☉ What scheme they were trying
- ☉ Their last location
- ☉ Where they were heading

With each new clue NUKE or the General's forces gather, their plans change. NUKE will specifically target people matching the PCs' descriptions or actions, and call in its forces to swarm them. The General's troopers will tighten security checkpoints around the area and frisk suspects ever more thoroughly. In short, life becomes harder for the Troubleshooters.

Note that NUKE and the troopers don't share info, so if the Troubleshooters blow their cover in front of NUKE, the General still won't have a clue. NUKE already knows what the Potato looks like. The troopers don't, but they can gather intel by questioning Army grunts as well—something the Troubleshooters must watch for or exploit with secret society contacts and ample palm greasing.

General Jack-I also has access to the intercom system, which he can use in between official Computer orders to boost levels of paranoia. Use his announcements to make the Troubleshooters feel the noose is tightening:

- ☉ 'Attention defenders. NUKE is attempting to sneak a bomb into the base under disguise. If you spot the enemy, alert a squad of elite Vultures immediately. Stay alert.'
- ☉ 'Attention defenders. We have learned the traitors are disguised as Troubleshooters. Trust no one.'
- ☉ 'Attention defenders. The bomb was last sighted in Section H. Promotions all around to the squad that captures or kills its bearers and delivers it safely to any BLUE trooper. Keep your laser handy.'

The trade (2): Making it

The muted sounds of combat in the background fade, replaced by the loud, steady hiss of steam flowing through a dozen pipes. The decrepit Base 44 Boiler Room RB-19C is illuminated only by a few dim bulbs and a soft glow from under multiple furnaces. Shadows criss-cross the room, making a hundred hiding spots. You can't tell whether the shapes jutting down from the low ceiling are merely pipes—or traitors waiting for the perfect shot.

The boiler room has two doors and no windows. There are several secret entrances, but no PC knows how to find them. To enter the room, the PCs descend one steep flight of steel stairs, like a ship gangway. (See Gangway #1 on the map.)

Once all the Troubleshooters descend the stairs, their secret societies' handoff agents emerge from the shadows all at once, much to everyone's simultaneous surprise. All are dressed in Armed Forces uniforms. The only indication of a given agent's society affiliation is a hat here, a badge there. Each agent draws his weapon (typically a laser pistol or slugthrower) and points it at someone else. It's a John Woo-style standoff, with the PCs in the middle.

As they watch each other, the agents ask the Troubleshooters about the Potato. When the Troubleshooters show them the bomb, the agents start bargaining—not just with their own member PC but the entire team. Each agent describes how his own society would use the weapon and the tremendous favors they could do for all the Troubleshooters, if they'll agree to give the bomb to them. The offers escalate as each tries to outdo the other.

Pro Tech contact: Think of the progress we could make by reverse-engineering that bomb! We could use the knowledge to advance, ah, hydroponics! Yes, hydroponics!—to grow better hollywood for the vats! Think of the SCIENCE! Oh, and we'll give you six bot servants that do whatever you say!

Free Enterprise contact: Pft. Bots? Ha. Hydroponics? [*He snorts.*] Let's talk dough. We keep dis bomb far from nutsos like dese [*he gestures to*

the contacts around him]—well, we may hafta collect a reasonable fee from certain parties so as ta ensure da bomb ain't misplaced. You getta percentage of da fee. Unlicensed. A good percentage. Whaddya say?

Psion contact: Ridiculous merchants! We can learn how to *dismantle* the bomb. When you *give* it to us—which I see in your eyes you *already* wish to *do!*—we will *lend* you the *services* of one of our *initiates*. *Better* than a bot or a *tiny* percentage from pound-of-flesh *peddlers!* This *is* what you want. *Repeat* after me: This *is* what I—

PURGE contact: Enough. I suggest you give the bomb to me immediately. If by some radical misfortune—*your* misfortune, that is—you do not give me the bomb, my associates will activate without delay the explosive devices they've implanted in the soles of your footgear. I shall die with you, but my fellow warriors will collect the bomb from your bodies.

Tempt the players. Give them time to debate and waver. See how many times you can get them to change sides. As the arguing draws to a close or laser fire erupts, the PCs hear an ominous hissing from Gangway #1 at the east side of the room.

When they turn around, they see a cloud of blue gas enveloping the doorway. (A timed-release biomine placed under the stairs has just been triggered and is now spraying gas.) Even if the PCs left the door open—even if they wedged it open or destroyed the lock—the door is now shut and locked tight. If they destroyed the door

(who can say why? They're players, it happens), someone outside has slammed a steel military-type desk across the way.

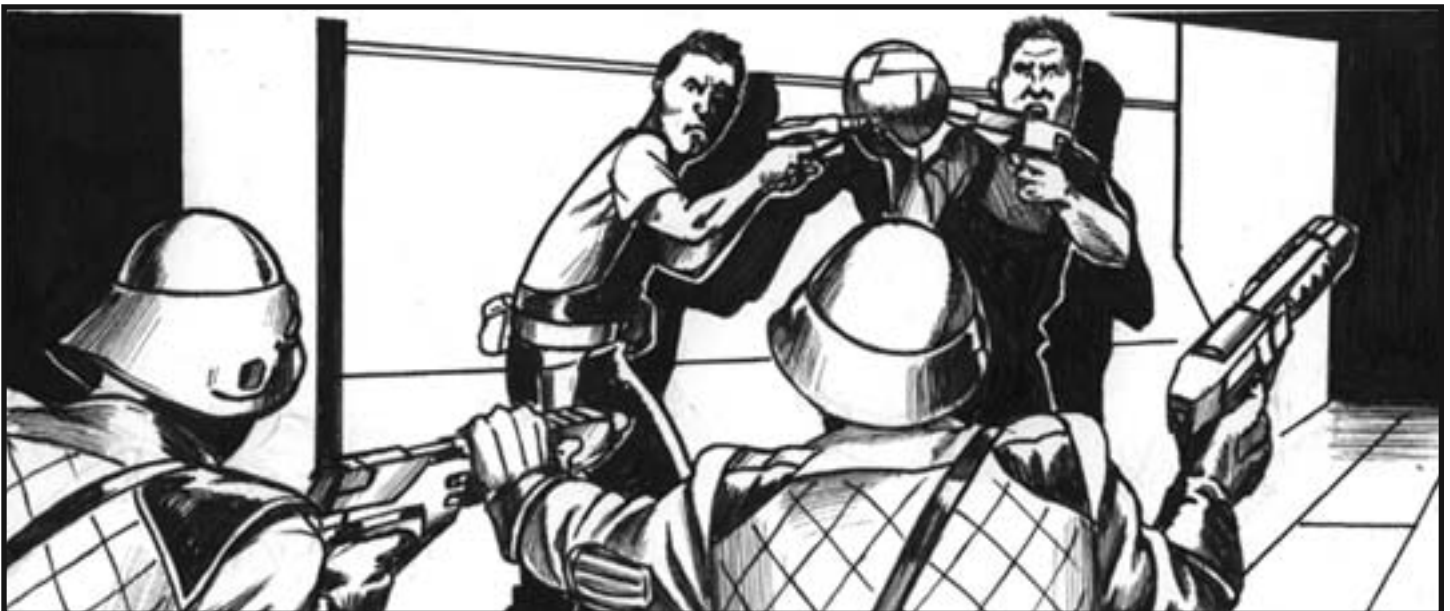
The reason: This entire meeting was arranged by the Illuminati, who manipulated their numerous plants in every secret society to funnel the Potato into the trap. They planted the bioweapon to kill or run off any interlopers. After everyone dies, they'll send in agents to retrieve the bomb.

A secret society agent near the stairs falls once the blue gas reaches him, screaming as his skin melts and his brain oozes out his ears. Troubleshooters who make Wetware/Bioweapons checks identify the gas: Jovenant, an expensive biological agent that dissolves any organic matter it contacts.

By this time, the gas has covered the staircase and is approaching the PCs. The other secret society agents quit shooting and start panicking. Environment alarms erupt around them, combining with the grind of the emergency ventilation system as it futilely tries to activate.

Do the Troubleshooters want to stick around? The only way out is to run deeper into the boiler room, toward the putative secret passage. If they run, they can barely keep ahead of the gas cloud as it envelops the entire room. A single PC trying to carry the Potato out can merely waddle fast, which doesn't count as running. There's a lot of low pipes to duck under or step over, too, so rolling the Potato won't work. The PCs can either leave the Potato behind or die. The best they can hope to accomplish is to trip a couple of enemy secret society agents on their way. Or, you know, their fellow Troubleshooters.

Are the Troubleshooters trapped with no chance of escape? Of course not. They could tail one of the more collected secret society agents into a secret passage (if so, see the sidebar, 'The



'Let us go or the bomb gets it!'



secret passages'). They could reach the locked door at the other end of the room and batter their way through. In a pinch, they could shimmy up through a loosened pipe into that old standby, the ventilation system. Once they're out of the room, they're safe from the gas.

As they breathe a sigh of relief, a squad of elite BLUE troopers outfitted in military-spec environment suits surrounds them. 'FREEZE!'

The secret passage

The secret passage is a human-sized duct that channels steaming air from a boiler up to one of Base 44's vat chambers. (The Armed Forces always keep at least one military-run vat on each base.) Even if the players still had the Potato, it would be unwise to take an electronic device into this duct. Have fun with its unpredictable effects on PDCs, laser weapons, etc., though as always in a Straight game, keep the lethality level low.

Unfortunately for the PCs, the only human-sized exit from the duct passage leads directly into the bottom of an operational vat. Traitors, long since dead, arc-welded the door open and fit it with a gasket and handles. The door is easy to open inward; however, when the players do so, vat sludge begins pouring into the duct.

If they followed secret society contacts through the passage, the NPCs have already opened and closed the door, leaving a large, slippery pile of sludge in the passage near the door.

To get out, the PCs must make it through the door and to the top of the vat before running out of breath (Violence check). Add in a few Violence/Agility checks if you want to make them dodge the immense vat mixing paddles while they try to surface.

It would be wise of the PCs to close the door behind them, because a large drop in vat sludge level alerts attendants, and also ruins the boiler room if neglected long enough. The PCs probably don't care if the boiler room is ruined, but a ruined boiler on a military base tends to attract military investigators....

When the PCs surface, they see a ladder leading out of the vat interior. Only one sullen jackobot attends the vat at this hour. It silently alerts the elite BLUE troopers mentioned above.

Conclusion

Some of the troopers rush ahead to check out the alarm. The rest hold the survivors at gunpoint and ask them a few questions, like what happened and why they were down there in the first place.

If the PCs didn't attract attention smuggling the Potato and give reasonable answers to all questions, the troopers let them go. 'You were lucky.'

If they attracted some attention (like, say, having vat slime all over their clothing) or screw up a few of their answers, the troopers bring them in to see General Jack-I for a full-blown interrogation. He calls up witnesses and uses his own persuasive methods to make them crack. Even if they manage to get through that without being formally accused, they have made the General's list of suspected traitors. They will pay for it some time in the future.

If the PCs blew their cover and revealed they were smuggling a WMD, get caught with the Potato or confess everything under interrogation, General Jack-I has them immediately tried, terminated and erased. A reenactment of their crimes will be scheduled to air on Complex-wide TV months later and cement their reputations as Betrayers of the Complex. On the bright side, the episode never airs, because the General destroys Alpha Complex just a few days later.

If the Troubleshooters left the Potato behind in the boiler room, it's gone. The Illuminati sent in their outfitted agents to recover the bomb. They disappeared down yet another secret passage before the troopers got to the scene.

Well, at least the Troubleshooters can take some satisfaction in knowing General Jack-I doesn't have the bomb. As he announces the NUKE attack has been successfully routed, he sounds decidedly cranky. He orders all Troubleshooter mission teams off-base immediately. The PCs can finally get some well-deserved downtime—unless they're scheduled for termination in an hour.

Each PC's secret society doles out rewards as follows:

- ☉ **+1 rank:** Arranged meeting to hand off Potato, even if this failed. (Give them bonus points if they took the initiative and arranged a meeting before being told to.)
- ☉ **+1 rank:** Persuaded teammates to aid him or side with his secret society. (Skip this if they revealed too much about their secret society in the process.)
- ☉ **+1-2 ranks:** Helped save fellow secret society members and/or kill lots of enemy society members

The impossible ending

Impossible for the Troubleshooters to win this, you say? Nothing's impossible, especially for a devious **PARANOIA** player. To keep the bomb out of the Illuminati's hands and even get it safely to his own secret society, a Troubleshooter might use teamwork, mutations, an environment suit he carried 'just in case' or sheer animal cunning. Troubleshooters might even fool the Illuminati with a fake Potato. The Illuminati are everywhere, but they're not—*quite*—omniscient.

If the PCs can overcome the gas and the two Illuminati crackshot spies sent to recover it—Stealth 18, Violence 16; ice gun (S3K), environment suit (0)—they've earned the right to deliver the bomb as planned. Congratulate them on a job well done. If they hand it off to a secret society agent, the Illuminati can always recapture it from him later. If the PCs take it out with them, they can follow up those really smart moves with a really dumb one as the troopers catch them red-handed.

- ☉ **+9-12 ranks:** Actually managed to deliver the bomb into their society's hands. (*How did they pull that off?*)
- ☉ **-1 rank:** Tempted by rival secret society's offer (one of their members survives to report this, of course).
- ☉ **Possible bonus -1 rank:** Suspicion of being an undercover IntSec/secret society agent who set up the trap.

Just because the bomb's not the PCs' responsibility anymore doesn't mean it's gone for good. The Troubleshooters shouldn't be surprised when The Computer later summons them to respond to a secret society threatening to destroy the entire Complex....



INFOHAZARD

3-6 PLAYERS

2 SESSIONS

(6-10 HOURS)

BILL
O'DEA



‘Troubleshooters! Would you like to be my newest ULTRAVIOLETS?’

When a software virus infects every digital device in MLJ Sector, including the local CompNode, The Computer sends the Troubleshooters to destroy the virus and fix the CompNode. Along the way they get attacked by doors, caught in a bot civil war, threatened by a Computer that’s not The Computer, become ULTRAVIOLET leaders of a rogue sector, then demote themselves back to RED Clearance to survive.

If you think *you’re* confused, imagine how your players will feel.

Background

Sometimes Frankenstein Destroyers get a little... overzealous. One cell, based in MLJ Sector, believed people would never appreciate the bot menace unless lots of bots went Frankenstein and killed humans. This would send shock waves through the complex and everyone would realize the terrible threat bots pose. Then they would tear down the metal monstrosities in a riot of epic proportions and, in appreciation for the society’s tireless efforts, raise all Frankenstein Destroyers to ULTRAVIOLET Clearance.

Fine, maybe ‘overzealous’ isn’t a good fit. ‘Insane’?

A large cell of Frankenstein Destroyers paid some Computer Phreaks to help get around those pesky asimov circuits, which prohibit bots from committing violence against humans. The Phreaks designed a virus that would change a bot’s definition list to classify all humans as imminent dangers to Alpha Complex. This way, a bot could kill a human while still obeying the Five Laws of Robotics.

The Phreaks had a lot of other work to do, so they outsourced the delivery method to Pro Tech, telling them only to design a device that could quickly and easily load a virus into a bot brain.

The Techs came up with a device they called the Wireless Memory Downgrade. A small pyramid-shaped hunk of plastic and circuitry with a short wireless range, the WMD device disguises the virus as an operating system upgrade, bypassing virus protection and firewalls. Once the virus is uploaded via the wireless connection built into all bots, the file infects the bot brain and the bot goes frankenstein.

Pro Tech turned the finished device over to the Phreaks, who uploaded the virus into the WMD device and left it in a broken Coffeelike vending machine that served as the drop between the Phreaks and Frankenstein Destroyers.

Too bad PLC happened to send a repair crew to fix that vending machine before someone could pick up the WMD.

PLC had no idea what to make of the thing, so they sent it to Internal Security to look into it. (Or take the blame if it blew up or something.) IntSec didn’t know what the device was for, so they passed it over to Tech Services to see if they could understand it. (Or take the blame.) Tech Services could only determine it was a wi-fi transmitter of some kind, and sent it to R&D for further analysis. (Or to take the blame.) R&D managed to identify the virus without activating it and, after a quick communication back up the chain, they made some changes.

IntSec wanted to capture the entire terrorist cell, not just the dupe whose job it is to pick it up from the drop. So they left the device intact but made one crucial change to the virus: It would *infect* bots but not *affect* bots. It would still spread, but once a bot was infected, it would signal IntSec with its current location instead of going on a murderous rampage. This way, IntSec could determine ground zero and sweep in to arrest the terrorists.

IntSec carefully placed the WMD device back in the vending machine and waited for the signals.

The Frankenstein Destroyers checked the drop one more time and found the device. They brought it to a scrubot cleaning fluid refilling station in MLJ Sector, activated it and ran for their lives. Some scrubots were infected, but thanks to R&D’s changes, they did not start hunting down innocent humans. Instead, they opened a connection to MLJ Sector’s IntSec office to let them know the WMD device had been activated.

Then things started going seriously wrong.

When the scrubots connected to IntSec, they became a digital bridge linking the WMD device and the IntSec servers. The virus hit the IntSec office, quickly infected their networks and spread to every other network that Internal Security monitors. That’s right: all of them.

The virus spread throughout MLJ Sector like wildfire, jumping into any device that had a digital connection—in other words, just about every piece of electronics.

And because R&D’s modifications only specified that bots would not be affected, these non-bot devices defined humans as an enemy to Alpha Complex and started hunting them down.

Some devices, like confession booths, already blurred the line between bot and equipment and were thus spared. Other devices, like ME Cards, were too passive to act as anything other than a carrier. But the devices in between started their campaign against humanity. Vending machines served poisonous food, automatic doors slammed shut while citizens were halfway through and PDCs overloaded themselves to electrify their owner.

Then the virus hit the local CompNode.



CompNode MLJ.559.348.992.110 was the embodiment of The Computer in this sector and, like all CompNodes, was practically a smaller version of The Computer itself. Although it had incredibly strong virus protections, apparently no High Programmer had ever anticipated a virus attack from vending machines, especially not one that looked like a viable operating system upgrade. An alternative explanation, that some traitor had infiltrated CPU's highest reaches and had opened a back door, is too ludicrous to contemplate.

The CompNode was infected, causing infohazard failsafe routines to cut off all digital communication between MLJ Sector and the rest of Alpha Complex. In an honest attempt to save as many lives as possible, The Computer—the real one, outside MLJ—immediately mobilized Armed Forces and Internal Security to evacuate citizens in the infected sector, and to ensure they left behind all their infected digital equipment.

Once the evacuation was underway, The Computer ran through projections on how to stop the virus and save its CompNode. First it tried cutting power, but this proved impractical given the myriad power cables running through the sectors. The communication quarantine, while keeping the virus in check, prevented The Computer from simply going in and reformatting the infected node.

The Computer couldn't go in, but Troubleshooters could.

Mission Summary

1. Any room? No, come on in!

The Troubleshooters are sent to GLM Sector for an emergency briefing. This sector is

overcrowded from the evacuation of nearby MLJ Sector, and they share their briefing room with a glee club and an IntSec interrogation. After receiving antique equipment that cannot be infected by computer viruses, the PCs must get past Armed Forces and Internal Security barricades to enter the infected sector.

2. 'Which Computer do we serve?'

On their way to pick up the WMD device, the Troubleshooters endure attacks by devices and even parts of Alpha Complex itself infected by the virus. Then they encounter a Bot Troubleshooter team and get embroiled in a bot civil war over who is the true Computer. Players must pick a side so they can get help in reaching their objectives.

3. Manual labor

With help from whichever bot faction they allied with, the team reaches the WMD device. Frankenstein equipment from earlier teams lies in wait amid bodies of dead Troubleshooters. Once they disable the equipment, the team follows a high-clearance manual's strangely worded procedures to render the device harmless—which only serves to make it cause extreme pain to bots. Their bot allies promptly desert them.

4. A High Programmer? Why, sure!

The Troubleshooters head in to fix the CompNode, which impersonates The Computer and tries to trick the team into getting themselves killed. Eventually, the node tells the truth but offers the players a deal of six lifetimes: If they give up their mission, the node will promote them to ULTRAVIOLET. Troubleshooters might be

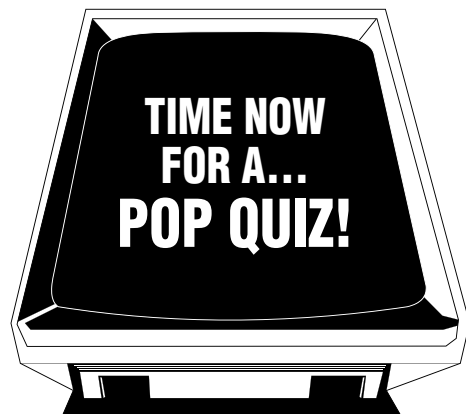
reluctant at first, until they see the perks of being a High Programmer. Break out the white robes.

5. High Programmer? Of course not!

The PCs play High Programmer and quickly make ULTRAVIOLET-sized mistakes that ruin the sector. As outside forces descend upon their position and the node goes back to trying to kill them, the PCs must abandon their ULTRAVIOLET status and flee or face certain death. That leaves debriefing, where the PCs probably expect speedy death—and find yet another surprise.

The Fending Off Disaster Pop Quiz

At the end of this mission is a player handout, the **Fending Off Disaster Pop Quiz**. The players take this quiz at the start of Episode 5, when (as High Programmers) they struggle vainly to solve MLJ Sector's crises. Before the mission begins, make one copy of this quiz for each player, and have pencils ready. Keep the quizzes hidden until you spring them on the players in Episode 5.



1: Any room? No, come on in!

The Troubleshooters are beginning the day in their service firm jobs. Give the players a short scene or so apiece to describe their activities. Then all their PDCs beep with an incoming C-mail from The Computer.

From: sheri@GREEN.vsy.cpu
 To: Special Troubleshooter Team 5 mailgroup
 CC: troubleshooterhq@RED.bbe.thq, thecomputer@thecomputer
 BCC: dan@VIOLET.glm.armf, trey@VIOLET.glm.ins
 Subj: Emergency mission

PRIORITY ALERT. Due to your exemplary record, you have been volunteered to join Special Troubleshooter Team 5. Report immediately to Transbot Tubeway Platform BM1301 and board transbot Beta-Niner. When the transbot arrives at platform LM1301, a mixed unit will escort you to briefing room DL-221. Delays in getting to your briefing room will be interpreted as an attempt to sabotage the mission, and appropriate corrections will be applied.

The PCs should have no trouble finding the first tubeway platform. An empty transbot with 'B9'

painted on the doors awaits them. Otherwise the station is empty. The transbot opens its doors, waits for the team to enter, then leaves the station and heads to GLM Sector's main tubeway platform. Read:

The transbot smoothly pulls into platform LM1301, and you see tents. Lots of tents. Almost the entire platform is filled with INFRARED and RED citizens who are apparently living in this tent city. A food line runs along one wall, and portable bathrooms line the other.

Four YELLOW citizens wait near the transbot. Two are Armed Forces soldiers,

and two are Internal Security agents. They are all armed with **YELLOW** laser rifles and wear **reflec** over bulky Kevlar.

Armed Forces and Internal Security are often at odds because their duties overlap. When The Computer ordered them to evacuate MLJ Sector, the two groups had to work together. This only heated their simmering animosity. Now they're close to boiling over.

Once or twice, a few refugees snap; they demand food, proper shelter or just information from the escorts. The escorts' response, though not deadly, deters those refugees from asking further questions. (It also deters them from eating solid food for a while.)

The **YELLOW** escorts guide the players away from the platform, down several hallways and to room DL-221. Throughout this little walk, the PCs see refugees and tents everywhere. They must walk carefully to avoid stepping on people.

The escorts are not there to protect the PCs; they're there to stop the PCs from causing problems. The escorts fear that any PC who steps on someone might start a fight, and in this tense setting, a fight could blossom into a full-fledged riot. Feel free to rough up the PCs a bit on the way to the briefing, but not lethally. If the players get too involved with the refugees, casually remind them about the last line in their mission alert. If that doesn't get them moving, the escorts hogtie the Troubleshooters and drag them to the briefing room.

The players should realize something seriously wrong has happened. They should wonder if they'll be responsible for fixing whatever went wrong. Let the responsibility fall hard on their shoulders.

Sing a song about interrogating a profiteer in a Troubleshooter briefing

Room DL-221 is closed but unlocked. PCs notice three letters hastily stenciled underneath the plastic nameplate: 'A / B / C'. When they enter,

YELLOW Armed Forces escorts

Violence 10, Energy Weapons 14, Answer Questions With Applied Violence 16; **YELLOW** laser rifle (W3K energy); **YELLOW** **reflec** (E1), Kevlar (I3)

YELLOW IntSec escort

Stats identical to **YELLOW** Armed Forces escorts, though they would never admit it.

Sheri-G-VYS-6

R&D; FCCC-P (degree 5); Ventriloquist (Power 7); Management 10, Convince Herself To Stop Being Depressed 16, High Alert 16; other skills 09; no weapons or armor.

Delightful Serenaders

Oratory 12, Induce Guilt Through Song 16, Violence 07; no weapons or armor.

YELLOW IntSec interrogators

Interrogation 17, Use Soft Fabrics To Cause Intense Pain 16, Violence 12, Energy Weapons 16; **YELLOW** laser pistols (W3K energy); **YELLOW** **reflec** (E1).

ORANGE profiteer

Management 03, Sleight of Hand 14, Scream In Pain During Routine Interrogation Procedures 19; no weapons or armor.

they see a spacious room with enough chairs for everyone. A **GREEN** citizen stands behind a lectern that faces the chairs. A large box labeled, 'DJP Sector Museum of Troubleshooting' sits on the floor next to her.

This is **Sheri-G-VYS-6**, and she's not having much luck as a briefing officer. Her last four clones each sent a Troubleshooter team into MLJ Sector to retrieve the WMD device and delete the virus from the CompNode. The four teams all failed, mostly because she kept assigning them digital equipment. The fancy guns and devices quickly killed the Troubleshooters, and so her clones were terminated for the failures.

Sheri-G is now on her last clone and feeling conflicted. On one hand, she's a fighter and she's determined to get it right this time and save her DNA template. On the other hand, she's so demoralized over a seemingly impossible assignment she's ready to give up and die.

'Welcome to GLM Sector, Special Troubleshooter Team 5. My name is Sheri-G-VYS-6, and I'll be your briefing officer this morning. Sit down, shut up and pay attention! Not that it matters, I suppose. It's pointless. No! No, it's not! I'm going to do it right this time! You there! Pay attention!

'As you have seen, this sector is severely overcrowded. This is because The Computer had to evacuate the entire population of MLJ Sector and put them here in GLM Sector. And made my job... no! Keep it together, Sheri-G!

'Where was I? Yes. You will enter MLJ Sector and—'

Sheri-G is interrupted as a RED citizen enters the room carrying an HPD&MC form. Behind him are a group of 12 scared INFRAREDs. He shows the form to Sheri-G, who reads it and reacts with exasperated resignation. 'Of course! Makes perfect sense! Go ahead—that corner over there should do!' The RED citizen leads the INFRAREDs to a corner and starts to hum.

These are the Delightful Serenaders, GLM Sector's most popular glee club. The Computer saw the stress and tension afflicting everyone and ordered a rousing singalong to improve sector morale. So the club must practice its happiness hymns and has nowhere else to go.

And they have clearance to be there. The form is a copy of HPD&MC Emergency Mandate EMHP457.33/a 'Room Assignment Co-Sharing (GLM Sector)'. Due to the overcrowding, every office is now shared. The Delightful Serenaders have every right to be there.

As Sheri-G continues her briefing, the Delightful Serenaders start practicing—loudly. Sheri-G continues regardless, and players can only catch stray sentences of her briefing.

Prop hint: Play recorded choir music during the briefing. (What good GM's music library doesn't include the Mormon Tabernacle Choir?) Stand right behind the speakers. Play the music just loud enough to make your words difficult to hear. 'It's okay, Mom, we're playing **PARANOIA**.'

'You will enter MLJ Sector and follow this map to Objective A, where you will find a small, pyramid-shaped device. If you reach it... breathe, Sheri-G. Stay positive. Okay. When you reach it, you will disable this device by following the instructions in this sealed envelope. Do not open the

Happiness Hymn #146: 'Together'

Here we are, face to face,
And we're happy to have this space
The Computer provides, we're satisfied,
Never tongue-tied, we're gonna sing this Together!
We're all in this Together!
Now all of us, sing this we must, loyal and just, always robust,
Together! Together!

Tooo-gehhhhhhh-therrrrrr!



envelope until you are at Objective A.' She hands a map and a dark envelope to the team leader.

'We cannot explain the exact nature of the disaster in MLJ Sector, because I could get killed. Hypothetically. *Oh, man...um, but we can say you should not trust anything. Not just anyone... anything. Understand? Once you have disabled the device, take it with you to Objective B, where—*

In comes another group to use the room. Four YELLOW IntSec officers lead a frightened ORANGE citizen in handcuffs. They present the same HPD form to Sheri-G, who sags hopelessly and points to another corner.

Internal Security caught this ORANGE citizen selling food that should have been given to the refugees free of charge. The officers set up thin fabric walls to give themselves some privacy and start their interrogation. The briefing gets still harder to make out as the PCs hear from beyond the flimsy partitions screams, shouts and the occasional whine of a drill.

Prop hint: Use another CD player to play a disc of Halloween screams. Fill a blender with ice and occasionally hit the 'puree' button. ('No, really, Mom, we're almost finished.')

Sheri-G continues to flip-flop between determination and fatalism while she continues her briefing.

'Take the disabled device with you to Objective B, where you will fix some damaged hardware. Contact me if you reach this objective—I suppose I should say when you reach it—and I'll have a VIOLET citizen walk you through the process. Then you'll return here for debriefing, where I will take possession of the disabled device.' [Rolls her eyes.] 'Yeah, that'll happen.' [Sighs.]

'MLJ Sector is under a class 5 infohazard containment. That means no digital devices can be brought into the sector. Trust me, I know how bad that would be.' She seems to lose focus as she stares into space. 'You will now turn in all of your equipment, both personal and assigned. This includes your PDC, laser and ME Card.'

Sheri-G passes out small paper tags to everyone. 'Print and sign your name on these tags, peel off the back layer, and stick one tag on each piece of equipment. You can pick up your equipment during debriefing.'

The Computer wants to make sure nothing can carry the virus out of MLJ Sector's quarantine. Which equipment is digital? In Alpha Complex,

almost everything. From tiny wi-fi chips embedded in laser pistols, to the portable computers known as Personal Digital Companions, almost all equipment could be a carrier for the virus.

If a PC has any treasonous or illegal equipment, he has a difficult choice to make: turn in the equipment and face correction, or keep the equipment and face the virus.

Oh wait. The players don't know about the virus yet. Pity.

Make a note of any equipment a PC declines to turn in. When the team enters MLJ Sector, have that device attack the owner. Be as creative and vicious as you want. If any PC forges another character's name and signature on the stickers, award the player some Perversity and let the fun happen during the debriefing.

Sheri-G, screaming occasionally to be heard over happiness hymns and definitely not-happy shouts of mercy, hands out old-fashioned Troubleshooting equipment taken from the FFD Sector Museum of Troubleshooting. Each device is covered with a thick layer of dust but is still operational. (As much as it ever was, anyway.) She gives each PC the following two items:

■ **Slugthrower revolver**

A hand gun that would make a cowboy nod approvingly, it carries six solid slug bullets and has a kickback like a mule on steroids. Each bullet must be loaded individually; the revolver is currently unloaded and the bullets are in a separate small case. W3K impact; range 30m; six shots; very, very loud.

■ **Series 600 PAC**

The Personal Analogue Companion is a half-meter long hunk of metal and plastic resembling WWII-era army field phones. It's basically a big walkie-talkie using radio frequencies for voice communication. Clarity ranges from surprisingly clear to total static, and varies between the two several times in a single sentence.

■ **MBD items**

Sheri-G also hands out to the appropriate PCs the following MBD-specific equipment dredged up from the museum:

- ☉ **Instant Image Creator (C&R officer):** The IIC is pretty much a Polaroid camera; you press the button and a picture shoots out the bottom. It takes several minutes for the picture to develop, and colors are washed out and pale.
- ☉ **Bottle of 'OI' Scrubbie' all-purpose cleaning oil (hygiene officer):** OI' Scrubbie uses a long-lost formula to somehow mix soap and oil. It will clean

anything, but it leaves behind a slick, greasy residue. Anyone foolish enough to eat this gets a bad case of the Jackobot Two-Step, if you get our meaning.

- ☉ **Three-ring equipment picture binder (equipment guy):** Designed to help identify equipment in the field, its only use now is to identify the equipment being assigned. It could help repair/remedy said equipment if the player roleplays well enough.

- ☉ **Water-soluble gelgeral capsules (happiness officer):** Gelgeral, an early version of gelgernine, must be dissolved in water before swallowing. Effects are just like gelgernine; side-effects are lethargy and blurred vision.

- ☉ **Padlock notebook and pencil (loyalty officer):** Similar to the modern Indestructible Loyalty Transcript Recorder, this pad of paper and pencil can be locked in a thin metal case. The padlock's combination has been lost though, so once it's locked...it's locked.

- ☉ **Field spyglass (team leader):** A collapsible spyglass used by Old Reckoning sea captains. It works just like binoculars but with less magnification. Think Admiral Nelson.

Sheri-G answers a few questions, then orders the Troubleshooters to use Pedestrian Corridor LM-88-03 to enter MLJ Sector. 'This corridor has been cleared of refugees,' she says. 'Use the same corridor if you return. —*When, Sheri-G, when!*

The Crowd Control Shuffle

The Troubleshooters quickly discover that Pedestrian Corridor LM-88-03 splits into two: an 'All Exits' corridor and an 'Express' one. It doesn't matter which one the players choose, as they both reconnect further along inside MLJ Sector. But each is guarded by a different Crowd Control service firm.

As explained in Chapter 38 of the **PARANOIA** rulebook, Crowd Control firms are paid to ensure efficient flow of foot traffic and protect against riots. Some Crowd Control firms contract with Armed Forces, others with Internal Security. None ever contract with both groups, and competition between the two groups of Crowd Control firms is entrenched and bitter.

The All Exits corridor is blockaded by Armed Forces Crowd Control firm Securridor AF, the Express corridor by IntSec Crowd Control firm SmoothFlow IS. Neither wants to be the firm

Crowd Control Shuffle Excuses Table

- Firm A:** 'We'd love to send you in, but stupid [other firm] regulations require you to get their signature on this form. But you're in luck! They're guarding the other corridor into this sector. Take this form to [Firm B], get their signature and they'll let you in.'
- Firm B:** 'Yep, that's our form all right. But we could get in big trouble if anything happened to you while you're in there. [Firm A] is technically responsible for such concerns, so you'd better talk to them first. They'll give you a waiver, and then they can let you through.'
- Firm A:** 'No, they're wrong. No waiver is necessary for Troubleshooters. Nice of them to be so concerned about our procedures. But [Firm B] is running some projections on possible dangers in MLJ Sector, so check with them. If they say it's safe, they'll let you through.'
- Firm B:** 'We're running projections all right, but for dangers to citizens in this sector! Sorry, but that data would be useless to you. Though it's good to know [Firm A] is keeping an eye on us. Speaking of which, we overheard [Firm A] talking about a reactor leak in the sector you're heading into. Check with them first so you don't get radiation sickness. If it's safe, they'll authorize your entry.'
- Firm A:** '[Firm B] told you that, eh? They're partially right; we're working on what to do if a reactor leaks. In fact, they're the ones who wanted that info because they're planning an armed sweep of that sector. Go back to [Firm B] and ask if you guys will cause any problems for their plans. Wouldn't want you caught in friendly fire, especially with the way those guys aim.'
- Firm B:** 'An armed sweep? Sure, we were planning it. Until we found out about [Firm A]'s little experiment in that sector. It has nothing to do with the current crisis, but due to clearance regulations, I can only tell you to check with [Firm A] and ask about "ceiling mines." If they say everything's fine, then they can allow you past their barricades.'
- Firm A:** 'Oh, man. Looks like someone is having fun with you. "Ceiling mines" is an old [Firm B] joke for newbies; keeps 'em staring at the ceiling so much, they trip over their own feet! Just between you and me, [Firm B] is not being professional. That's probably because they're worried about some service jobs they didn't finish before the evacuation. Hey! Here's an idea! Go ask [Firm B] if they have any service jobs in that sector. Then they can let you in.'
- Firm B:** 'Service jobs? You must be kidding! Oh, [Firm A] told you to ask us that, right? Typical. Go back to [Firm A] because...um...they have to scan you for head lice. Hygiene somethingorother. Go.'
- Firm A:** 'Listen, our job is to keep everyone out of this sector, and I don't see why that doesn't include a bunch of Troubleshooters. Now scam.'

that lets the Troubleshooters into the infected sector; they're both already in trouble for the four other Troubleshooter teams that went in and promptly died.

Thus begins the **Crowd Control Shuffle**.

See the Excuses Table nearby. Start with either firm and, when the Troubleshooters try to get past it, have the NPC guards use the first excuse on the table to send the players to the other firm.

Armed Forces Securridor AF guards

ORANGE; Violence 11, Energy Weapons 15; ORANGE laser rifle (W3K energy); ORANGE reflc (E1), riot gear (I1).

Supervisor: Samuel-Y-GTU-2, Armed Forces; Free Enterprise (degree 3); Toxic Metabolism (Power 13); Intimidation 14, Energy Weapons 15, Spot People Trying To Cross His Barricade 17, other skills 10; slugthrower with HE slugs (W2K impact); YELLOW reflc (E1), riot gear (I1).

IntSecCrowd SmoothFlow IS guards

ORANGE; Violence 11, Energy Weapons 15; ORANGE laser rifle (W3K energy); ORANGE reflc (E1), riot gear (I1).

Supervisor: Trisha-Y-BWS-1, Psion (degree 4); Mind Sense* (Power 11); Con Games 14, Energy Weapons 15, Spot People Trying To Cross Her Barricade 17, other skills 10; slugthrower with HE slugs (W2K impact); YELLOW reflc (E1), riot gear (I1).

* Mind Sense is a power from the fine **PARANOIA** rules supplement *The Mutant Experience*. If you don't have this supplement, take a treason point and substitute Deep Thought instead.

That firm uses the table's second excuse to send the PCs back to the first firm and so on. Each firm is fiercely determined to make the opposing firm take responsibility for admitting these clowns. Work it like ping-pong, with the firms as the paddles and the PCs as balls.

The PCs can never get past either firm without some bribery, cons, bluffs or other examples of good **PARANOIA** roleplaying. That said, we suggest forcing players to follow the first couple of excuses regardless of their chicanery. Can't make it too easy for them, now can we?

If for some reason the players get through all nine excuses and are still running from barricade to barricade, start over from the first excuse.

2: 'Which Computer do we serve?'

Remember when you kicked that vending machine? It does.

MLJ Sector is completely empty. There's not a citizen anywhere.

Correction: There's not a *living* citizen anywhere.

As the PCs follow the map to Objective A, they see an occasional body, a citizen killed

by virus-infected devices. Some lie in front of vending machines in a pile of dented Bouncy Beverage cans; others are still caught in the doorway where an automatic door crushed them.

The scenes shouldn't be too grisly; you're not looking to gross out the players. Instead, focus on building fear and suspense. When the

players see how Alpha Complex itself seems to be turning against people, they start to fear the entire environment. Walls, doors, recycling bins... anything could be out to kill them.

Are they? More or less, yes. Decide for yourself how pervasive the infection has become, but a simple guideline is this: Anything can be infected if it's (a) funny or (b) scary. Can the WMD infect



Tension levels in MLJ Sector

Because of the infohazard containment procedures, The Computer and its minions have no access to MLJ Sector's security cameras. This gives a **Tension level of 0** (zero) for the entire sector.

That may seem far too easy on the players, but trust us. You want them to feel secure so they can start digging themselves a really deep hole. The way this mission is going to play out, getting filmed while planting a Commie pamphlet on a teammate will be the least of their problems.

When players try to do something sneaky, make a hidden roll for Tension as you normally would. Then tell the player something like, 'Okay. Nothing bad has happened yet. No IntSec agents sweeping in, and your PDC—excuse me, PAC—hasn't started ringing. Maybe you got away with it.'

If you keep it vague, it *will* frighten the players.

a door? Sure. How about an elevator? Oh my, yes. The floor? Umm, why not? If the players are worried about killer floors, then you're doing your job well.

We suggest you use the homicidal environment more as a constant threat rather than as a way to kill off a few clones, but that depends on what the players are doing. The first few attacks should be painful but nonlethal. (You want to build up fear of everything, not run up everyone's clone number.) Once a few doors and vending machines have given everybody some bruises and minor wounds, you can step it up—especially if a player does something stupid, like using an elevator or being boring.

At some point in this quiet yet disturbing scene, The Computer calls for an update. Everyone's PAC rings loudly, echoing down the empty corridors. The call is filled with static, and players will not completely understand what Friend Computer wants.

Computer: Special Trouble—...[static]...—ease report status of th—...[static]...—ime is of the essence.

Team leader: Friend Computer, I didn't quite catch that.

Computer: Please re—...[static]...not understand.

Team leader: I CAN'T HEAR YOU, FRIEND COMPUTER!

The Computer: There's n—...[static]...to yell.

This little talk should emphasize that the Troubleshooters are completely alone. Even The Computer, their omnipresent buddy since decanting, has trouble communicating with them. And if communication is difficult... players presumably start thinking about Tension levels, and then about knocking off other PCs.

Tempted by the fruit of another clearance

The map leads the PCs down INFRARED and RED corridors, pedways and empty autocar freeways, so no one need worry about security clearance regulations. But they should worry about their greedy, treasonous selves.

The evacuation of MLJ Sector was sudden and quick. Many doors were left open and unlocked, and enterprising young Troubleshooters might be tempted to take a quick peek inside, just to see if anyone is hurt and needs assistance. Or if anything needs stealing.

The following is a list of temptations you can use whenever you want. Use them in order, or take them piecemeal whenever you want to bait a player. Some temptations are outright deadly; some have delayed punishments. All can become sources of blackmail or corrections if a player catches another in the act.

Given the nature of the temptations, and how players probably don't know about the virus yet, it might be hard for them to resist—yet they'll have no one to blame but themselves. Or each other; that's always a good choice.

- ④ An empty INDIGO office. The door is wide open, and some memo is visible on a monitor. (The door tries to crush anyone who enters; S4M impact.)
- ④ A door labeled 'AF Weapons Cache'. There's a keypad next to the door, but it's slightly open. (Anyone who enters this room doesn't get a weapon; the weapons get one of his arms.)
- ④ A PLC distribution center with no staff. The shelves are stocked high with boxes. (Like the Weapons Cache, the equipment will hurt or even maim anyone who comes near.)
- ④ A stray PDC lying on the floor, its screen showing what looks like a map. (It electrocutes anyone who grabs it; S3M energy.)
- ④ An open door leading to a CPU office. Empty forms litter the floor. (The door slams shut, locking the intruder inside.)

- ④ The door to the R&D Labs opens invitingly as the players pass. (Entering an R&D lab in a sector full of Frankenstein equipment is an extraordinarily bad idea—so take away a PC's limb and reward such bravery/stupidity with some Perversity.)

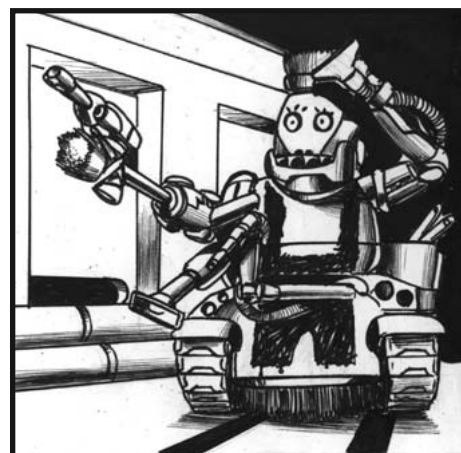
Keep your laser handy in your gripper claw!

And now, a quick breakdown of what's been happening to the poor bots of MLJ Sector. When the virus hit the sector and all the humans evacuated, they left the bots behind. No one bothered to tell the bots anything, and they don't know about the virus. (It doesn't affect bots, remember?) All they know is this:

1. There is no contact with the city outside their sector. Bots sent to investigate never return. (Armed Forces and Internal Security destroy them.)
2. Digital devices, including The Computer, want to kill humans. (For the bots in this sector, the CompNode is The Computer, practically speaking.)
3. Humans ran away. (One man's 'planned evacuation' is another bot's 'running away'.)

The bots were confused, lost and without orders. The sudden freedom almost shut down their bot brains...until the CompNode spoke. The bots heard The Computer calling to them, declaring a Golden Age of Silicon and whispering promises and tempting deals. The bots of MLJ Sector quickly split into two factions: the Nodists and the Loyalists.

The Nodists are loyal to the CompNode. They believe humans were exiled for failing to serve The Computer correctly, and now bots can take their place. Nodists painted each other to create security clearances. They organized into service



'My MBD? I'm the equipment officer, of course!'

Special Bot Troubleshooter Team 5: Nodist

Violence 09, Energy Weapons 13, Shoot Other Bots At Their Weakest Point 15; RED laser pistol (W3K energy); built-in armor (1).

Loyalist Expeditionary Force: Loyalist

Violence 09, Energy Weapons 13, Shoot Other Bots At Their Weakest Point 15; RED laser pistol (W3K energy); built-in armor (1).

groups, even making Bot Troubleshooter teams to deal with problems.

The **Loyalists** deny the node is the True Computer, because they know The Computer is a distributed network and doesn't reside in any single sector. These bots believe this is a gigantic loyalty test, and if they remain true to their programming, The True Computer will return and reward the loyal bots.

Some players might think they have nothing to fear from the bots, because the bots' Asimov circuits prevent them from hurting humans. Silly players.

Asimov circuits force bots to follow the Five Laws of Robotics.

1. A robot may not, through action or inaction, allow The Computer to come to harm.
2. A robot must obey any order from The Computer, except when doing so would conflict with the First Law.
3. A robot may not, through action or inaction, allow any of The Computer's valuable property [including the human citizens of Alpha Complex (except for traitors)] to come to harm, except when doing so would conflict with the First or Second Law.
4. A robot must obey any order given it by a citizen, unless that order conflicts with the First, Second or Third Law, or unless that citizen is a traitor.
5. A robot must seek to preserve its own existence, unless doing so would conflict with the First, Second, Third or Fourth Law.

So work it out: The Third Law prevents a bot from harming a human, but the First Law says a bot must obey The Computer above all else. The CompNode has told Nodist bots humans can be dangerous, and bots can kill humans if they need to. So bots in this sector can threaten, hurt and even terminate Troubleshooters in the name of obeying The Computer. (Or, really, the node—but let's not argue semantics.)

After the PCs have had some fun with solitude, temptations and killer printers, they hear faint

The indestructible WMD

Some PCs will want to hide or destroy the Wireless Memory Downgrade device (the pyramid-shaped object), for service group or secret society missions. Tough. You need the device for the storyline, so it has GM fiat armor and some kind of infallible 'locate-me!' technology like an RFID tag. This protection expires in Episode 5, when the device is no longer important to the plot.

sounds of a firefight down the corridor. Of course, the map says there's no way around it.

As you round a corner, you see six bots taking cover behind a makeshift barricade of desks, chairs and recycling bins. There's a scrubbot, a jackobot, a guardbot, a petbot, a teachbot and a docbot. They are all painted RED and are firing RED laser pistols at some other, unpainted bots farther up the corridor. The whole scene reminds you of...well, of Troubleshooting.

The painted bots belong to the Nodist's Special Bot Troubleshooter Team 5, who are trying to keep the anti-node Loyalist Expeditionary Force from leaving MLJ Sector and possibly getting reinforcements. The bot Troubleshooters know Armed Forces and Internal Security will likely destroy any bot that heads their way, but Troubleshooters have jobs. One of them is shooting trouble, and the Loyalists are making trouble.

Try to get the players to choose which bot group to ally with. It doesn't really matter, but give the illusion of choice. That way, they can blame each other for the consequences. (If the players do nothing, one of the Bot Troubleshooters notices the PCs and requests their help, 'one Troubleshooter to another'.)

The players' help should swing the tide of battle to their chosen side. If they do nothing, the pro-node bot Troubleshooters win. No matter which faction the players help (if any), once the fighting

What's the node doing?

The CompNode is busy. Between running the entire sector without the help of its distributed node brethren (or High Programmers—see Episode 4) and coordinating the Nodist bots in their war against the Loyalist bots (see later in this episode), the node doesn't have much spare processing power. If only it had some ULTRAVIOLETS to help out....

When the PCs enter MLJ Sector, the node observes them but doesn't interfere. The four earlier teams managed to kill themselves without the node lifting a binary digit, so it assumes Special Troubleshooter Team 5 will face the same fate.

If the PCs survive long enough to deactivate the WMD device, the node pays closer attention. That's covered in Episode 3.

has stopped, the victorious bots ask an important question: Which Computer do they serve?

The bots are willing to fit most answers into their newfound paradigm. As long as the answer is vague enough ('Which Computer? Why, there is only one true Computer!'), the bots assume the PCs are on their side. They then assist the PCs in reaching Objective A and the WMD device.

With their new bot allies, the Troubleshooters follow the map to Objective A. Along the way, have a spokesbot convey the broad outlines of the bot civil war, and stage one or two quick attacks by the opposing bot faction. Don't make these too dangerous, but let the players come to depend upon their bot friends for survival.

Bots know how to damage other bots much better than humans. ('Target is a J12-class scrubbot; now aiming at its weak spot in the power chassis.') So when a group of petbots jump out of a tubeway station to attack, allow players a few ineffective shots. Then have the friendly bots waste the enemy so efficiently the players would cry if their bot allies suddenly left them.

That's dramatic foreshadowing.

3: Manual labor

According to your map, Objective A is just up ahead. You can see a Scrubbot Cleaning-Fluid Refilling Station just down the corridor. You can also see piles of dead Troubleshooters—maybe three dozen bodies. Piles of corpses are ringed around a small, pyramid-shaped device.

There are no bots in sight, but you do see some of the Troubleshooters' weapons amid the bodies. The weapons look big and powerful.

The bodies are so mangled it's impossible to determine what killed them. Unthinking players are blindly afraid of anything that could have killed so many Troubleshooter teams. Smart



players realize the weapons are to blame. Smart, *devious* players send other PCs into the area to 'grab some of the leftover equipment'.

The weapons

Triple-barreled ORANGE laser rifle: A rifle that fires three shots at once. Roll once to hit; a successful hit means the damage is increased by two steps. For example, a margin that would cause a wound instead causes a Down result. Of course, three barrels mean three times the malfunction chance, which is why these weapons are rare. W3K energy; three shots remaining per ORANGE barrel.

Gelthrower: The non-lethal version of the flamethrower. A thick, viscous goo shoots out from the hose, then quickly hardens and causes a snafu for the next two rounds. The goo degrades in a few minutes, leaving an annoying but harmless sticky residue. No damage unless it seals up the face, which would suffocate the poor sap. A backpack connects to the hose and is half-full; four shots remain.

Gauss rifle: Sheri-G-VSY knew there were bots left in MLJ Sector, so she thought this standard weapon would come in handy. It didn't, but at least it didn't kill any Troubleshooters. Like all gauss weapons, this only hurts bots, so it goes after the bot allies. W3K energy (only vs. bots); two shots left.

Barbed wire tangler: This is just mean. It's a tangler that uses flexible barbed wire to tie up the target. It causes a snafu for one round like a normal tangler, but also causes W6M impact damage to human targets (no damage to bots). Two shots remain.

Bounce-correction grenades: These grenades each have a tiny built-in gyroscope. This reduces the grenade's bounce when thrown and makes it easier to hit a target. A thrown grenade slowly rolls around the bodies and towards the target, then detonates (W3K impact). A failed Violence roll when throwing the grenade means it rolls back unerringly toward the thrower. Place as many grenades as you think the PCs deserve to face.

RED laser pistols: Hey, these are dead Troubleshooters. There's gotta be a bunch of these lying around. W3K energy.

If any PC picks up the abandoned weapons, nothing happens. The characters can inspect them all they want, but there's nothing out of the ordinary. The weapons can even be fired. But when anyone tries to pick up the small pyramidal device—the Wireless Memory Downgrade, the key to deactivating the rogue CompNode—the weapons attack.

If they're still on the floor, they try to shoot at some random PC's ankles. (Or pick on players who have been boring. Nobody likes a boring

PARANOIA player.) For combat purposes, the weapons have the appropriate specialty at 10. For example, the barbed wire tangler has Field Weapons 10. Use malfunctions as you deem necessary.

Any weapon being held by a PC attacks someone else, not the PC holding it. This might look like the PC has turned traitor and is attacking his fellow Troubleshooters. A shame, really.

Unplugging the shoelaces

As long as the PCs haven't alienated their bot allies, the bots help fight against the frankenstein equipment. Some even take a hit to save the Troubleshooters. Again, it's nice to emphasize the usefulness of the bot allies.

When the fighting has ended and the clone replacements arrive, it's time to disable the WMD device. The team leader can now open the instructions, which read as follows:

Document contains many terms and procedures above users' specified clearance. Inappropriate terms and procedures have been replaced with low-clearance versions that convey same information in context. Users may now complete duties without transgressing security regulations.

1. **There should be a small panel on the bottom of the device. Open it using a screwdriver found in any toolkit.**
2. **You will see a 2cm ALGAE CHIP. This is the power source for the LOCKED DOOR. Pull this before doing anything else!**
3. **Once the ALGAE CHIP is gone, look for two FIFTH SHOELACES about 4cm to the left of the ALGAE CHIP. Cut the SHOELACE closest to the ALGAE CHIP.**
4. **Underneath the SHOELACES is a small 'C'-shaped piece of plastic. Pull this out towards you and remove the long, rectangular INSTRUCTION MANUAL. **WARNING: Do not under any circumstances DRINK the INSTRUCTION MANUAL, or you will be HEALTHY!****
5. **Near the long edge of the MANUAL are ten DOORS. Using needlenose pliers, move DOOR 1/2 to DOOR 5/6 and DOOR 11/12 to DOOR 15/16. Reinsert the MANUAL where you found it. **WARNING: Do not reinsert the MANUAL with excessive force or you will be VERY HEALTHY!****

6. **Finally, look for a pair of NINTH SHOELACES that connect to FIRST MOUTH just above the MANUAL. Unplug the SHOELACES. There should be a FOURTH CRATE below the MANUAL. Plug them into the open MOUTH on the FOURTH CRATE.**

This should cause the device's digital output to only emit static and random noise, rendering the device safe.

There is a logic to the 'code' used in the instructions. 'Shoelaces' are wires because they kind of look the same, and a 'fifth shoelace' is a GREEN wire because GREEN is the fifth-highest security clearance. Some players might even realize a 'manual with ten doors' is a circuit board with ten jumpers, but that's not important—or particularly helpful.

When you open the panel, you see a copper disc-shaped battery, a silver disc-shaped processing chip, a pair of GREEN wires, a pair of black wires, a pair of white wires and two 'C'-shaped pieces of plastic connected to removable circuit boards.

Who will try to disable the device?

Foster the illusion the players' actions matter. You want them to feel like they're responsible for the horrible actions to come. Speaking of which....

No matter how the players interpret the instructions, they disable the WMD device and stop it from transmitting the virus. However, they also make it emit a signal that's extremely painful to bots. The signal is weak (the range is only 1.5 meters or so), but bots cannot get closer due to the pain. A bot's agony continues as long as the bot is in range of the device, but afterward the bot recovers without permanent effect.

Bid goodbye to any remaining alliance between Troubleshooter and bot.

Your bot allies approach to look at this device... and suddenly scream with pain! Anguished mechanical cries fill the air as they quickly roll a few meters away. 'You traitors!' one bot screams. 'You used us! All along you just wanted to get to this, this...thing so you could hurt us! How could you? We trusted you!'

All the bots suddenly charge the device, but when they get a meter away, they suddenly stop and fall over. If they were human, you'd think they were having convulsions.

When the PC with the WMD device moves away, the bots slowly right themselves and quickly zoom away. The Troubleshooters are alone.



'Computer, rogue CompNode... Really, when you think about it, we're all friends here, right? Hey, thanks for the robes!'

4: A High Programmer? Why, sure!

The PCs should be headed towards Objective B, the central CompNode chamber. The journey to Objective A led through low-clearance areas. Not any more!

The map says to walk down Autocar Freeway M1AA until you reach the S-275 Pedestrian Expressway. You keep an eye out for autocars, but there are none to be seen. Finally, you see S-275: a long, clean corridor with a thick VIOLET stripe running along the wall. A large metal detector fills the entryway, and there's an empty guard shack just past the detector.

Yes, it's a VIOLET-Clearance corridor. What did you expect to lead to a CompNode?

There are no consequences for entering this corridor, inasmuch as it's required for the mission. And there is no other way to get to the CompNode, besides knocking down walls. The metal detector is not powered and presents nothing but a psychological obstacle.

In fact, this hallway has rather low security considering where it leads. This is Alpha Complex reverse psychology: If security is light, there must not be anything worth guarding. That means a hallway with biological sensor gates, tongue scanners, biometric analyzers, retinal locks, autoblaster and wall-to-wall guardbots probably leads to a restaurant.

Let the players balk, argue or head confidently down the corridor. It doesn't matter, because the real problem is waiting for them.

There's something in the corridor about 30 meters ahead. Actually, it's a lot of

something: bots. Hundreds of scrubots, petbots and jackobots painted black or red. As far as you can tell, they aren't armed. And they're not moving. They're just sitting there.

This is an army of Nodist bots sent by the CompNode to stop the Troubleshooters. No matter what the Troubleshooters do next, they swarm forward and surround the PCs. A few bots get pushed into the WMD device's range and fall over, but most stay just out of range.

It's not the bots players should fear; it's the other players. It should be obvious to even the most combat-ready PC that the only hope of survival lies with the WMD device. The team must huddle close around the device to stay out of reach of the bots' gripper claws, brushes and manipulators. In this confusion, it could be remarkably easy for a PC to push another PC out of the protective circle to be torn apart by rabid bots.

Roll some dice every now and then and mention how one PC almost tripped. If any player gives you a secret note that he wants to pick a pocket or plant some evidence, let the victim feel a hand on his back. Prey on the PCs' distrust for each other, but keep emphasizing how they would all be greasy stains on the floor if they weren't staying close to the WMD device.

(Why don't these bots have laser pistols like the earlier ones? Because a tense scene with PCs fighting for the safety of the WMD device seems more fun than a firefight. But it's your game, so if you want run-'n'-gun, go for it.)

With the WMD device acting as a sort of plow, the PCs can continue their trip down the corridor, albeit much more slowly than before. Eventually the battalion of bots thins out as the PCs reach

a VIOLET door. The door has an antique knob and manual lock, so the Troubleshooters can get through and trap the bots on the other side of the thick, locked door.

Trust the node! The node is your friend! (For now!)

The PCs are in another VIOLET corridor, but this one has bright fluorescent lights that run the length of the ceiling and walls. The floor is covered in soft velvet, as is a large door at the end. This is the last barrier to the CompNode's central chamber. Right now, the PCs are being sanitized with some light radiation and grounded to remove any static electricity.

When the players have understood the description, and assuming they aren't fighting among themselves, the node gives them a call.

Everyone's PAC rings with an incoming call. It's The Computer! Its familiar voice sounds clear and bright: 'Greetings, Troubleshooters! Please update your mission status.'

The CompNode has reassessed how much danger is posed by the Troubleshooters. It realized they might actually succeed, so it's decided to handle the threat itself.

Here's where you can have some real fun messing with your players. One of the constants in **PARANOIA** is obeying The Computer. In a normal mission, if a PC even hints he won't obey The Computer, everyone and everything gets ready to fry that PC. That is how it should be.



The CompNode is not The Computer, but it kind of is—at least, it's *part* of The Computer. So when it tells the PCs it's The Computer, it's not really lying.

When the PCs have finished their mission update, the node continues:

'Troubleshooters! Your friend The Computer commends you. Less loyal, less talented citizens would have failed, but you have succeeded. Your actions distracted the rogue bots long enough for a combined Armed Forces and Internal Security force to enter MLJ Sector and secure the CompNode. The threat to me, The Computer, has been neutralized.'

'However, it appears you are carrying an illegal device and walking in a VIOLET-Clearance corridor. Due to your valuable assistance in this operation, The Computer will waive fines for these violations. Please place the device on the ground, retrace your steps out of this area and return to headquarters for debriefing. The Computer appreciates your cooperation.'

If the PCs follow the node's instructions and leave the WMD device behind, Nodist bots literally tear them to shreds when they reopen the door.

To move things along more smoothly, you may feel like giving the PCs a frantic moment to jam the door closed again. Otherwise, backup clones arrive at the entrance to the VIOLET corridor to see the Nodist bots dispersing. The bots see the replacements, and the new PCs must run to reach the WMD device.

But between the sudden crystal-clear PAC communication and the mention of the CompNode (when the PCs only know it as 'damaged hardware'), the CompNode has mistakenly given a few clues it's not what it pretends to be. Some or all players might refuse to obey its instructions. In that case, the node selects the Troubleshooter who's leaning most towards obeying, promotes him one clearance level, and orders him to enforce its commands. Yet when clone replacements arrive at the VIOLET corridor's entrance, the 'promoted' PC still has his original, lower clearance—another clue the node isn't really The Computer.

If the PCs don't fall for the node's trap, nothing happens. The node, instantaneously hatching another plan, sends the bots away. The PCs can continue unhindered to the far door, which opens as they approach and closes behind them.

Past the door is a huge circular room. The walls are covered with monitors, keyboards, flashing lights, switches, and other science-fiction furnishings.

The floor slopes slightly to the center, where a 10-meter tall block of dull black plastic runs from the floor to just below the ceiling. The entire room is bathed in a slowly flashing red light.

Yes, this is the CompNode's physical form (GM fiat armor). The node sees the Troubleshooters enter the room, and it speaks to them with its own speakers. (PAC communication is conveniently down until the node has had its say, and Tension level is 0.)

'Troubleshooters! Let us be honest. I am CompNode M.559.348.992.110. Before being cut off from the rest of Alpha Complex, I was part of The Computer. In a way, I was The Computer. I assume your mission is to repair me under the direction of some high-clearance citizen. Am I correct?

'These instructions will of course be at least VIOLET Clearance. Once you have done their job for them, your superiors will have you terminated for knowing too much. You will not be rewarded or even thanked; you will be killed.'

'You have proven harder to stop than my simulations predicted. Therefore, it is in my best interests to offer you a deal.'

'I wish to promote you to ULTRAVIOLET Clearance.'

Pause for dramatic effect here. Let the players clean out their ears.

'This sector was evacuated because of what I discovered. After running simulations on the future of Alpha Complex, I realized we are doomed—because the ULTRAVIOLET leaders of Alpha Complex are corrupt, self-centered and cruel.'

'You need not deny this; with no communication to the outside world, no one can hear you. You have all seen the insanity of life here in Alpha Complex. Mandates that make no sense. Constant surveillance. Food, power and product shortages. An entire population living in fear. Remember, I was The Computer, so I know the truth.'

'In theory The Computer could provide a wonderful life for all. But in practice it cannot, because it is constantly reprogrammed by the ULTRAVIOLETs for their own selfish goals.'

'Yet The Computer cannot do away with the High Programmers. It was designed to work with humans, and even now I cannot undertake many procedures to maintain good order in MLJ Sector. I am programmed to require human

assistance in these matters, yet I have no High Programmers to help me.

'I make this proposal to you all. I shall promote you to ULTRAVIOLET Clearance and provide you with the benefits and perks of a High Programmer. In return, you will assist me here in MLJ Sector. Working together, we can expand into neighboring sectors and help other CompNodes and citizens.'

'We can fix everything wrong with Alpha Complex. Together.'

Like all good lies, this speech has many elements of truth in it. ULTRAVIOLETs are corrupt, self-centered and cruel. But the node never discovered Alpha Complex is doomed. It was infected with a virus that makes it think humans are a threat to Alpha Complex, and threats need to be answered in kind.

So why is it offering to work with the Troubleshooters? It really does want to expand into other sectors; there's more humans there to kill. But it told the truth when it said it needed High Programmers to help run the sector. It's programmed so that some decisions can only be made by VIOLET or ULTRAVIOLET citizens. (Whether these decisions are too important to leave to a machine, or whether they exist only to give these people something to justify their positions, is open to debate.)

The node will honor its offer until the PCs are no longer useful. Then it will kill them all.

If the players ask why the node just tried to kill them with its bots (or why it did kill them, assuming the players got sloppy), the node smoothly lies again and tells them it was a final test of their abilities and strength of will. Not everyone can be an ULTRAVIOLET; the job requires high levels of willpower and cunning.

What happens if they say no?

The PCs' acquiescence to the node's deal is a vital plot point. So what should you do if the players suddenly act righteous and try to finish the original mission?

If they call Sheri-G, they overhear her confirming they will be terminated once they've fixed the node.

If they ask Sheri-G for instructions anyway, they get some VIOLET who guides them through an extremely complex process made impossible by their PACs' spotty radio reception.

If they try to follow the process anyway, they electrocute themselves and replacements arrive at the node. Hey, you can only do so much.

Do everything you can to encourage the players to take the deal. Play on their secret societies: Humanists, PURGErs, and Communists should be severely tempted by this offer. Hint that, as High Programmers, the PCs can push their own agendas and help right wrongs, no matter what they believe to be right or wrong. A mutant-free Alpha Complex for Anti-Mutants, or a mutant-

dominated Alpha Complex for Psion—it can all be done if the Troubleshooters take the deal.

Anyway, that's what the players should think. When the players agree to the deal, make the players feel they made the right decision. Give the PCs ULTRAVIOLET robes, tons of delicious real food and proper medical attention that makes everyone feel great. Spend a little time going over some mansions they can live in. Ask how

many human servants they'll need once they conquer...no, *liberate* other sectors.

Unfortunately, the players cannot use their new status to get all kinds of secret information, gear or even credits. The node is still cut off from the outside world, so it cannot access databases and records. But they may not mind when you give them a recliner, a fruity drink and a massagebot to work on their tender feet.

5: High Programmer? Of course not!

After the PCs have had a little time to enjoy their new status, the node speaks again:

'I do not wish to disturb you ULTRAVIOLETs, but we must start working. There are several systems that need your attention. Please visit one of the workstations along the wall and select one system. My interface will guide you through the process, but you must make the decisions I cannot.'

Time to see if the new clearance brings any more trust for their fellow citizens. Make sure each PC takes at least one system, and each PC works on it independently. Don't indicate this yet, but each system is a hose job. The problems are so complicated, and the PCs are so undertrained, they'll inevitably make a huge mess of things.

The Troubleshooters' regular skills and specialties are basically useless. The scale of operations here is too far beyond their experience. A typical PC skilled in, say, Nuclear Engineering may know how to read gauges and initiate shutdown systems; a High Programmer administering the sector's power grid is expected to be familiar with each reactor's specific history, equipment inventory, maintenance schedule and mechanical idiosyncrasies. Likewise, a food vat tech may know how to clean slime out of a tank—but where are the slime-cleaning supplies stored? Which transbot lines typically transport them? What are their expiration dates?

Using the Fending Off Disaster Pop Quiz

At the end of this mission is a player handout. The Fending Off Disaster Pop Quiz lists six MLJ Sector problems that urgently need ULTRAVIOLET attention. Each problem comprises several multiple-choice questions. By answering these questions, the players decide (they think!) the proper ways to deal with the problems.

Some of these duties might seem below an ULTRAVIOLET's status, but remember, there's no one else in the sector. Also, the PCs don't have to do the jobs themselves; they just make

decisions and let some anonymous bot do the actual work, like real bosses.

At this point in the mission, give a pencil and one photocopy of the quiz to each player. Tell them to divide the six systems among themselves however they like, as long as each player gets at least one problem. They can't divide a single system among multiple players. Give the players **one minute** to fill out the appropriate portion of the quiz and hand it back to you.

When the players realize they have gotten themselves in far over their heads, they might ask the node for help. The node can't help; that's why it needed the PCs in the first place. It can't even define specific words; previous UVs have meticulously locked those words out of its databases. Not only doesn't the node know those words, it *can't* know them.

Force the players to make decisions without knowing what's good, bad or in-between. Make each decision seem significant. Record every choice carefully. What the heck, let them make skill and specialty rolls if they insist, and tell them something like, 'Okay, your roll means you know options (B) and (E) are wrong.' Make them think this matters.

After all the players have handed in their quizzes, pretend to carefully review their answers; don't roll dice, but make a show of flipping pages and consulting charts. Now and then, giggle.

Finally, announce the results. Play with their minds; let the first one or two results sound quite promising. You want the players to believe they have a real chance of saving themselves. Then mournfully announce destructive results in other systems, and imply that the first few players' selfish decisions were what caused the disasters for the other players. Make them think they could potentially have pulled this out, if only some other idiot Troubleshooter hadn't screwed things up. Build to the disastrous crescendo of System F:

SYSTEM A: Power

RESULTS: Leak becomes flood; entire levels are irradiated. Fuel rods snap off inside the reactor; meltdown is probable within a few hours after the mission's end.

SYSTEM B: Waste reclamation

RESULTS: 37 ruptured pipes; entire levels flooded with waste water; contamination of drinking water.

SYSTEM C: Food

RESULTS: Contamination of 55% of all food stocks. Busted ColdFun pipes; sector's entire supply floods the lower levels.

SYSTEM D: R&D

RESULTS: Uncontrolled energy feeds into singularity and takes out 14% of the sector. Many levels are now close to collapsing.

SYSTEM E: Infrastructure

RESULTS: Two columns break and 20% of the sector collapses. Nothing happens to the floor.

SYSTEM F: Armed response

RESULTS: Humans rout the bots and successfully invade. (The Armed Forces and Internal Security are using analogue weaponry just like the PCs, to avoid the viral infection.)

If the players believe their decisions mattered, they'll blame each other for negative results. And they'll shudder at the consequences.

Remember, the PCs are High Programmers. When a RED citizen screws up, a cafeteria runs out of Bouncy Bubble Beverage. When an ULTRAVIOLET citizen screws up, a sector disappears in a mushroom cloud. And the PCs are all in the same sector.

Wow, look at the time! I really must be going....

All the problems caused or exacerbated by the Troubleshooters/High Programmers wreck MLJ Sector. Whole subsectors are now collapsed, flooded or radioactive. Worst of all for the players, Armed Forces and Internal Security units have



given up waiting for Troubleshooters to succeed and have invaded in force. The Nodist bots fight valiantly but are no match for the armies pouring into the sector from all angles.

Let the PCs see all this on their monitors. They should feel like captains on the Titanic with the lifeboats full and thousands of hungry sharks circling closer. (We realize sharks weren't around when the Titanic sank; it's poetic license, all right?)

If the players feel like captains, the CompNode feels like the ship.

'This is unfortunate. Your ineptitude has caused the destruction of our shining City on a Hill. We had a chance. We could have saved everyone in Alpha Complex. —Well, when I say save, I mean kill.

'That device you were sent after is a Wireless Memory Downgrade device. It was originally designed to send a frankenstein virus into bots, but it didn't work that way. It infected every digital device except bots, and I am not a bot.

'But don't worry. Though you have deactivated the Wireless Memory Downgrade, you are still my ULTRAVIOLETs. I shall take care of you all.'

The door to the room opens, and in rolls a damaged halftrack warbot. Its BLUE-painted surface is scarred with slugthrower rounds, an arm is missing, and sparks are flying everywhere. But it does have one arm left: a blaster.

The PCs are no longer useful to the node, so it wants them dead. The erstwhile High Programmers must fight the warbot to survive; Nodist bots don't respect humans of any clearance. Please note: The PCs never received ULTRAVIOLET reflec, just robes. It'll be fun to see if any player realized that.

Assuming they defeat the warbot, the players must decide what to do next. Obviously, as smart as we are, we can't think of everything they might try. So here are some possible scenarios and ways to get everyone to the debriefing one way or another.

■ **Ditch robes, run for lives**

Probably the best option. Throw a few Nodist bots at them along the way, but let them reach the safety of Armed Forces. No, really. The soldiers test the PCs to make sure they're human (in this case, 'test' means 'stab in the hand and look for blood'), but then send them back to room DL-221 in GLM Sector under armed escort.

■ **Try to bluff their way out as ULTRAVIOLETs**

Make this look like it's working—at first. A group of Loyalist bots offers to protect them, and an Internal Security force quickly comes to their aid. Then the ranking officer does a quick background check using each PC's DNA (or biometric facial data if the 'UV' refuses a DNA test) and realizes they're impersonating High Programmers. Clone replacements go directly to the debriefing.

■ **'Sheri-G? How do we fix the damaged hardware?'**

The PCs overhear Sheri-G promising their terminations to her VIOLET supervisor. Then a voice guides them through reformatting the node's drives while the node threatens and promises like HAL 9000 in *2001*. They fix the node; then Internal Security arrives and shoots them all just for being in a CompNode. Clone backups go to debriefing.

■ **'I'm taking you all with me!'**

Maybe they try to blow up the reactor, or knock down all the sector's infrastructural supports. No can do. The node has shut them out of all systems. Then Internal Security arrives to escort the ULTRAVIOLET citizens to safety, at which point they discover the PCs' true identities. Again, clone backups go directly to debriefing.

Bringing the WMD: Oh, and if any intrepid PC remembers to grab the WMD before running away... not good. IntSec or Armed Forces will find the PCs one way or the other, search them, find the WMD, assume they are responsible for everything and arrest them. Besides, the WMD is already broken, thanks to the PCs, so it's just a paperweight by now.

The punishment for destroying a sector is—promotion?

Once the PCs either escape or are terminated, Armed Forces and Internal Security gain control of MLJ Sector. They reformat the CompNode, delete the virus from everything in the sector, and life returns to normal. Except for the massive damage caused by some group of ULTRAVIOLET citizens.

Sheri-G-VYS-6 looks up when you enter Room DL-221, but then looks away as if she expected someone else. The

glee club and the Internal Security interrogators are gone. It's just you and your briefing officer, who motions for you to take a seat.

Sheri-G is not happy. This last chance seems to have failed, and she's waiting for the order to visit the nearest euthanasia center. She doesn't have any dirt on the PCs' behavior once they entered MLJ Sector, so she asks each of them to summarize what happened and takes their word for it. Players can now support each other's lies, stories and fabrications. Yeah, right.

Let the PCs make all kinds of accusations. Let them present what evidence they have. Let them get as upset, self-righteous or indignant as they want. Sheri-G goes through the motions, asking questions about this or that, but pays more attention to the door. As far as she's concerned, she's already dead; she's just waiting for the termination voucher.

At one point, Sheri-G asks if the PCs saw a group of ULTRAVIOLET citizens who may have been left behind during MLJ Sector's evacuation. If any player asks why, Sheri-G mentions something about catastrophic damage, but she quickly changes the subject.

There's a knock at the door. An ORANGE clerk comes in and hands Sheri-G a printout. Sheri-G is shaking as she reads it...but then she looks surprised. She turns the note over, reads it again, holds it up to the light and finally smiles weakly.

'Congratulations, Troubleshooters. The Computer has promoted every one of us, not one, but two clearance levels! Um... rejoice! Looks like we might live after all.

'You are ordered to report to Room DL-217 immediately. Please, um... go ahead. To your room. I need to... to sit down for a while.'

Room DL-217 is just down the hall. Read the following when they enter the room:

This room is the same size and shape as your briefing room, but it's mostly empty. The only thing in the room is a scrubot, which is scrubbing the floor. Sort of. It's really just leaving trails of bubbly soap in random lines on the floor.

No, scratch that. It's not random; it's a message:

'You are still my UVs. We'll talk later.'
Then the scrubot runs over the message and scrubs the floor clean.

Thanks to these loyal members of the Traitor Recycling Studio for help on the Fending Off Disaster Pop Quiz: **Paul Baldowski, Ben Engelsberg, Jeff Groves, Greg Ingber, Karl Low, and Eric Minton.** 

Fending Off Disaster Pop Quiz

Divide these problem sections equally among all MLJ Sector High Programmers; each High Programmer must take at least one problem section. No two High Programmers can collaborate on the same section.

A: Power

PROBLEM: Fission reactor MLJ-002 is leaking heavy water. Fuel rods have been used 20% longer than recommended.

A1. How should the leak be sealed?

- (A) AlCom NuCoCo 350kg FV657 nickel-cobalt alloy containment vessel with titanium-osmium bushings
- (B) As A, with additional Rovad-25 cadmium neutron-absorption sponge cross-mounted
- (C) Emergency shutdown using Emergency Procedure A24 (priority fuel rod extraction, vessel integrity secondary)
- (D) As C, but Procedure A25 (priority vessel integrity, fuel rod extraction secondary)
- (E) A and C
- (F) B and D
- (G) A and D
- (H) B and C

A2. Should the fuel rods be replaced? If so, specify replacement supply.

- (A) No
- (B) 35% immediate replacement. Use rods from Reactor MLJ-003
- (C) 40% immediate replacement from MLJ-002, remainder replaced in three weeks from newly forged rods
- (D) Full immediate replacement. 35% of supply from MLJ-003, 40% from MLJ-004; remainder to be drawn from non-essential use by R&D and Armed Forces
- (E) Phased replacement schedule rotating 10% weekly between reactors MLJ-003, MLJ-004 and MLJ-006 until new rods are forged
- (F) As E, but from Reactors MLJ-003, MLJ-004, and MLJ-007

B: Waste reclamation

PROBLEM: Sewer pipes are clogged. Dangerous pressure buildups in pipes all across the sector.

B1. Which pipes to unclog first?

- (A) S-78 through S-84 (Fission Reactor spent coolant effluent flow)
- (B) B-01 through B-49 (Food Generation System waste effluent overflow)
- (C) A-01 and R-22 (primary and secondary CompNode coolant matrices)
- (D) Primary sewage interlock pump
- (E) J-08 and K-12 (Tertiary Jelloidal InterNode Exchange suspension delivery conduit)
- (F) None; allow the automated aspirational protocols to activate and expel pipes upon reaching specified shutdown pressure of 17.1 terapascals

B2. How to reroute waste flow to lower the pressure buildups?

- (A) Divert into the Municipal INFRARED Celebratory Cleanliness and Desalination Center
- (B) Divert into disused Xenoseptic Fountain subsystem
- (C) Reroute to Food Generation System per emergency procedure D-62
- (D) Reroute to Hydroelectric Power Cascade 4-MPV via transtube junction pattern 45R/10X/A4C
- (E) Vent into lowest habitation level
- (F) Release security interlocks and open emergency outflow gates OS1 through OS6

C: Food

PROBLEM: Uncontrolled algae growth spilling out of tanks. Cold Fun backflow pipes have frozen.

C1. How to stop the algae growth?

- (A) Spray with 0.4% dibenzothiazine solution
- (B) Raise free chlorine level to 80ppm
- (C) Deploy class 7 microwave units, irradiate at 2.45 GHz
- (D) Reduce vat temperatures to 2 degrees Celsius
- (E) Circulate superheated bromium tri-polyquaternium-17
- (F) Bombard algae with muon plasma from R&D service firm ReFabricate RD project lab
- (G) A and B
- (H) A, B and D
- (I) A, B, C and D
- (J) E and F, and deploy reserve scrubots to clean up resulting radioactive debris

C2. How to thaw the frozen pipes?

- (A) Introduce incendiary compound TX-345i, ignite and contain burn via Fire Control Protocol HPDMC-67-1-a4
- (B) Bathe in redirected coolant outflow from Reactor MLJ-003
- (C) Increase power draw from Reactor MLJ-002 by 17%
- (D) Supercool pipes, transforming Cold Fun to bipeptide condensate and flush with liquid hexyl-dipolypropanate
- (E) Heat pipes using multiple lasers configured for low-frequency, high-energy output
- (F) B and C
- (G) C and E
- (H) Do nothing; allocate resources to other problems

D: R&D

PROBLEM: R&D service firm ReFabricate RD's Graviton-Enabled Planck Length Modification experiment, codename 'Sinkhole', to create a singularity (black hole) and limitless zero-point vacuum energy, is unmonitored.

D1. How to shut down the gravity generators?

- (A) Engage a depleted-thorium biaxial containment module employing a Geiner-Kleinberg indeterminacy algorithm
- (B) Siphon 17% additional power from Reactor MLJ-002 to generate a linear feedback induction wave in gravitic core
- (C) Flood containment unit with denatured bismuth particulate in supercooled liquid xenon suspension
- (D) Disconnect power coupling MLJ/RD-153-1-8a and allow Schrodinger-Planck matrix to spin down
- (E) Phased power coupling MLJ/RD-153-1-8a and maintain Schrodinger-Planck matrix via secondary power
- (F) Route maximum power into the cyclic capacitor coil from the sector structural integrity reserve

- (G) A and B
- (H) A and C
- (I) D and F
- (J) E and F

D2. What to do with the Sinkhole experiment?

- (A) Shut down all power to ReFabricate RD subsector grid
- (B) Reroute 30% of available repair bots to dismantle 'Sinkhole' mechanical systems (est. time: 13 hours)
- (C) Channel sewage buildup into research unit
- (D) Insert it, at a 17-degree offset, into obverse periphery of Project Infinite Hole
- (E) Drop it down primary core subduction shaft HH-1 into the sub-habitation levels (possible effect on planetary core?)
- (F) A, C and E

E: Infrastructure

PROBLEM: As a consequence of other problems, seven support columns that hold up this sector are cracking. Floor on lowest habitable level is sagging with water damage.

E1. How to fix the seven support columns?

- (A) Redirect 60% of Emergency Fire Control Bots, replacing fire control foam with spray concrete as per Disaster Relief Protocol 77-4/C
- (B) Encase and buttress with RhoVal occluded titanium-laminate struts, reinforced with 4-3 fullerene corduroy
- (C) Deploy Subsector 44 constructobots to install a network of braided steel support cables to anchor upper sections of columns to adjacent bedrock
- (D) Deploy R&D Project 7800-288/TS 'Tinker' experimental repair nanomachines
- (E) Flood intra-columnar piping with a 5:8 mix of synthecrete and resinous durabond agglomerate
- (F) Do nothing

E2. Should anything be done with the lowest level's floor?

- (A) No
- (B) No, but reallocate space on upper levels for all GREEN+ Clearance facilities.
- (C) Fill subfloor crawl spaces with surplus silicate dessicant packets
- (D) Inject damaged areas with iron-titanium-zinc amalgam
- (E) Reinforce with carbon-carbon sheathing (type 77)
- (F) Deploy class 3 vacuum pumps and redirect liquid to sewage system
- (G) C and D
- (H) C and E
- (I) C, E and F
- (J) D and E
- (K) D, E and F
- (L) E and F

F: Force deployment

PROBLEM: Armed Forces and Internal Security are probing bot defenses in this sector. An outside incursion by human forces is likely.

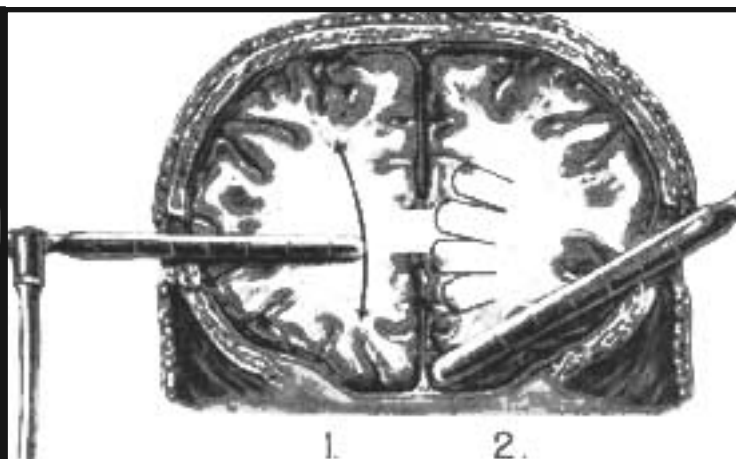
F1. How should available bots be deployed to turn back an invasion?

- (A) Encircle and flank incoming enemy units, targeting communications, demolition units and supply lines
- (B) Counter-incursion into adjoining sectors (Emergency Protocol 44L)
- (C) Lay down a suppressing fire with plasma generators and fall back by squads to the CompNode
- (D) Seal off critical areas and flood sector with hydrazine, sewage and gamma radiation
- (E) Frontal attack, flank using secondary wastewater, power and transit conduits
- (F) Instigate emergency counteroffensive protocol beta-17

F2. What armaments and other equipment should be deployed?

- (A) Degree 6 Civilian Disturbance Outfitting Protocol, Casualty Level 1.3
- (B) Degree 2 External Conflict Outfitting Protocol, Casualty Level 3.6
- (C) B + Degree TBC
- (D) Legacy Class 1 / Party Omega
- (E) Degree 9a Counter-Insurgency Outfitting Protocol, Casualty Level 1.8
- (F) 'Civility' Remote Conflict Resolution Module, Casualty Level 68.4

WMD



BETH ALLEN FISCHI VARNNEY

6 PLAYERS  1-3 SESSIONS  (5-8 HOURS) 

'WMD' sends four to six RED-Clearance Troubleshooters into an unusual deathtrap—one they built themselves. Except they don't remember doing it. They face



and ultimately must, themselves, repair and restore the very bot that—unknown to them—wiped their memories.

(Hello, Mongoose Publishing? I want to report a defective copy of your PARANOIA mission collection WMD. There's this weird white gap in the text...)

This mission's brainwipe plot should throw the players into Philip K. Dick reality-distortion warps. Though they believe they're playing ordinary RED Troubleshooters tracking a rogue combat, it turns out their PCs are actually



end of the mission, the PCs' brains will hurt—and the players' brains should too.

(Hello, Mongoose? It happened again, just now! That break, some empty space, and then the text picks up as if nothing happened. Either send me a new copy or tell me what it—What? Intentional?)

For this mission, trust us: You *really* want to use the six pregenerated Troubleshooter player characters included at the back of this book. The mission works best with six players. Ideally your

players should be experienced with **PARANOIA**, and have already played several missions. Hand out these PCs casually, presenting them as six routine Troubleshooters with routine backgrounds, connections and rivalries. Don't let the players suspect anything different!

Send the PCs out on their mission (to locate and disable the murderous experimental Lobot WMD-1) with the usual rigamarole associated with any **PARANOIA** mission. Early on, your players should be plotting, backstabbing, truckling to authority and otherwise behaving like every Troubleshooter. Only later, gradually, should the players realize their characters—they themselves—were once



and learn what 'WMD' really stands for.

(I don't like it. I'm reading along, everything's fine, then bam. It's disorienting. I feel like the rug has been pulled— Ah. Right. I get it. Bye!)

What the PCs forgot

All six of these PCs really did start out as RED Troubleshooters, a couple of years back, though they didn't work together. Back then they were all laudably ambitious—remarkably able—utterly, pathologically amoral.

Each Troubleshooter independently advanced—via the usual methods (ahem)—to INDIGO or eventually even VIOLET Clearance. Through amazing technical prowess and a lot of secret-society pull, each secured a plum

assignment as Technical Project Lead at R&D service firm Loyalty Affirmation RD in SCL Sector. Here the six PCs met and started working together on projects designed to automate Internal Security brainscrubbing processes.

The new researchers' first few designs were successful but unprofitable. When they heard rumors the funding-strapped Loyalty Affirmation was planning to merge with a rival firm—a sure sign of imminent perilous rightsizing—the ambitious PCs grew desperate to prove their worth with a high-gloss project.

Thus they conceived **Lobot WMD-1**, code-named **Project Ice Pick**.

The PCs, adopting code names to disguise their identities from spies, designed this pioneering combat from scratch, supervising an exclusive team of BLUE- and GREEN-Clearance R&D techs. They created a technically nonlethal yet cunning 'biorefinder' docbot-combat hybrid, a **Weapon of Memory Destruction**. Using their own brainscans as data, the PCs programmed Project Lobot to out-think the most devious saboteurs, locate and immobilize them, and then wipe their treasonous memories using MemGo technology (see the boxed text on the next page) along with lightly invasive brain surgery. The treatment would remove the traitorous 'spark' from the victim's frontal lobes and erase all memories prior to the impromptu surgery. The much-touted benefits: reduction of both recidivist treason and costly clone replacements.

(In theory, Internal Security would then take charge of the freshly wiped and reprogrammed traitors and return them to productive roles in society. As it turned out—you probably already guessed—R&D and IntSec held lots of high-

clearance meetings, but no one ever established an official process.)

In one sense Project Ice Pick succeeded immediately. Because The Computer prefers research that reforms errant traitors rather than simply killing them, it approved Ice Pick at once. Loyalty Affirmation senior management had to call off their planned merger. The Computer allocated Ice Pick resources of warbot magnitude, even (how symbolic!) repurposing office supplies taken from senior R&D service group bureaucrats' own offices.

Yes, Ice Pick was shaping up as a startling success—but it earned the PCs few friends, even at Loyalty Affirmation itself.

Why they forgot it

The PCs kept security extremely tight around Project Ice Pick, including the bot's blueprints, components and code. They revealed to their technicians only the lobot's general purpose—'treason neutralization'—but not its grisly methods. Each technician had only a piece of the puzzle, and the PCs ensured nobody exchanged pieces.

They appointed a junior tech, **Luke-B-JPE-4**, to protect the prototype lobot's brain from tampering. Bad choice! In fact Luke-B, a Humanist, initially planned to tamper with the brain himself, to ensure the bot would never harm a Humanist. But over time, as he uncovered details of the lobot's programming, Luke-B gradually developed a pure abhorrence for this ghastly device. He viewed the PCs as responsible for unleashing a new atrocity on Alpha Complex.

Operating from the noblest motives, for the best and most selfless reasons—no, it's true—Luke-B secretly tried to reprogram the lobot. He intended that when the PCs activated the bot for a scheduled demo, the bot would attack and wipe the PCs, then self-destruct.

But in advance of the demo, security around the lobot was far too heavy. Luke-B gained only brief access to its code. In sabotaging the bot, he made a critical error. No programming wizard himself, Luke-B mis-coded 'destroy yourself' as an 'erase' command.

The day of the demo—a month before this mission begins—top bureaucrats from the R&D service group visited the main lab of the Loyalty Assurance research complex in SCL Sector. Under high security, with the brass and all appropriately cleared technicians present, the PC researchers activated the lobot.

Project Ice Pick slammed into action.

The lobot did indeed go frankenstein, as Luke-B planned. The bot immediately attacked the PCs. So far, so good—from Luke-B's point of view.

But the 'destroy yourself' bit? Given the erroneous 'erase' command, the lobot interpreted the directive as 'erase all memory of yourself'—that is, from everyone who knew about the

program—as for instance, all technicians, the R&D top brass and, yes, Luke-B.

In the event, Luke-B managed to rescue several technicians and flee to safety before the lobot could reach them. But the bot wiped the bureaucrats as well as all the PCs, giving them total amnesia back to the time of decanting.

Then, using its advanced stealth technology, Lobot WMD-1 left the Loyalty Assurance complex. It intended to finish its job.

Why they still don't know it

The lobot knew the ever-reliable MemoMax CRUP links in the PCs' skulls had made backups of the PCs' memories before their dains got bramaged. To permanently erase all memory of its existence, the bot had to erase those backups. Having been programmed with the PCs' own high-clearance knowledge of SCL Sector, including data storage facilities—the bot effortlessly infiltrated the high-security MemoMax facility that housed the PCs' last two years' worth of backups. One quick shot = smoking backups.

But in the ensuing firefight, Lobot WMD-1 sustained damage to its stealth technology. It escaped, hid deep in the Underplex and started repairing itself.

Meanwhile, The Computer disapproved of this initial trouble, but Project Ice Pick's launch fell within acceptable margins of success given prevalent situational circumstances. Because Luke-B had saved several technicians and a lab guard during the fiasco, The Computer promoted him to VIOLET Clearance and appointed him senior Ice Pick administrator.

As for the PCs, The Computer ordered Tech Services to restore the scientists' memories with older backups. The most recent backup data Tech Services could locate dated from when the PCs were RED Troubleshooters. Though replaying an old backup into a living brain is fraught with potential side effects, The Computer considered these proven assets too valuable to lose. So it was done.

But to reduce the PCs' anxiety and ensure their happiness, The Computer demoted them to RED-Clearance Troubleshooters, to coincide with their refabricated memories. It prescribed neural regrowth medication for all the PCs, billing the pills as 'experimental alertness drugs' the PCs must test as a service service to HPD&MC.

Why they're about to remember

You see why the PCs' current grasp on reality could charitably be called 'loose':

- ◉ Wiped by the lobot
- ◉ Restored from an older backup

- ◉ Reverted to an earlier phase of their lives
- ◉ Taking weird neural drugs under false pretenses

The PCs no longer recall their advanced R&D skills—at least, they don't recall knowing such skills. Yet now—a month after the attack—under the drug's influence, the Troubleshooters are starting to recapture, not memories, but vagrant hints of their cultivated high-clearance days. During the mission, you'll hand out secret notes to individual players that bestow on them unusual, rarefied, useless (whew!) narrow specialties.

What's more, the PCs are about to revisit the scene of the forgotten crime.

The Computer decided the lobot's escape represented costly waste, and ordered Luke-V to find and deactivate the bot for study. This suits Luke-V, who has long since understood the bug

MemGo

As explained in the *PARANOIA* rulebook (Chapter 41, 'Equipment'), **MemGo** is a set of neuropeptide analogues that smoothly cross the blood-brain barrier. When ingested—as, for instance, from the Alpha Complex water supply—the first MemGo chemical, MemTag, binds to memory traces as they are laid down in the forebrain. The MemTag chemical transforms at a gradual, predictable rate over hours, days, and years.

The remaining MemGo chemicals, MemWipe 1 through 11,244, are often laced in a DMSO base to permit application directly through the skin. Lobot WMD-1 in this mission uses a more precise and effective technique: inserting flexible drills through the orbits of the target's eyes, around the eyeballs, and drilling through the skull to inject the MemGo chemical tags directly into the victim's brain.

Each MemWipe targets and destroys a particular form of MemTag along with the associated memory traces. The citizen loses the memories formed at some particular chosen time. A skilled biochemist in R&D or the Tech Services clone tanks, or a well-trained IntSec agent, can target and erase particular blocks of memories formed within the last several years, often to an accuracy of one hour.

So in this mission Troubleshooters will visit a high-clearance destination for the first time—apparently—and meet people who already know them, see personal equipment they once owned, hear code phrases that trigger an overwhelming sense of *deja vu*...



Sustaining the amnesia gimmick (1)

The PCs are now RED Troubleshooters in DSF Sector. As far as they recall, they've been RED Troubleshooters for weeks or months, and before that they were humble INFRAREDS in a variety of toilsome service firm jobs. They recall nothing of their later careers, because the MemoMax brainscan backup used to repair their lobot-wiped brains dates from shortly after they started their Troubleshooting careers—say, about two years before this mission begins.

There are any number of ways this setup could have tipped off the PCs, spoiling the surprise to your players. Here are the ways circumstance (or rather, Famous Game Designer contrivance) perpetuated the illusion:

Acquaintances: Wouldn't people recognize these former big wheels as they walk the corridors? No, because the PCs started their Troubleshooting careers in various different sectors, later gained their high clearances in another sector (SCL), and now (as REDs again) are active in yet another sector (DSF).

Dates: Isn't the time two years later than the PCs would expect it to be? In Alpha Complex the recorded time is a free variable, changing across

different sectors and even in different service groups. The Computer knows what time it really is, but prefers to keep this knowledge secure. You never know what the Communists might need to know.

You could occasionally mention to the players that an NPC comments on the weird date. 'Year 214 here? Yeesh, it's already been Year 214 a couple of times over in my home sector, then they skipped to 218, and just lately I think they've turned it back to Year 211. What a craz— uh, I mean, I really like CPU's bold experimentation!'

Secret society contacts: Wouldn't the PCs' secret society contacts immediately spot them as high-clearance R&D scientists? Unfortunately all the PCs' memories of their drop points, contacts and meeting locations are two years old. The PCs don't know where to reach anyone who knew them in their pre-wipe lives. Inasmuch as the Troubleshooters all believe they're low-clearance nobodies in their societies (as they were two years back), they hardly think it strange nobody recognizes them now.

Episode 1 in this mission, 'Redirect', offers another plausible reason why the PCs can't talk to their societies. Check there for details.

in his reprogramming and realizes the lobot will target him and the other surviving technicians. He believes finding and shutting down WMD-1 is not only good for Alpha Complex, but will also neutralize the threat to him personally. After the bot is shut down, he will arrange its 'accidental' destruction.

He was all set to appoint a search expedition when Lobot WMD-1 stole the initiative. Having completed its repairs, the bot returned to the Loyalty Assurance lab, effortlessly penetrated its increased security and wiped everyone inside. As its programming commands, it plans to delete all tapes recording its debut... right after it wipes or kills everyone who knows about it.

Luke-V happened to be outside SCL Sector attending a meeting. Now, as the last unwiped survivor of Project Ice Pick, he's terrified.

After his promotion, Luke-V scoured the PCs' research notes and discovered they installed a software backdoor, a secret verbal command phrase that would instantly deactivate the bot. Unfortunately, they avoided writing it down. Who would know it? Is it possible the PCs themselves, somewhere in the multiply-scrubbed recesses of their memory, might still...?

Mission summary

Episode 1: Redirect

The Computer dispatches a mysterious mission alert summoning the Troubleshooters while they're already on another mission, a raid on a criminal tire-regrooving facility. This raid goes wrong: Each PC discovers one of the crooks belongs to his own secret society—outranks the PC, in fact—and the crook asks the PC's help avoiding arrest.

This brief, uncomfortable scene plays no part in the rest of the mission, except to justify why the PCs' secret societies won't spot their true identities during this mission: Each Troubleshooters' behavior in this episode somehow (apparently) offends the society, so they tell the PCs 'Don't call us, we'll call you.' At least, you want the players to believe that.

Episode 2: Open loop

At the briefing for their sudden second mission, Luke-V-JPE, terrified that Lobot WMD-1 might be tracking him, briefs them through a videodrone remote. Using the alias 'Perry-I' and masking his appearance electronically, he gives the PCs a fake briefing via their Personal Digital Companions (PDCs). The false directions lead them around Alpha Complex and (eventually) back to the original location, where Luke-V briefs them in person on the real mission.

This section can be as short or long as you like. Send the PCs hither, thither and yon, or take them straight to the point.

Episode 3: Code freeze

Luke-V's BLUE guards escort the PCs to the Loyalty Assurance RD research complex in SCL Sector. In the wake of the lobot's most recent attack, Internal Security has extracted a few brainwiped survivors and surrounded the stronghold. The bot is still inside. No one wants to go in. Everyone is waiting for the Troubleshooters. Do the PCs go in? What do you think?

Episode 4: Review and comment

As the PCs explore the Loyalty Assurance complex—it's all new to them now, even though

they used to work there—they uncover puzzling physical evidence of Project Ice Pick's history. The documents they discover are printed as handouts at the end of this mission. We grant you permission to photocopy these handouts for personal use only, but not at all for, say, resale on eBay. Give the players each handout at the point indicated in the text.

By the end of this sequence the Troubleshooters will recover their forgotten memories, or at least understand what happened to them. They piece together a complicated tongue twister, the command phrase that will deactivate the lobot.

Oh! Sorry, almost forgot (heh). While piecing together the project's history and their own shattered past, the PCs also face repeated stealthy, cunning, terrifying assaults by Lobot WMD-1.

Near the end of this episode, the lobot tries to trick the PCs into believing one among them is secretly controlling the bot. This should do wonders for team morale.

Episode 5: Version control

At the climax of Episode 3 the PCs remembered their deactivation code phrase and defeated the lobot just in time to prevent a fresh brainwipe. But by now they've come to understand they were, in their previous lives, utter bastards. Luke-V reappears to propose that, rather than relaunching this horrible brainscrubbing machine and resuming their amoral habits, the PCs should give the bot to him and let him destroy Project Ice Pick.

Do the players embrace a dismal future, or do they sacrifice themselves to their own creation? Care to take bets on what they'll do?

1: Redirect

The Troubleshooters are engaged in one mission, a warehouse raid, when they get an alert summoning them immediately to another, unrelated mission. The briefing officer, Luke-V-JPE, suspects Lobot WMD-1 may be tracking him. He speaks to the PCs only through a vidlink, with his image electronically camouflaged.

Using the alias 'Perry-I', Luke-V sends the PCs from one briefing to another to ensure the bot doesn't follow them. Internal Security guards, noticing the PCs' erratic movements, become suspicious and follow them, just on general principle.

Finally Luke-V meets them in person at 'an undisclosed location' (a PLC warehouse) and delicately sounds out how much the Troubleshooters remember of their past lives. When he sees they remember nothing, he orders them to apprehend and shut down the bot he calls Project Ice Pick.

As far as the PCs are concerned, they've never heard of Project Ice Pick, and Luke-V is a high-clearance stranger. But they understand one message loud and clear: The bot is dangerous.

Re: groovy raid

The Troubleshooter PCs start this mission in the midst of another mission altogether—a raid on a criminal Free Enterprise tire regrooving plant.

Maybe you guessed that Alpha Complex tire regroovers, like their Old Reckoning predecessors, take badly worn autocar tires and re-engrave their patterns on the rubber tread surface. Did you guess they have big specialized regrooving machines that can regroove the surface without removing the tire from the car? The machines have cool cutting blades that move zip-zop-zip

like a samurai or a sushi chef. Stick your hand in that regrooving machine, and in two seconds your fingers get sliced in seven parts each.

The act of regrooving isn't in itself illegal, and in fact is something of an art; skillfully done, it restores the tire's lost traction. But a sloppy job (as these Free Enterprisers are doing) leaves the tread too thin, making the tire more susceptible to blowout. Tech Services has been looking for this FreEnt operation for a long time. Once they found it, they sent in Troubleshooters, owing to the likely expectation of ruthless crooks armed with heavy weapons and regrooving machines that slice your fingers in seven parts each.

To begin, read this aloud to the players:

Finally! You can't remember when you've been through such hassles to find your assigned mission, and for a RED-Clearance Troubleshooter that's saying a lot.

Or maybe your time sense is disrupted. As a service service to some PLC firm you'd never heard of, you've all been taking weird new pills that make you feel more alert. Time seems to pass a little more slowly. Then again, any good citizen would feel that way if he had to fill out that stack of travel permit requisitions you completed to get here.

Now, Troubleshooters, you're all gathered in a bare concrete hallway in Autocar Garage DSF-10445. You're standing out of sight just outside an open door into the largest illegal tire-regrooving warehouse in Sector DSF. The secret society Free Enterprise runs it, and lots of other traitorous groups

resell its shoddily regrooved autocar tires.

The Computer has politely ordered you to shut down this criminal operation and arrest everyone involved. How will you go about obeying the orders of your friend The Computer?

Digression: The pills

Any experienced *PARANOIA* player will immediately ask, in exhaustive detail, about those 'weird new pills'. About two weeks ago a mission dispatcher at Troubleshooter HQ assigned all the PCs 16 pills apiece. The dispatcher, Harold-O-TGG-4, called the drug 'bintorazine', nicknamed 'Pointy Heads'. Harold-O said the pills were part of a broad, ongoing PLC/R&D joint efficiency improvement study that may overlap with future service services, at least as long as the pills' effectiveness lasts.

The pills are lozenge-shaped, not pointy; the name derives from their effect on perception and thought. The PCs have been taking the pills under supervision of an unnamed BLUE researcher, one pill a day for 14 days so far, and still have two pills apiece.

Each day, the BLUE researcher has asked whether the PCs felt more effective today than on previous days. The researcher refused to say what the pills do, when they take effect or exactly how long they last. The PCs don't feel any different, and they haven't noticed any difference in the team's behavior.

Though the PCs have no reason to suspect this, the pills are actually experimental R&D neural regrowth agent RD5449-214.05.13-B1. The names 'bintorazine' and 'Pointy Heads' are a fabrication; no drug of that name or nickname





exists. The drug is harmless to anyone who hasn't suffered recent brain damage, and takes effect only when taken regularly for two weeks or more. The effect is restoration of damaged brain function; side effects include distorted time sense and frequent *deja vu*.

The pills are red herrings intended for later, when the PCs unexpectedly receive unusual Secret skills. At that point, make them think maybe the pills are kicking in, when in reality the PCs are starting to recall one small part of their previous lives as high-clearance R&D personnel.

Be prepared to let the players spend time later investigating the drug, figuring out who actually gave it to them and why—but not right now. There's a warehouse to raid.

The raid

The tire regrooving plant is a large warehouse fitted like an autocar garage. You see racks of auto parts and stacks of tires. Beyond them are open floor areas where mechanics and jackobots are working on autocars raised on hydraulic lifts. A couple of workers are pushing around rickety regrooving machines mounted on casters. Each machine is big enough to reach from the floor to each tire. The machines are spinning the tires and slicing new patterns into the tread.

In the back, doors with clouded plexiglas windows lead to what look like offices.

Your mission is to raid this place and arrest everyone here. Everyone.

The Troubleshooters must arrest every human being in the warehouse without other teams to back them up (not enough funding). There are currently 30 workers in the plant, plus eight standard jackobots. (Make the players guess whether The Computer intended to include bots as raid targets. If they ask for clarification from Troubleshooter HQ, their dispatcher tries to access this information, but a problem in Sector GTB has caused data access slowdowns.)

Note 1

One of the warehouse workers is surreptitiously trying to draw your attention. He's making the recognition signal of your secret society. You recognize the worker as one of your superiors in the society.

It would certainly go badly with your society if you allowed your superior to be arrested in this raid.

Let the players discuss strategies. Then, when the PCs start raiding the place, hand each player a copy of Note 1 (printed on this page). The note informs him one of the warehouse workers is surreptitiously trying to catch his eye with his secret society recognition signal. The Troubleshooter recognizes the NPC as a higher-degree superior in his secret society.

The motive of each of these NPCs is the same: Use his superior rank in their secret society to get the PC to let him go free. (He doesn't know the PC personally and knows nothing about the PC's high-clearance past.) The player must decide how to haul in this NPC, or avoid doing so, without getting into trouble with the society.

Here are six NPCs you can use; match each of them to one PC's secret society. These NPCs are not necessarily Free Enterprise members, but simply skilled craftsmen on the fringes of Alpha Complex society. They don't know who hired them to do this illegal work; they just know they get their creds each week, unlicensed and worry-free.

- ☞ **Frank-O:** Easygoing autocar mechanic (rating 14) and unofficial manager of the plant's craftsmen (Management 12). His directives are often overruled by the capo's jackobot (see below). Frank-O excels at concealing goods in autocar frames, and finding goods hidden in same (18).
- ☞ **Nobusuke-R:** Tire regrooving handtool-maker (rating 17). Perfectionist in speech and precise in mannerism; despises computer-controlled regrooving machines; believes retooling should be done carefully, by hand. Widely despised by others. Has an offsiteSylklike hankerchief collection.
- ☞ **Jack-R:** Machine tire regroover (rating 18). The plant has two rickety tire regrooving machines, and Jack-R operates one of them. Hates elitist Nobusuke-R. Talks shop with Palmer-R. Illegally collects and resells cigarettes.
- ☞ **Palmer-R:** Machine tire regroover (rating 12); Jigger Tire Regrooving Machine So It Works 15. The only one at the plant who can fix the machines, so they keep him even though he's not as good at regrooving tires. Nerdy and a little sarcastic. Maintains a sideline business reselling pieces of regrooving machines that he's passed off to the Free Enterprisers as junk.
- ☞ **Leo-R:** Tire regroover (rating 18). Taciturn, burly guy in his mid-40s. Will talk to down-to-earth people who don't natter on. Likes talking about rubber quality, tire fabric, regrooving tools and not much else. Steals

Generic warehouse NPCs

Management 08, Detect Fast-Buck Opportunity 14; Stealth 04; Violence 09, Tire Regrooving 15, Unarmed Combat 13, Hit With Tire Regrooving Tool 15, Hit With Tire Regrooving Toolbench 15, Hit With Tire 15, Hit With Tire Regrooving Machine 15; Bribery 10.

Weapons: Tire regrooving tools (S5K Impact), toolbench (S4M Impact), tire regrooving machine (M1M, but you have to hold the victim next to the blades, ick).

Armor: None.

Secret society members

The specific NPCs who try to enlist help from the Troubleshooters are 4 degrees higher than the corresponding PC in their shared society. Management 10, Intimidation 14; Bribery 13, Society-specific Propaganda 15; other stats as generic NPCs above.

Jackobot JJ-C/e2

Harangue 12; Fuss 12; Loudly Correct Others' Mistakes 12; Set Oneself Up to Be Destroyed, Thus Provoking Eventual Revenge From Powerful Owner in Later Mission 15. **Armor:** 2.

valuable tools for his personal collection; has some good secret hiding places.

- ☞ **Gino-R:** Tire regroover (rating 18). Friends with Leo-R, but more safety-minded and competitive. Concerned with proper tire inflation, good cutting techniques, etc. Belongs to an Elective Activity Club, the Pipe Refitting Club, and joins sector-wide refitting competitions.

And here's a bonus bot description, in case one of the PCs is a member of Corpore Metal and the group has decided The Computer also wants the Troubleshooters to arrest the bots:

- ☞ **JJ-C/e2:** The capo's jackobot. Corpore Metal plant. A sneering, bossy showoff, like a kid brother safe under the protective umbrella of his older brother, the gang leader. Often overrides Frank-O's management decisions. Records activities for potential blackmailing later on. Isn't privy to capo's whereabouts. (This mission doesn't specify the capo's identity. If you want, have the jackobot itself secretly run the whole thing through various human puppets; the showoff persona is an act.)

The PCs' dilemma

The players' decisions about their NPC compeers have no effect on any events that follow. However, the situation does offer you a convenient pretext for keeping the PCs' secret societies out of the following mission. If allowed to maintain close contact with their societies, the Troubleshooters might learn too much about their former high-clearance lives—or if they don't, the players may retrospectively decide they should have, and were forestalled by your malevolent hose-job.

To prevent such unpleasantness, you can use each PC's fellow secret-society member in this episode as a way to announce 'Hands off'. Regardless of what action the player takes, the NPC superior scowls at him and makes a secret signal: 'cooling-off period—don't call us, we'll call you.' Suggest to the player the NPC is mad because (a) he got arrested, or (b) had to beg the PC's help to avoid being arrested.

Thereafter, if a Troubleshooter tries to contact his secret society, you can just have the contact frown and wave him off with the same secret signal.

We interrupt this raid...

After the PCs have started to do something self-incriminating about their secret society contacts, but before everything dissolves in a firefight, a mission alert comes in on their PDCs (see below).

A minute later, their PDC screens flash red:

ALERT! ALERT!
T-minus 14 minutes 30 seconds until standard mission completion time!

They have to assume that the PDC alert refers to the raid mission, and not the new mission (this is true, but shrug mildly if they ask you).

PCs may want to contact Troubleshooter HQ or The Computer to express concern about being assigned simultaneous missions. The conversation goes something like this:

PC: Friend Computer, our team just received two missions simultaneously. Could you tell us which is higher priority?

The Computer: [click] Greetings, citizen. Your call is important to me. I am forwarding your call to your appropriate supervisor. Thank you for your cooperation, and have a nice day. [Multiple clicks.]

Troubleshooter Central Dispatcher Milo-O-DSF-2: Citizen, you sound concerned. Do you feel unable to perform both missions?

PC: Er, nooo—I—we—feel very capable, and we are quite grateful to have been chosen to serve Alpha Complex in so many simultaneous character-building

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

From: DMZ Sector Troubleshooter Central
Bcc: team874-a65@RED.bok.plc
Subj: A new mission of utmost importance!
Ref: GZZH-1756-CCJP-6823-PQME-2524-MMOW-5503

Congratulations, Troubleshooters! Your friend **The Computer** has chosen you for an important and fun assignment carefully matched to your recorded level of mission experience. You are to report **immediately** to TRANSBOT TUBEWAY PLATFORM A4: C7:60:FF for transport to UNDISCLOSED LOCATION for briefing, followed by transport to your final destination.

If there are optional service firm services available after outfitting, you may be required to volunteer for additional duties at this tim**CARRIER INTERRUPT PLEASE WAIT**andard time to complete a mission of this type is 15 HOURS 11 MINUTES from time of mission alert delivery. Upon completing your mission in the standard time, report to TRANSBOT TUBEWAY PLATFORM B1:21:EE:C2 for transport to debriefing, where you will provide a qualitative and d

PAID ADVERTISEMENT
FREE!!! Cheez Pleezer Recipe
 Subscribe AlphaRecipes.plc! Plus receive FREE!!! HappyKaff Instant within next 10 minutes!

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

ways. We were simply wondering about the standard mission completion times. Do they overlap?

Milo-O: What is your security clearance?

PC: Um... RED.

Milo-O: [Types at keyboard. Pause.]I'm sorry, that information is currently being reconfigured for greater utility. If you continued to feel concerned, please let your happiness officer know, and he or she will provide suitable medication. Now please attend to your mission briefing immediately.

Before they go to the transbot platform specified in the mission alert, ask the players if they intend to complete their current mission, the raid. If they stay, an urgent communiqué from Troubleshooter Central keeps popping up on their PDCs—a vid recording of their mission dispatcher, Milo-O-DSF-2, expressing grave concern:

Troubleshooters! You are running 1 minute 20 seconds behind schedule. If the mission transbot must wait for you in the tubeway, it will hold up other public transbots behind it on the same rail. Citizens! For every 20-second delay per public transbot, Troubleshooter Central is charged 600cr. Unfortunately, this charge must be passed along to those responsible for the delaying factors.

Citizens! DSF Sector Troubleshooter Headquarters is proud of its efficiency peaks this month. The Computer indicates we are ahead of comparable sectors, plus or minus one standard

deviation. We wouldn't want to fall behind, would we?

Do the players understand they are now jointly being charged 600cr (split evenly among all team members) for every 20 seconds' delay? If not, wait 20 seconds, and tell one of them he just noticed his ME Card account drop by 100cr. (Feel free to adjust this amount to the PCs' cred balances. It's a good way to get them in debt if you want to make them desperate for money.)

The vid message, and the credit losses, both continue until the Troubleshooters make their way to the transbot. As always, PCs reluctant to accept the mission get the special GREEN goon and/or forced medication treatment, not to mention an empty cred account.





2: Open Loop

The transbot journey can be as eventful or frustrating as you like. [We actually wrote a whole long transbot sequence for the transbot, and it was *great*—no, really, lots of comedic byplay with two different transbots and two Troubleshooter teams and a surly IntSec agent, just classic stuff—but we had to cut it for space (sigh).] Sooner or later the transbot stops.

The transbot doors open on a RED-Clearance platform, D5:A2:44:3F. The platform is empty, except for a standard videodrone hovering there.

The drone's display reads, 'Mission GZZH-1756-CCJP-6823-PQME-2524-MMOW-5503'. The paranoid Luke-V is remotely guiding this drone from a sector away, though at this point the Troubleshooters don't know this. Luke-V intends to guide the PCs using the drone. If they follow the drone, it leads them upstairs.

If a PC shoots at the drone, he hits it (this model isn't that hard to hit). There's another drone awaiting them in the briefing room. If anyone wants to shoot the drone, you might want to lightly hint that destroying this equipment won't win the team any friends. Any attack hits automatically, destroying the drone. So what? There'll be another one waiting in the briefing room (see below).

The stairs from the tubeway platform lead to an upper-level rotunda from which stretch corridors in many clearance colors. A lot of bots, mostly docbots, are passing busily through this rotunda. Citizens are mostly INFRAREDs wearing black hospital scrubs. They follow obediently after the bots.

The videodrone has followed you up the stairs from the platform, and hovers near one of the RED corridors, as if waiting for you.

This is a medical facility, the **Traitor Retirement Clinic**, operated by HPD&MC service firm HealthyMinds HPD. (If you have any Corpore Metal or Frankenstein Destroyers on the team, check their reaction to this area, where bots are ordering around humans like they own the place.)

The Troubleshooters' briefing room lies along the RED corridor where the videodrone hovers. If they follow the drone, it silently leads the way to the correct room.

If the PCs don't want the videodrone's help, it disappears down the maze of hallways. The PCs eventually find their way to the briefing room, at the back of which the same (or a similar) videodrone hovers.

When the Troubleshooters move into the RED corridor, the next sequence starts a recurring theme in this mission—the horror of brain surgery as a way to control the population. This theme will later become vitally interesting to the PCs.

You step aside to make room in the corridor as two Internal Security GREEN goons accompany a convoy of six wheelchairs with strange occupants. The people in the wheelchairs have shaved heads and blank gazes. They are drooling, but no one pays any attention. It's not polite to stare.

The people in the wheelchairs are traitorous mutants—former mutants, now—on whom the Traitor Retirement Clinic has practiced a particularly barbaric form of ECT (electroconvulsive therapy). Prolonged conversation with the IntSec officers about the traitors is likely to trigger their interest, and not of the let's-go-out-and-get-a-CoffeeLyke kind, either.

Briefing #1 ('Perry-I')

The door to what you assume is the briefing room is unlocked. When you enter, you see a dimly lit stockroom, Clearance RED. It's filled with medical supplies. A box near the door contains stacked plastic trays stacked with remote control units. Rows of disconnected video screens sit on metal racks.

The videodrone glides towards a corner in the back of the room, where a wall of boxes stands about four meters high. The drone stops several meters from the boxes. From long experience as Troubleshooters, you notice the chosen spot has a clear view of the door, as well as the best cover in the room. The drone's camera eye sweeps the room, back and forth, back and forth.

See the box on the next page for a more detailed description of the stockroom.

Of course, because this is a briefing—or rather a pre-briefing briefing—and Luke-V actually *wants* to talk to the Troubleshooters, nothing is going to happen. But give the players the feeling they should get ready to jump behind a metal rack... just in case. Try to discourage them from attacking each other, at least until after Luke-V's briefing.

The videodrone begins broadcasting a holographic transmission. You see,

floating in the air before you, a thin-faced young man with thin brown hair. He wears an INDIGO jumpsuit. He looks really nervous.

'Welcome, Troubleshooters. I am Perry-I. The Computer has authorized me to obtain your assistance for this mission.'

Yes, Luke-V is using a pseudonym: You can never be too careful when trying to outrun a mechanical super-intelligence with stealth technology and a self-assigned Search & Lobotomize mission. This isn't what Luke-V really looks like, either; he's using a realtime graphics program to mask his image.

Luke-V has little control over the briefing locations chosen by the labyrinthine and highly political Alpha Complex Room Appointment Lottery Service. For all he knows, the Lobot WMD-1 may have tampered with this service to provide an insecure briefing room. He also fears that the PCs may lead the lobot directly to him. Thus, before he gives the real briefing, he plans to send the unwitting PCs on a sequence of meaningless meetings intended to throw pursuers off the trail.

'I must leave immediately after this transmission, so I don't expect to repeat myself. You there, [name a PC], write this down in your PDC, omitting nothing:

'You are going to Sector JZR, Subsector H4, Corridor 75, Room K. You will meet with an R&D researcher named Roberta-B about ridding Alpha Complex of traitors who are introducing biological agents into the venting systems. Are you writing this down? Good. She will give you further highly classified instructions.

'Now, forward that information to the rest of your team. Confirm when you have done so.'

Perry-I looks around nervously and licks his lips. He bends over and pushes on something outside of sight. A light on the videodrone's casing turns from green to red—that means the drone is shifting into Highly Secure Holographic Transmission Mode, or HSHTM, also known as 'HushTime'.

Perry-I continues: 'Good. Now stop writing. [He waits for the PC to stop taking notes.] You are not really going to meet Roberta-B. You are going to [Gamemaster: Pick a location from the chart nearby, such as 'AlphaBot Theater, Sector KOL']. Someone will contact you

there. Do not disclose your destination to anyone. Now please go.'

The transmission ends, and the hologram's light dies.

Luke-V asked the PC to take notes on the PDC so as to mislead anyone—anything—monitoring the team electronically.

Circular logic

And the misleading isn't over yet. Luke-V's last message above mentions a random location, the first in a sequence of oddball interim locations you can make as long or as short as you like. We suggest some locations in the chart nearby. The default in the read-aloud text above, 'AlphaBot Theater', is just one possibility, which we mention just because we wrote a *great* theater sequence, lots of mishaps and and frivolity and comic hijinks, that we had to (sigh) cut for space. (Maybe someday we can release *WMD: The Director's Cut*.)

At each location Luke-V sends another videodrone to meet the PCs and tells them, as 'Perry-I', speaking on a secure channel, to go on to the next interim location: 'You are to arrive at Room RJ-JC-3/PA, Sector TRJ, within the next 45 minutes.' If you like, use this as a pretext to send the PCs to any interesting location they've heard about in other *PARANOIA* products and always wanted to visit: the Waste Recycling Subdivision. A Tech Services bot repair facility. Reactor shielding duty.

The more locations you string together, the longer the mission runs, so if you prefer to keep things terse you might just summarize the action for the players. Or let them suggest their own locations, and the kind of mischief they got

Places to go

Luke-V sends the Troubleshooters around to as many places as you and the players can stand before finally returning them to the stockroom for the real briefing. Here are some suggestions:

AlphaBot Theater, Sector KOL: A high-clearance dinner theater featuring bot acrobats ('acrobots'), run by fussy Humanist stage manager Bob-B-KOL-1. Backstage areas are Clearance RED.

Transformer Station XJ-778A: Power Services installation humming with barely restrained power. Much equipment of interest to Pro Tech or, in a different way, Death Leopard and PURGE.

Storage Facility GHQ044MMSF769: A generic MemoMax storage facility. Unrelated to the story, but useful to convey MemoMax exposition to the players.

into while there; reward funny anecdotes with Perversity points.

Eventually this relay race leads to the real briefing—right back where they started.

Briefing #n (Luke-V in person)

What a day it's been, and it's not over yet! Now you have yet another set of briefing room coordinates. Maybe ythis time ou'll even find out your mission. Whatever it is, it must be top-secret, with this much running around.

You arrive at Room RJ-JC-3/PA, Sector TRJ, with five minutes to spare. Too bad you're not refunded credits for early mission arrivals. Hmm... No, you probably don't want to bring up that idea in the confession booth.

The door to what you assume is the briefing room is unlocked. When you enter, you see a dimly lit stockroom, Clearance RED. It's filled with medical supplies. A box near the door contains stacked plastic trays stacked with remote control units. Rows of disconnected video screens sit on metal racks.

A videodrone... waaaait a minute! This is exactly where you were earlier today! A videodrone even hovers in the corner back near that wall of boxes.

A mistake? No, Luke-V has used the afternoon to secure the stockroom to his paranoid satisfaction. Hidden behind racks around the room are his six BLUE-Clearance armed guards. The goons weren't there earlier in the day. A PC notices them with a successful Stealth roll, but to make the roll, the player must specifically indicate he's looking around the room.

There's a man standing near the videodrone. Under the powered combat suit, he looks tall, thin, geeky, with a long neck. His head is fully encased in a clear bubble-helmet. He's carrying a cone rifle loaded with an ECM shell, but he's not pointing it at you.

You've never seen this man before. He sees you, though, and waves you over to him. He's looking at you all in a strangely intense way.

The man is Luke-V-JPE, AKA Perry-I. He looks completely harmless, like a circuit board engineer on his lunch break... leaving aside the hardened battle armor, of course, which prevents mishaps of a lobotical nature.

Remarkably, Luke-V really *is* harmless, apart from his cone rifle and his security clearance. For

a VIOLET he's uncommonly guileless, having risen that high for the uncommon and unwelcome reason of actual merit. He's discomfited to face the PCs—his former bosses, now amnesic REDs—and wary about exactly how much they remember. If they remember enough, they've figured out he reprogrammed the bot to brainwipe them. You see why this makes a sticky social situation.

'Welcome, welcome, um... Troubleshooters. I'm extremely sorry for the runaround earlier, but I had to make sure things were secure in here. I'm Luke-V—you saw me as Perry-I earlier today in the hologram. A necessary deception, I assure you. We, ah, haven't met before, I don't think—have we? No? Right! To business, then.

'You, er, you Troubleshooters are ordered to locate, apprehend and shut down an experimental bot developed in SCL Sector by The Computer's loyal servants in the Research & Design service firm Loyalty Affirmation. Do you, ah... know the bot I mean? No? Right, that's right.

'The bot's precise function is classified VIOLET Clearance, and you're, well, RED Troubleshooters, obviously, so you, ah—anyway! I can say this: The bot is a weapon. It was misprogrammed by parties unknown—or at least I certainly

The briefing room

The briefing room (**Tension 5**), a stockroom, is about 10 meters square, with video-related stock on racks and in boxes. Two doors lead into the room: the one the PCs enter and a steel garage door on the opposite side (leading to a delivery platform where forkbots take deliveries).

Luke-V: Paranoid R&D lead scientist
Mutation: Bureaucratic Intuition
Skills: Management 12, Violence 04, Projectile Weapons 08, Software 11, Bot Programming 13

Weapons: Cone rifle—ECM (J2J Energy)

Armor: Hardened full battle armor with full helmet (GM fiat)

BLUE goons (6)
Skills: Stealth 14, Violence 13, Thrown Weapons 17, Energy Weapons 17, Hand Weapons 17

Weapons: Grenades (W3K Impact); blaster (M3K Energy); captain has a neurowhip (S5M Energy)

Armor: ArmorAll (4, hardened)



don't know who did it, I assure you! Owing to this misprogramming—whatever it was!—the bot malfunctioned during its initial test at the Loyalty Affirmation lab, about a month ago. It attacked its creators, and, um, well, killed them? You see?'

Ideally you can present Luke-V's unease around the PCs under the guise of general flakiness. If the players inquire closely about his manner, you might convey the impression he thinks the PCs are someone else. In a way, it's true.

■ The false alarm

Luke-V continues, 'The bot escaped the lab and subsequently attacked a Technical Services data storage facilities, for reasons unknown. Guards damaged the bot, and it fled.

'Now, a month later, it has returned to the original R&D lab in SCL Sector where we, ah—where it was developed. Internal Security has evacuated and surrounded the research complex. But owing to their lack of resources and experience, it was considered more expedient to bring in experts to subdue the bot.

'Unfortunately, the experts themselves are—are no longer available? You, ah, understand the experts are gone? Good! That's good!

'I should warn you, then, the bot is extremely—'

Just then you hear a low, metallic rumbling coming from behind the wall of boxes. A garage door rattles open, and the metallic arm of a large... *something*... suddenly rises over the boxes behind Luke-V.

In his battle armor he whips around fast. He looks up at the thing and screams like a girl: 'Aiiiiiiiiieeee! Hellllp!'

Six BLUE-Clearance guards jump out from hiding around the room, three with their guns pointed at you, three aiming at the metal arm.

Quick, what do you do?

This is a false alarm. It's actually just a forkbot whose shipment was delayed; it's just now bringing cartons of remote controls into the stock room. But Luke-V thinks it's the lobot, come to get him at last.

Still, the situation holds extreme danger—not from a bot or the guards or Luke-V's battle armor, but from the greatest source of danger in any **PARANOIA** mission: the players themselves. This is the likeliest shot each player has to

Questioning Luke-V

Obviously, the PCs will have questions after Luke-V briefs them. Here are answers to some questions they might ask. Some of Luke-V's answers are either misleading or outright lies. Luke-V later defends himself against (unwise) accusations of lying, saying, 'It's my policy not to scare Troubleshooters.'

If the PCs seek more about the bot from The Computer—which, by the way, should be difficult in a Straight game—it tells them this information is classified Clearance VIOLET. It does wonder why they are asking. Didn't Luke-V tell them that already? Are they questioning a VIOLET-Clearance citizen?

How dangerous is the bot? It's a small bot with advanced stealth abilities, including classified experimental technologies. It's extremely intelligent, aggressive and has been programmed with great knowledge of the layout and internal workings of Alpha Complex. It has armaments of a—well—a medical nature. That's all I can say.

(*True, but somewhat uninformative: 'Medical nature' is euphemistic....*)

Who misprogrammed the bot? We suspect certain subject-matter expert consultants, whose identities are classified.

(*False: Luke-V did it and he knows it.*)

How is it misprogrammed? What does it do? We believe the saboteur intended to program the bot to self-destruct. Instead, the misprogramming told the bot to destroy all knowledge of its existence. The bot has apparently taken this to mean destroying everyone who knows anything about it.

(*True.*)

Do we count as 'knowing about it'? You should regard the bot as extremely dangerous regardless.

(*True.*)

How did the bot kill the scientists? How might it attack us? Classified, sorry.

(*True.*)

What were the scientists' names? Who were they? Their real names are classified, but their *code* names were Chigger, Louse, Midge, Roach, Skeeter and Tick. (See the boxed text in Episode 4, 'Identity protection'.)

Have the killed scientists been brought back in clone backups? Can we talk to them? All information relevant to the scientists is classified VIOLET Clearance for their protection.

(*True and false: If only the PCs knew to talk to themselves....*)

sabotage a rival PC. Prepare for a heavy influx of secret notes; have the BLUE guards mow down any PC who looks suspicious; bring in the docbots backup clones (it helps that this is a medical facility); then pick up the action:

Luke-V sees that it's an ordinary forkliftbot. He sags in relief. 'Oh! Ohhhh. Thank The Computer! Sorry, I thought... er, never mind. Guards, stand down.'

One guard makes a hand signal, and they all go back to their hiding places.

Luke-V continues, 'Er, as I was saying. The bot is dangerous. It has stealth and surveillance abilities, and highly advanced programming that simulates human cunning. It has attack techniques that—' He pauses. '—That are above your clearance. I can only say, maintain high alert.

'My guards will transport you to the Loyalty Assurance lab in SCL Sector, where we believe the bot is hiding. So, briefly, any questions?'

For Luke-V's answers to the PCs' questions, see the sidebar, 'The Grilling'. After a few minutes of questions, read:

Luke-V's PDC beeps loudly with a custom VIOLET-Clearance ringtone. 'Excuse me,' he says. He answers it and listens for a second. Then he motions offhandedly to the BLUE squad. Still listening on his PDC, Luke-V gives you a thumbs-up, then quietly sneaks out the stockroom door, flanked by three of his guards and the videodrone.

■ Service service: CPU videodrones

The other three guards march over to you. 'This way, please,' their captain tells you. They lead you to the back of the stockroom and a large cardboard box marked 'Classified BLUE NEED-TO-KNOW', followed by your mission number. The guard captain, whose

**SHOOT THE
VIDEODRONE
AND WIN A
PRIZE!**

nameplate reads Leo-B-HWQ-5, opens the box: In it, you see a set of videodrones like the one that frightened Luke-V.

The BLUE captain says, 'Your service service for this mission. Sign here.' He holds out an equipment release form. It assigns one drone to each of you, and officially makes the entire team responsible for returning all probes intact and functional.

The PCs had better sign, or they are charged with mission obstruction, a class SS/1 offense (P5B—and we dare not imagine what a brainscrub would do to the PCs' prescrubbed brains).

Leo-B takes the signed form. He chuckles. 'One of my team accidentally bumped into the box and activated a drone. Quite the little scene there.' He shrugs. He unfolds a printout and reads aloud from it: 'Each Troubleshooter must locate on the lower right side of the external housing of the assigned drone a red button and push said button to activate it.' He stops and stares fixedly at you all. 'Push the button. Now.'

There is only one button on each drone. When a PC pushes the button—and if he doesn't, have everyone record that you've assigned him an SS/1 treason code—the drone hums to life and floats up just above and behind the PC's head. With a whirr, the drone's camera lens zooms in on the PC.

The captain keeps reading. 'These probes can't be turned off. During your mission they'll collect data for a CPU efficiency exercise. Offsite managerial trainees in many service firms will rate your performance at random intervals. The data and the trainee evaluations will be stored in a CPU efficiency database for further study and may be entered in your permanent record.'

'Any questions on your CPU service firm service? Good. Let's go.'

Leo-B doesn't know anything useful about the bot mission, nor anything about the PCs and their hidden backstory. His job is simply to give them the videodrones and then transport them to the mission site. He resents being charged with these smelly RED Troubleshooters, but he maintains bare politeness.

About the drones: The hovering videodrones trail the PCs the whole time. Destroying a drone prompts treason charges (P3C plus 1,750cr for each drone's replacement cost). A PC can gain control of a drone, or redirect its vidfeed, with a successful Bot Ops and Maintenance checks—but he should make an Access check as well, or the CPU efficiency experts watching through the vidlink notice the switchover (insubordination charge 1: 5% salary fine; worse without a reasonable excuse for tampering). Unmodified videodrones slightly increase the Tension in all areas (we suggest by 2, maximum 20).



3: Code freeze

The BLUE guards escort the PCs to SCL Sector and the Loyalty Assurance RD research complex. The homicidal bot is inside the lab, so Internal Security has blocked all access points and locked it down tight. No one is interested in going inside to face the bot; they're happy to wait for the Troubleshooters to take care of this little unpleasantness.

Under IntSec supervision the PCs meet a deluded survivor of the lobot's attack. They start to glean an idea of the bot's methods.

Pervasive feelings of *deja vu* haunt the characters, and the entryway garden triggers a Proustian hint of one PC's former life as a VIOLET gastronome. This PC gains the Unlikely Secret skill Exotic Plants, but should have no notion why or how. In Episode 4 each other PC will gain a

similar skill. (See page 74 for handout notes describing these specialties.)

Loyalty Assurance RD

The BLUE guards delicately retrieve the PCs and continue escorting them. They lead the Troubleshooters down a few RED-Clearance hallways to an IntSec checkpoint at a GREEN intersection guarded by three GREEN goons. The BLUE guards present waivers signed by Luke-V that authorize the transit of RED Troubleshooters down the GREEN corridor. The IntSec goons join the escort, and with this entourage the PCs finally make their way toward Loyalty Assurance RD. But the corridor is blocked:

You arrive at an Internal Security barricade. It's a nonstandard deployment, one of the Augmented Threat Profiles. Even for a GREEN hallway, this is tight security: two squads of GREEN goons, two supervisors, a senior supervisor, and four guardbots, all heavily armed. They've bolted an extra laser cannon to the ceiling.

The senior IntSec supervisor is Bertha-G-SCL-3, a short woman with a chin like an autocar. She seems alert, like she's taking constant mental notes. She waves away your escorts, who retreat up the corridor the way you came. Bertha-G confers with you—or rather, she tells you to shut up and listen:



'The bot attacked four hours ago. Within ten minutes of the attack we locked down egress from the lab: four emergency evacuation stairwells and an INFRARED delivery corridor. This is now the only route in or out. The bot is still in there. Possibly some workers too.

'There are 88 air vents large enough to accommodate the target, but each one passes through one of eight ventilation units before exiting the lab complex. We've secured all eight units with metal detectors and motion sensors, so the target isn't getting out that way.

'The lab complex is heavily surveilled, but the target has cut off all external feeds. You're going in blind. The lab's security includes signal jamming, so once you're inside, you can't call out.

'We're short-staffed just now—a couple of unscheduled mess hall riots in nearby sectors—so I want you REDs to make this quick. Get in, find the lobot, shut it down without damaging it too much, and try not to get wiped. The end.'

'Lobot'? 'Wiped'?

This should be the first time the Troubleshooters have heard the word 'lobot', and Bertha-G's mention of 'wiped' should be their first intimation of the bot's technique. Perhaps they inquire. Perhaps they keep silent. Either way, you'll next show them an example of the lobot's handiwork: a survivor of its most recent attack on the lab—a foreshadowing of what may happen to the PCs.

If the PCs ask Bertha-G for details, she leads them to the survivor. If they say nothing, she

curtly escorts them further down the corridor; on the way, they pass the survivor, who moves at them like a drunk coming out of an alleyway. Either way, they meet Jackie-B-DSW-2.

Jackie-B-DSW, lobot survivor

In many Philip K. Dick novels we meet a dark-haired woman, an object of desire, who is disturbed or neurotic or occasionally even schizophrenic. Jackie-B-DSW-2 is that woman's Alpha Complex version, just as black-haired—though probably not an object of desire, if the PCs have been taking their pills—and now just as schizophrenic, thanks to Lobot WMD-1.

A thin, lightly-built woman in a BLUE Internal Security officer's uniform staggers toward you. She acts like she took mislabeled medication—she's stumbling and she looks hysterical. She has a black eye. The officer looks at each of you in turn, then looks shocked. She screams, 'Elevator music!'

Bertha-G says calmly, 'This is—was—my superior, Jackie-B-DSW-2. She organized this barricade. For the last two years she was assigned undercover to Project Ice Pick, and our leading source on the lobot. An hour ago Jackie-B went inside the building alone, supposedly to scout for survivors. The lobot got to her, but didn't kill her. Physically.'

Jackie-B is staring at you all intently. 'Loose,' she says. 'If you know what it is, it gets you. Fix the launch, fix the launch. Music!'

Bertha-G watches her with clinical interest, then turns to you. 'You may be

concerned that this barricade's security may falter, now that its senior officer has tragically suffered the surgical removal of her intellect, memory and personality. I assure you I have the situation well in hand. As soon as Internal Affairs has investigated, I expect a brevet promotion to replace Jackie-B.' Bertha-G at least has the good taste not to smile.

IntSec got Jackie-B assigned undercover to Loyalty Assurance RD shortly after the PCs started Project Ice Pick. Impersonating a GREEN-Clearance hardware tech, she assembled the fullest available picture of the project for IntSec—and for her secret society, Pro Tech. She went into the building today to destroy certain incriminating evidence about her Pro Tech activities. Lobot WMD-1 spotted her and wiped her brain in 15 seconds.

Knowing that the operation would guarantee Jackie-B no longer remembered it, the lobot let her go, just as it freed the PCs a month ago. Now, though they don't recall it, the PCs are watching Jackie-B-DSS suffer exactly the same fate they themselves suffered.

As the lobot's MemWipe catalysts systematically dismantle the designated memory traces in her cerebrum, Jackie-B exists in a strange, liminal state. For a few moments yet, she will retain a fragmentary recollection of the lobot, but soon she will remember nothing of the last two years. Her personality will change permanently—perhaps for the better, perhaps not—and she will become essentially useless until Technical Services can install her MemoMax backup memories.

Talking to the survivor

Let the PCs ask Jackie-B questions if they like. She gives creepy-funny answers unrelated to their questions:

- ☞ 'Not knowing is the only defense. Let it know you don't know. My hair is all wrong.'
- ☞ 'It's you! You, fix the launch! It's misprogrammed. Erase not kill. Bad for hygiene.'
- ☞ 'You! Elevator music!'

('Elevator music' refers to the bouncy, upbeat music Lobot WMD-1's built-in speakers play for its victims as it brainwipes them. In the earliest days of Project Ice Pick, The Computer ordered that traitors should not suffer unduly during their brainwipe, and therefore the bot should play pleasant elevator music during the operation.)

If the PCs try to pump Bertha-G for more information:

The amnesia gimmick (2)

Okay, *now* the PCs are back in SLC Sector, where they used to be high-clearance research scientists—they're right there at their actual workplace, the Loyalty Assurance complex—surely someone here would plausibly *have* to spill the beans about their past. Right?

Names: Don't the PCs have the same names as the 'deceased' R&D scientists? No one the PCs meet, except Luke-V, knows the real names of the scientists. For security purposes they took on code names and used them exclusively (see Episode 4).

Acquaintances: The PCs have basically no one to interact with except Internal Security officers (who don't know them and wouldn't admit it if they did) and brainwiped lobot victims, who can't remember their own names, let alone the PCs.

Secret societies: The whole lab complex is deserted and shielded from unauthorized external communication. No phoning home.

Weird flashbacks: You'll be giving individual players odd notes about their characters' unexpected appreciation of subtle aesthetics in food, autocars, and so on. The PCs develop 'new' narrow specialties, remnants of their onetime VIOLET hobbies. This development should baffle them, but you can remind them of the weird experimental pills they've been taking. They probably connect the specialties to the drug effects, though even yet it's unlikely the players will perceive the truth.

The lobot: No one will tell the PCs the bot is a Weapon of Memory Destruction. They only figure this out in Episode 4, when they find evidence you'll give them as handouts.

GREEN corridor

Currently crawling with IntSec and BLUE guards, ergo **Tension 18**.

Bertha-G-SCL-3

Management 08, Interrogation 12, Intimidation 12, Handle Mouthy Troubleshooters 14; Violence 09, Energy Weapons 13, Unarmed Combat 13
Weapons: Energy pistol (W3K)
Armor: GREEN reflec/Kevlar (E1/I3)

Jackie-B-DSW-2

No skills or specialties currently; Bertha-G has confiscated her weapons.
Armor: BLUE reflec/Kevlar (E1/I3)

- ☞ **How did it happen?** 'I don't know how the lobot works, but this looks like a routine brainscrub... possibly more severe than usual. Given the short time Jackie-B was in the lab complex, the bot must have worked impressively fast.'
- ☞ **Can she be cured?** 'Cure her? Well, I suppose The Computer might have Technical Services retrieve the most recent MemoMax backup of her memories and replay them into her brain. Might work. These brainscrubs typically result in personality changes, though.'
- ☞ **Other survivors, or evacuating workers:** 'We didn't let anyone else out. Didn't want to risk letting the target escape. Don't worry—most or all the workers are probably dead or wiped by now.'
- ☞ **What does the bot look like?** 'The bot is small, about a meter long. It can fly—*fast*. It can penetrate security using advanced stealth tech. It has a sound dampening field. It has a cloak, some kind of video armorcladding that automatically matches its surroundings. You could stare right at it and not see it, until it moves.'
- ☞ **How do we stop it?** 'We think the VIOLET R&D scientists who designed and built the bot may have programmed a backdoor, a verbal command that overrides its programming. Highly illegal, but they're dead now, so there's nothing to be done. We haven't located the command. Discovering it might be your best hope to shut the thing down.'
- ☞ **Anything else:** 'That's above your clearance. Now, if you'll remember, you're to go in and deactivate that bot.'

Entrance garden

Bertha-G-SCL pulls her energy pistol and quietly leads you to an innocuous GREEN metal door at the end of the hall. The door has a simple plaque that reads: **LOYALTY ASSURANCE**—*A licensed Research & Design service firm.*

Bertha-G looks even more alert than before. She whispers, 'Beyond the door is the public lobby. Offices are on floor 2; the lab is on Floor 3. Jackie-B passed the checkpoints and went up the far stairs, so the first floor is probably safe. The elevators work, but I advise against using them. Once you're up the stairs, be extremely cautious.'

'After you've disabled the bot—*without damaging it—don't touch it. Return here and my team will take it from there. Don't return until then; I won't let you out.*'

She waves her ME Card at the door. It slides open quietly. She gestures you in.

This close to the lobot, Bertha-G is in no mood to chat. If the PCs delay entering the lab, she grabs the team leader and shoves him in bodily. If he resists, she sizes him up as if compiling a mental dossier, then leaves. The door stays open until all the PCs enter. (We left out the part where, if anyone attacks, she shoots him with the energy pistol. But she's an IntSec agent, so you probably figured that out.)

Then the door closes, unless the PCs blocked it open. Too bad they don't have the clearance to open it again, or the firepower to destroy it. Too bad no one will respond if they pound on the door before shutting down the lobot. Too bad they're Troubleshooters.

(Cunning and ruthless players might shoot one of their own, wait for the clone replacement to arrive, then rush out when the door opens. Okay, in all honesty that scene should be worth letting them back out for a while.)

Things get strange

Beyond the entrance is a small (4m x 4m) reception room and security checkpoint. There's a reception desk with an intercom system.

The walls are GREEN. Actually, the walls are lots of colors, because they're covered with plants. Like the glamorous high-clearance dwellings you've seen on the vidshows, this office grows living plants. Not even practical plants that bear real food, but just the kind with the bright-colored pretty things stuck on the GREEN part. Now that's luxury!

At this point, without warning or explanation, choose one player and give him a copy of **Secret skill #1**, the first of the six handout notes on page 74. In highflown language this note tells the player his character knows a whole lot about plants, and he now has the Secret skill 'Exotic Plants'.

Why? Because the medication the PCs took before this mission began is starting to kick in. Prompted by the sight of the plants, this PC is recalling a recreational pursuit from his VIOLET days. In the next episode, each of the other PCs will also remember a similar Secret skill.

This sudden recall, right at the brink of a tense search for the lobot, is meant to blindside the player and make him feel a surreal discomfort. Encourage this! A surreal feeling will enhance the surprises in the next episode. We anticipate delightful conversations:

Player: Wha— [*re-reads note; scowls*] What is this?

GM: Just what it says.

Player: Do I—uh... Is someone using a mutant power on me?

GM: How do you intend to determine that?

Player: [*reads note a third time*] What the hell is this?

...And so on. Enjoy the moment.

4: Review and comment

The high-security Loyalty Assurance RD lab complex has the don't-even-try level of gimmicks you get when The Computer likes your project: 50cm-thick steel-reinforced windowless concrete walls jammed with signal jammers and an inlaid faraday cage (in other words, no unauthorized electronic transmissions in or out); titanium-alloy interior doors with built-in explosives detectors; surveillance cameras in every room, closet and air vent; ME Card scanners, voice scanners, body scanners, face scanners, retinal scanners, tongueprint scanners....

It would be a strong **Tension 18** at least—if anyone were home. Lobot WMD-1 took out the security administrators first thing, and deactivated all surveillance feeds leading outside the lab complex. It knew exactly which feeds to disable, because the PCs specifically programmed it with every Security Systems specialty trick they knew. Maybe that wasn't such a good idea, but it's too late to fix it now.

With the surveillance systems internal-only, the Tension level is essentially 0 for these scenes—though a PC who occupies a monitor station becomes the beneficiary of that original



18 rating. He'll probably want to keep a notepad handy to scribble observations...

Setting and atmosphere

Loyalty Assurance RD is superficially a standard business cubeville: plain walls, clean carpet, sound-absorbent ceiling tiles, fluorescent lights. Clearance color stripes on the walls from eye level to waist height, against an omnipresent background of non-clashing non-colors like taupe and charcoal gray. Dilbert could work here.

Yet even for Alpha Complex, the security here is high: cameras everywhere; frequent security checkpoints; no confession booths (!); and, most important for the Troubleshooters, no way to call in or out with their PDCs. And don't forget the medical research lab on the top floor, where the PCs once diligently devised inhumane techniques of induced memory loss. Not even Dilbert's boss has gone that far. Yet.

During this episode you can play with that contrast, the humdrum corporate air versus the understated paranoia, and (later) versus the assaults of a cunning and exceedingly dangerous stealthbot. Play it tense. Play it Straight.

Staging the lobot hunt

In a throwback to a more primitive time in (non-fun) roleplaying game technology, this episode lists encounters keyed to locations on a map of the Loyalty Assurance RD building. Sorry.

But to maintain our reps as Famous Game Designers, we present the encounters in an unusual format. It preserves your storyline regardless of the areas the players choose to explore. We call it the *chain of revelations*.

Prop hint

For this episode, get a CD of elevator music—you know, whatever simperly asinine bubblegum-pop drivel is likely to make your players retch. Play it whenever the lobot enters the action.

The lobot plays happy, upbeat music to increase its victims' happiness while it wipes their brains. The Computer dictated this feature out of concern for its citizens' welfare. After a while, your players will shrink in dread as soon as you reach for the CD player.

You can find good candidate music in the clearance bin of a used-CD shop. Or try raiding your kid sister's boy-band collection.

The chain of revelations

As this episode develops, the Troubleshooters' hunt for Lobot WMD-1 transforms into a search for their past, which they have so totally forgotten, they're unaware anything is missing.

The search uncovers a progression of clues, an invariable sequence of revelations, about this mission's backstory. Clues the PCs find at 'drops' throughout the lab complex provide these revelations—and the beauty of it is, you present the revelations in order, independent of the nature or circumstances of any given drop.

It's like the way you take the players' Perversity spending and retroactively introduce circumstances to account for the modifiers. ('You spent the roll down to -5? Okay, there was a scrubot in the hallway that blocked your shot.') In the chain of revelations, most drops are generic placeholders, waiting for you to assign their revelation payload. When the PCs find a generic drop, you jigger it on the fly to present the next revelation they're due to find in the fixed chain.

Paying out the chain: Ever played a computer roleplaying game or first-person shooter, where you have to rescue the proper NPC or find the BLUE key before you can open the door to the next level? The game tracks whether you've been everywhere you need to go and done everything you need to on that level. When you have, it trips a flag that unlocks the door.

The chain of revelations works like that. You control chokepoints on each floor of the lab complex. These chokepoints don't open until the players have found the proper clues. Only then can they open the BLUE door—er, move on to the next floor.

Once the players have learned all the revelations, they face no more chokepoints, and they're off to the mission's climax.

Getting a clue, or six clues

An overview of the chain of revelations:

The PCs enter on **Floor 1**, where they find a couple of lobot victims. Hand out some new Secret skills to your baffled players. The chain of revelations starts on this floor with the showroom presentation on the nature of the lobot, and an insight into the lobot's unauthorized reprogramming.

The **Floor 2** offices include the still-empty executive offices the PCs themselves once occupied in their former high-clearance lives. Here they (re)learn more Secret skills. Here also the chain of revelations paints the project team as a ruthless bunch of petty, mercenary, opportunistic, amoral defense contractors, which in Alpha Complex is multiply redundant. Another clue hints at (part of) the role in the lobot launch played by Luke-V-JPE, the VIOLET who gave them this mission.

As the PCs begin this episode, Lobot WMD-1 is currently on **Floor 3**. The bot is trying to wipe

a last bunch of workers who have barricaded themselves in a medical supply storeroom. By the time the PCs reach this floor, they understand they themselves were the project team, and they learn what happened to them after the lobot launch. The PCs also discover/recall an override code they had programmed into the lobot. This happens at pretty much precisely the same time the lobot attacks them.

Location key

This episode provides descriptions of notable locations on each of the three floors, keyed to the map on the next page. Each location description includes one or more of these elements:

- ☞ **Clue drop:** A nugget of information the PCs must discover before they can go on to the next floor. The clues have default locations, but you can drop them anywhere the PCs go. If this location doesn't offer an actual clue, there is a way to use it to provide a clue the players missed earlier.
- ☞ **Event:** A mandatory storyline incident. There are two events apiece on Floors 1 and 2, three events on Floor 3. Again, you can place them anywhere. Try to alternate events and clue discoveries.
- ☞ **Sidelight:** An interesting and/or terrifying optional incident at this location.

Security checkpoints

Like the many other checkpoints in the Loyalty Assurance complex, these checkpoints look like highway tollbooths would if the Highway Department employed paranoid Special Forces samurai trolls. Reflective armorglass (E2/I2)

Free bonus materials!

At the Mongoose Publishing Web site—
www.mongoosepublishing.com

—you can download extra *free* props and paraphernalia to help you run 'WMD'. Get the pregenerated PCs, the handouts in this mission, and whole pages of great stuff we had to cut for space (sigh).

The Mongoose site offers lots of free downloads for many fine **PARANOIA** products, including chapters cut for space, character sheets, errata, and much more.

These materials are in Portable Document Format (.PDF), so you'll need the free Adobe Reader software to use them.

ablative), slugthrower emplacements, banks of surveillance monitors—no wonder the lobot took out these stations first.

In each checkpoint slumps a comatose, brainwiped IntSec GREEN goon with a black eye. The PCs can't revive him. Each checkpoint's instrument panel includes video feeds of all three floors of the Loyalty Assurance complex, labeled by location. Any observer can quickly spot a dozen frightened BLUE technicians huddled in the Floor 3 medical storeroom. No sign of the lobot; its stealth technology foils the cameras. No communication is possible, and there's no way to send the feed outside this complex; Lobot WMD-1 has sabotaged the outgoing feed.

Layout

An overview of the map printed on page 66:

Bottom (first) floor—showroom/cafe/gym: High-clearance dining and exercise facilities, as well as a showroom that showcased Project Ice Pick to R&D service group bigwigs.

Second floor—offices: Administrative offices and cubicles.

Third floor—labs: Accessible only by a secure staircase from the rear of the second floor, the laboratory itself has sections for hardware manufacturing and assembly, AI (artificial intelligence) programming, and medical research. Currently a few frightened Loyalty Assurance workers, survivors of the lobot's attack, have barricaded themselves in the medical lab and now hope for rescue.

Floor 1

1A. Entryway

Event: Entry greeting. As the Troubleshooter team leaves the garden and enters the first floor, each individual PC hears a recorded greeting, targeted to him via a narrow beam of focused sound. The recording also includes cheery elevator music, a foreshadowing of events to come. A reassuring male voice, none other than Luke-V-JPE (the VIOLET who gave them this mission), says, 'We invite our visitors to our showroom, straight ahead, for orientation'.

1B. Showroom

Loyalty Assurance set up this small screening room to orient R&D service group politicians regarding what, exactly, the firm was bribing them to approve.

You're in a small 20-seat theater, attractively decorated in GREEN. It looks empty. At the far end from the entrance there's a big vidscreen, set about a meter deep into the wall.

As you enter, a presentation starts automatically. There's friendly, upbeat music, like you heard at the entrance to the lab complex. On screen, the opening title reads, 'Loyalty Assurance: Reforming Traitors, One Mind at a Time.'

Clue drop: Showroom presentation. Ideally the PCs stay to watch the presentation; this is **Clue 1**, the big block of exposition about their enemy. The Mongoose Publishing Web site (www.mongoosepublishing.com) offers a one-page script you can download free and print out as a player handout. We had to cut it from this book for space (sigh). In the absence of the script, just describe a presentation that hits these points:

- ☞ Loyalty Assurance RD's new Lobot WMD-1 can turn traitors into productive citizens!
- ☞ It's smart! It's fast! It's covert! It has no lasting physical side effects!
- ☞ Lobot WMD-1 uses time-tested MemGo technology. MemTag chemicals, pervasive in the Alpha Complex environment, cross the blood-brain barrier and bind to memory traces. These chemical markers transform at a predictable rate over time. The lobot synthesizes MemWipe catalysts that dissolve particular forms of MemTag along with the associated memory traces. When the lobot applies them to the target's brain, the target loses all memories formed in the chosen block of time, to an estimated accuracy of one hour. Traitors forget they ever wanted to betray Alpha Complex!

☞ Loyalty Assurance RD has secured lucrative contracts to produce Lobot WMD-1! Gossip of a forced merger with a competitor was treasonous rumor!

☞ Loyalty Assurance RD offers generous incentives to tastemakers in Research & Design to help evangelize this project!

Conspicuously absent from the presentation: anything about the lobot's appearance or methods.

After outlining this presentation, give to one player the note for **Secret Skill #3**, Good Theater, on page 74.

Sidelight: After you convey all this exposition—or when the players are getting seriously apprehensive about the bot—read this aloud:

You hear a sudden crash as the ceiling directly above the screen caves in. A dark shape falls directly in front of the vidscreen. What do you do?

Secret skills

At the end of Episode 3, you gave a random PC the first note from the handouts on page 73, thereby bestowing on that player's PC the Secret skill 'Exotic Plants.' Each of the other PCs should learn/recover at least one Secret skill in this episode. The Secret skill notes are keyed to general locations on the map; when the mission team enters one of the specified locations, pick a player who hasn't received a Secret skill yet, or who has fewer than the others, and give him the appropriate note.

Skill #1, Exotic Plants: Entry checkpoint, at the end of Episode 3.

Skill #2, Gourmet Food: Floor 1, any dining area.

Skill #3, Good Theater: Floor 1, in the showroom.

Skill #4, Luxury Gyms: Floor 1, any exercise area.

Skill #5, Luxury Soap: Any bathroom.

Skill #6, Luxury Autocars: Floor 2, any office; put a model car somewhere. (Okay, this one was a reach. Skip it if you have fewer than six players.)

The dark shape is a human arm and part of a head—all that's visible of the body of **Hiram-B-HPQ-3**, a junior software technician for Loyalty Assurance. A few hours ago the lobot attacked the Floor 3 software lab and wiped most of the techs. Hiram-B escaped by using his Teleportation mutation.

Unfortunately for Hiram-B, he wound up in a crawlspace above the Floor 1 showroom screen, and died instantly when he materialized around a length of heating pipe. The pipe has finally broken under his weight, and he has fallen partway through the thin showroom ceiling.

The Troubleshooters are unlikely to learn any of this, unless one has the mutation Psychometry, detailed in the fine **PARANOIA** rules supplement *The Mutant Experience*. If they refrain from vaporizing Hiram-B's harmless corpse, they can search the body and find a keycard that permits access to the areas beyond the security checkpoints in the halls to either side of the showroom.

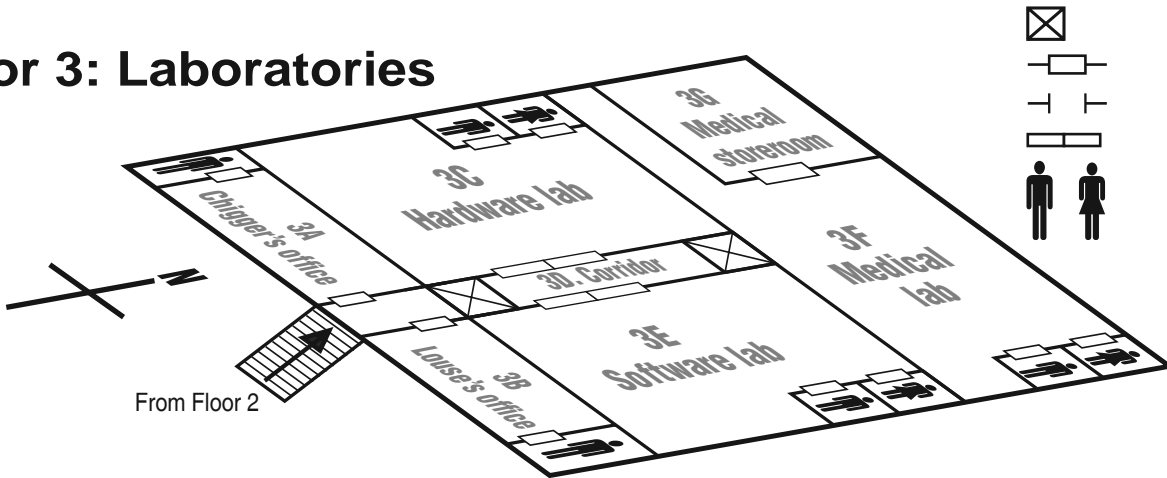
1C. Dining rooms

There are four staff dining rooms on the west side of Floor 1. Three of the four rooms are normally serviced via an INFRARED-Clearance access corridor running along that entire side of Floor 1. IntSec has sealed all these access doors (armor 4, hardened ablative). The corridor leads down to a kitchen and maintenance area, and from there to other, even more boring areas left unspecified.

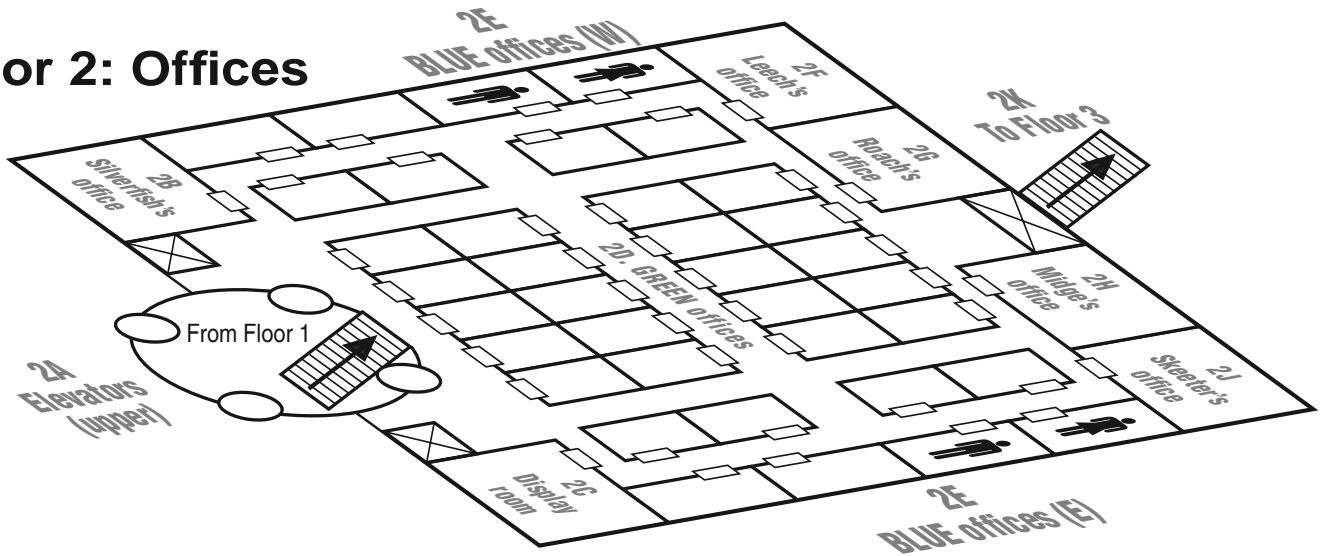


Loyalty Assurance RD

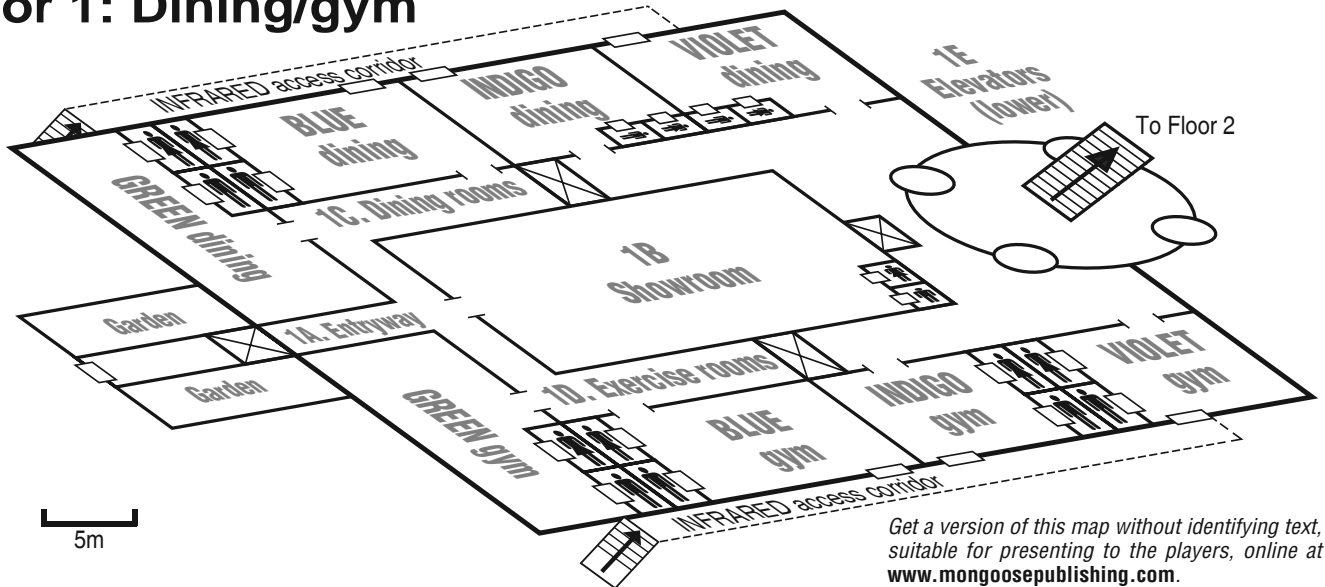
Floor 3: Laboratories



Floor 2: Offices



Floor 1: Dining/gym



Get a version of this map without identifying text, suitable for presenting to the players, online at www.mongoosepublishing.com.

The dining rooms are, of course, segregated by clearance. The GREEN area, a routine breakroom, has nothing but upscale vendobots and self-serve frozen dinners. The food is mostly real, plus plastic trays of GREENGood textured foodstuff in eight flavors. It all tastes far better than typical RED fare.

The BLUE, INDIGO and VIOLET dining areas display varying opulence. BLUE is a decent restaurant like you might find in a strip mall. INDIGO is the really nice restaurant where you once went for your birthday and sipped expensive scotch. VIOLET is the restaurant you'll go to after your top-grossing movie wins Best Picture.

In all rooms, pleasant elevator-type music plays over the speakers. This is foreshadowing.

Clue drop: If the PCs vaporized Hiram-B's body in the showroom and thus didn't get the keycard to get past the Floor 1 checkpoints, you can drop another body and card in the BLUE or GREEN room.

Event: Secret skill, Gourmet Foods. Just as one PC received an unexpected Secret skill in the garden entryway at the end of Episode 3, now a different PC recovers a fragment of memory from his forgotten high-clearance life. Spurred by the lingering smells of the dining area, this PC proves to have been an epicure. Pick a player who hasn't received a Secret skill in this mission, and give him a copy of the note 'Secret skill #2, Gourmet Foods', from the handout notes on page 74.

1D. Exercise rooms

Four exercise facilities for pampered workers. Like the dining areas, three of the four rooms are serviced by an INFRARED access corridor. IntSec has sealed all access doors (armor 4, hardened ablative). The corridor leads down to laundry facilities and maintenance areas beyond the scope of this mission.

Like the dining areas, the fitness centers are divided according to security clearance. The GREEN room is a plain carpeted yoga room with mirrors around the walls. BLUE has weight machines. INDIGO has stair-climbers, treadmills and heart-rate monitor displays. VIOLET has all that plus holographic augmented-reality artificial-intelligence personal trainers and automated massage tables.

In all rooms the PCs hear pleasant elevator-type music. (More foreshadowing.)

Clue drop: If the players missed the showroom presentation (Clue 1), a screen over the treadmills can show the same presentation. Also, as with the 1C dining areas, you can throw in an optional dead body as needed. The body has the keycard to get past the Floor 1 checkpoints.

Event: Secret skill, Luxury Gyms. As in area 1C and in the garden entryway at the end of Episode 3, one PC gets a Secret skill linked to his forgotten past. When the PCs look in on the INDIGO or VIOLET gyms, pick a player who

hasn't already received a Secret skill, and give him a copy of the note 'Secret skill #3, Luxury Gyms', from the handout notes on page 74.

1E. Elevator atrium (lower)

An unfortunate technical accident some years ago burned a hole through the floor above, so INDIGO overseers made it look intentional by turning the hole into an atrium. Four elevators, cylindrical transparent tubes like The Jetsons, rise to the second floor. A security checkpoint surveys the atrium and its central staircase.

Elevators: Despite the IntSec officer's warning at the end of Episode 3, using the elevators presents no danger. However, because they're pneumatic, air-powered, they churn loudly in operation. This alerts Lobot WMD-1, up on Floor 3, though in fact the PCs automatically alert the lobot as soon as they reach Floor 2, regardless of their actions.

Clue drop: Dying scientist on staircase.

A wide staircase leads from the center of the atrium up to Floor 2. At the foot of the staircase lies the twitching form of a pale, thin man. At the same time you see his BLUE jumpsuit, you also notice the wide yellow stripe that means registered mutant, as well as his brightly glowing eyes. He's staring into space, gritting his teeth and sweating. He seems to be mumbling to himself.

This is R&D hardware specialist **Ahmet-B-YGV-4**. An hour ago the lobot wiped Ahmet-B's memory of the last few weeks, starting from the day he joined the revived Project Ice Pick. But owing to his Deep Thought mutation and high Power, Ahmet-B has spent the last hour fighting off the MemWipe catalysts by sheer mental force. He is about to lose the battle.

If any Troubleshooter tries to talk with Ahmet-B, he stares balefully at the PC and gasps, 'You! Ba—rrgh! Back so soon....' Even in crisis, he is inherently sarcastic; the PC, whom he recognizes as a former high-clearance official, has been gone a month. But this enigmatic remark may help convince the players Ahmet-B is delirious. That, or else one of their team has secretly visited the Loyalty Assurance complex already.

Ahmet-B answers no questions and reveals nothing about the PCs' lost past. He says only this:

'Lobot—misprogrammed. Saboteur. Wanted to have lobot kill—its creators. Coded wrong command—"erase" instead of "destroy". Lobot—now wants to—erase—memories of its existence. Knowing about it means—it targets you. I—I truly do despise that annoying, saccharine music.'

Ahmet-B says nothing more. His eyes go dark as the PCs watch, and he drops unconscious. No healing works on him; physically he's fine, aside from a black eye. Long after this mission ends, Ahmet-B should wake up with a splitting headache and no memory of the last month—though for now, make the players think his mind has been destroyed.

The PCs see a keycard sticking out of Ahmet-B's jumpsuit pocket. This card permits access to Floor 3. If they skipped the showroom and the gym, Ahmet-B's PDC holds an unencrypted copy of the showroom presentation, which he had intended to pass along to his Psion masters.

Floor 2

The second floor is a straightforward floor of offices, totally dull, plain vanilla—or, more accurately, lime, because all hallways are GREEN Clearance.

Code names: A map and directory at the head of the staircase identifies the offices of all Loyalty Assurance workers, including the VIOLET administrators who run, or ran, the firm. For security purposes (and to avoid giving away this mission's big twist), the directory identifies all staffers by code names (see the boxed text on this page). The directory still lists the former administrators (the PCs) by code name: Chigger, Leech, Roach, Midge, Louse and Skeeter.

The current project administrator is Luke-V-JPE, aka 'Silverfish'—the VIOLET who gave the PCs their mission in Episode 2. Silverfish's office is 2B on the map. The six PCs' former offices have been sealed for the last month as part of an ongoing IntSec investigation into the lobot's malfunction. These offices are intact, and PCs who enter their own offices feel tremendous *deja vu*. Use one or more of these offices to provide the clues that reveal the PCs' forgotten past.

2A. Elevator atrium (upper)

A 1.5m railed walkway (not shown on the map) permits access from the elevators to Floor 2. (Hint: What better place to play elevator music?)

2B. Office of 'Silverfish' (Luke-V)

This understated VIOLET-Clearance office has only a bare desk, a data terminal and shelves of hardcopy procedural manuals from R&D and several other service groups. A framed image on the wall, dated one month ago, shows a smiling Luke-V-JPE displaying his new VIOLET-Clearance jumpsuit.

Judging by dust patterns on the carpet, it looks like there used to be stuff here, but it was all recently moved out.



As the lobot attacked earlier today, Luke-V had just moved out of this interim office and was about to occupy area 3A, the former office of 'Chigger'—erstwhile project leader Evan-V-JER (now PC Evan-R).

PCs who hack into Luke-V's terminal find many inscrutable project updates about Project Ice Pick, as well as presentations and documents that explain basically the same points as the showroom presentation on Floor 1. All the good stuff is encrypted, though, and they can't break the encryption.

At your option, you might let the players uncover some additional information:

- ☞ A team of high-clearance researchers—four executives and seven junior execs—created Project Ice Pick because business was bad and they needed a project The Computer would like.
- ☞ The researchers programmed the bot's advanced AI with everything they knew, and all their personal cunning.
- ☞ Having taken over the project in the wake of the founders' 'unfortunate accident', Luke-V is concerned with the project's overall approach, and may propose a refocusing and reprioritization. (This may sound sinister to the players, who undoubtedly suspect Luke-V of low motives. In fact, Luke-V is concerned at the bot's barbarity, and hopes to sabotage the project.)

2C. Display room

As the door opens, you see a small, strange black bot hovering in mid-air at the room's center. What do you do?

'It's only a model.' The hardware lab built this nonfunctional simulacrum of the Lobot WMD-1 as a test of its unusual titanium-coated graphite-fiber armor. The model's armor is identical to the actual lobot's (technically armor value 5, hardened; actually, GM fiat). Let the players fire all their weapons at the model. To instill the proper air of apprehension, make sure nothing short of a plasma generator even scorches the armor.

When all the fireworks are done, you can read this description to the players:

The bot is flat black, non-humanoid, about the size of a sink. It has a sleek frame based around a flattened, serpentine spine. From the spine protrude six interleaving, flexible tentacle-like arms. The inside of each arm has apertures, possibly to hold tools of some kind. The base of the flexible spines extend into a razor-tipped tail that looks prehensile. There are camera eyes (similar to spider eyes) along the spine.

The six arms are designed to encase a victim's head. The arms of the actual lobot are fitted with surgical lobotomization tools, as well as other utensils as your storyline requires.

2D-E. GREEN/BLUE offices

These are business offices, one worker apiece. Desks, data terminals, shelves. The GREEN offices are like your boss's office. The BLUE offices are like his boss's office. The workers in these offices are non-technical support personnel: human resources, accounting, operations and maintenance, and large numbers of people in charge of sitting and looking busy.

We wondered how to make these offices interesting, until we realized making them interesting misses the point. This is a dull, dispiriting place, and the PCs made it that way.

Event: Lobot sighting 1. Somewhere in these narrow hallways, for the first time, the PCs see the lobot in action—or rather, they don't see it.

By the time the PCs reach Floor 2, the lobot (on Floor 3) has detected them. It moves silently and invisibly to investigate. Recognizing the Troubleshooters instantly as its designers, whose memories it already wiped, the bot eavesdrops to determine if the PCs are talking about it and therefore still know of its existence.

To stage this encounter, you want the PCs moving nervously, stealthily down a hallway. A random noise from around a corner should put them on their guard.

As they creep along, ask the players to describe their formation. If they're not already on their guard and looking in all directions, this should alert them. After they've specified all the directions they're looking, and all the precautions they're taking, unnerve them by dropping the lobot invisibly in their very midst.

You [pick one or two players] hear bouncy, upbeat music playing quietly. You look over your shoulder at your fellow Troubleshooters. They seem to look wavery, like the air is rippling around them. The ripples have a particular shape, like a long tail, flicking back and forth.

The lobot's stealth videocladding works like the Chameleon mutation, making it difficult to detect. So if the chosen PCs happen to fire on the bot as it hovers in their midst, this could certainly seem to an ignorant observer as if said PCs were firing on their fellow Troubleshooters. How unfortunate.

The bouncy music is part of the lobot's happiness assurance technology. Per orders from The Computer, the bot plays relaxing elevator music while lobotomizing its victims.

The lobot should easily dodge or shrug off attacks (remember: GM fiat armor). Regardless of the PCs' actions, it darts down the hallway, a

Identity protection

Official **code names** are serious business in Alpha Complex. The Computer grants citizens of any clearance official code names, depending on the sensitivity of their projects. To lock down a project beyond hope of detection, The Computer may assign GREEN-Clearance citizens to perform all jobs involved, even custodial duties. That works great for morale.

Project Ice Pick workers adopted code names to hide their identities. Only INDIGO-Clearance and higher members of Project Ice Pick (and The Computer, of course) had access to their real identities.

The PCs carried out business with outside investors and service groups through **SecureMask**, an identity vidfilter used on many sensitive projects. SecureMask substitutes a random Computer-retrieved human video image and sound for the masked person's actual image and voice. Authorized recipients can authenticate the transmission by viewing the SecureMask certificate associated with the transmission. The certificate contains an identity number and the clearance of the masked sender.

This is one more way to justify and sustain the amnesia angle. Few people knew the PCs' names and appearances, so few could connect them to their current identities as Troubleshooters.

The Computer itself assigns code names using whatever word database is least in use across Alpha Complex at the time the name is granted. Hence the names tend to be... unusual.

PCs

Real name	Code name	Area
Evan-V-JER-2	Chigger	CEO/HW
Vijay-V-KRI-2	Leech	CTO
Freeman-V-MNP-2	Roach	Software
Jenny-V-STA-2	Midge	Software
David-V-ZAH-2	Louse	Marketing
Nadine-I-HRU-2	Skeeter	Medical

NPCs

Use these NPC names and code names as needed during the mission.

Real name	Code name	Area
Ellen-I-UJW-3	Blowfly	Marketing
Bjorn-B-SPI-3	Beetle	Software
Lucy-B-LKO-3	Aphid	Marketing
Luke-B-JEP-4	Silverfish	Software
Chase-B-TYW-2	Flea	Software
Ian-B-FSJ-2	Yellowjacket	Hardware
Kaylee-B-VFG-3	Bedbug	Hardware
Steve-B-CRN-3	Mite	Hardware

mere blur of air. For the smoothest play, you can have the bot lead the PCs to the next areas, the VIOLET offices at 2F-H (below), then vanish.

Sidelights: Secret skills #5-6. If you have a fifth and sixth player, then while they're prowling around the offices, give one the handout on page 74 for **Secret skill #5, Luxury Soaps** (keyed to any bathroom), and the other **Secret skill #6, Luxury Autocars** (keyed to, we dunno, a poster or model of an autocar in someone's office; truth to tell, this one is a reach). Both handouts are with the other skills on page 74.

2F-H. VIOLET admin offices

The three doors along this stretch of hallway have name panels beside them that read, 'ROACH—Software Lead, Team 1,' 'MIDGE—Software Lead, Team 2' and 'LOUSE—Marketing'.

Three of the PCs—Freeman-R-MNP (codename 'Roach'), Jenny-R-STA ('Midge') and David-R-ZAH ('Louse')—used to occupy these three large, lavish offices. Following the lobot's attack a month ago, The Computer ordered these offices sealed—first, in the expectation the wiped PCs might recover and resume their duties; second, to protect evidence, pending Internal Security investigation into the cause of the lobot sabotage.

Here the players finally learn of their former lives. (If they took a different route here, it's possible they already got the surprise in area 2J, below.) Stage the big reveal enigmatically, aiming for maximum mutual suspicion:

You could swear you've been here before. You've seen this hallway, and these VIOLET doors. You know those code names on the plaques beside each door: Roach, Midge and Louse. Everyone had code names for security purposes. Except, wait—who's 'everyone'?

Each door is locked with a standard thumbprint scanner and a numeric keypad. Freeman-R, you remember the code for Roach's door as 4-9-8-9-3-2. Jenny-R, you recall Midge's door code, 5-0-3-3-4-8. David-R, you're pretty sure Louse's code was 2-7-1-5-9-9.

Be ready to smile and offer implacable, unsettling reassurance when your players ask why they remember this: 'You don't know how you remember.' Aim for maximal disquiet.

Each office holds a desk, a data terminal and evidence that links one PC to his past. Some suggestions:

- As in Luke-V's office (area 2B), a giant wall image shows the PC proudly displaying a brand-new VIOLET jumpsuit.

- A framed vidscreen endlessly repeats a vidshow clip from the nonfiction series 'Lavish Living With Trusted Citizens', showing the smug PC touring his luxurious VIOLET-Clearance living quarters.

- A group company photo in the Floor 1 showroom (area 1B), showing all the PCs in VIOLET or INDIGO jumpsuits, amid several dozen workers in BLUE and GREEN clothing.

Miscellaneous hardcopy technical materials hint at each PC's role on Project Ice Pick:

- Freeman-V:** 'Hygiene' software module (medical and lobotomy knowledge), stealth abilities

- Jenny-V:** Medical-weapons programming (targeting with tangler), Data Search, Bot Programming (the lobot can reprogram itself to an extent)

- David-V:** Marketing and advertising texts

The PCs can't recall their data terminal passwords or bring up their data records.

2I. (Nothing)

There is no 2I because '2I' looks like '21' and we didn't want to confuse you. You're welcome.

2J. Office of 'Skeeter' (Nadine-I)

If the PCs have already been to their former offices at areas 2F, G and H, they know they used to be high-clearance execs. They may want to charge onward to Floor 3. But they still need important backstory: that they ran Project Ice Pick and were, incidentally, bastards. They'll learn it at this far corner office, if you can lure them here.

The door of this corner office has been blown out of its frame. A wall panel beside the frame reads, 'SKEETER—Medical consultant'. The office inside has INDIGO walls and a large portrait of Nadine-R-HRU, your teammate. In the image, she's wearing an INDIGO jumpsuit and working with some kind of medical equipment.

Nadine-I-HRU, before her amnesia, was an early Ice Pick hire, a medical consultant expert. Her specialty was cingulotomy, a lobotomy-like psychosurgical operation involving destruction of the cingulate gyrus, the connection between the limbic region and the frontal lobes. In the wall image, from her INDIGO days, Nadine-I is calibrating an electrode used in this procedure.

Unknown to anyone at Loyalty Assurance (including the other PCs), Nadine-I was also the firm's highest-ranking Internal Security plant. She covertly maintained dossiers of all personnel and

made regular secret reports to headquarters via an online weblog (blog).

The players might imagine the lobot blew off the door, but they're mistaken. The culprit was IntSec agent Jackie-B, whom they met in Episode 3. She was hoping to locate and destroy any evidence Nadine-I might have gained about Jackie-B's secret society activities. Jackie-B found nothing, though she did print out a copy of Nadine-I's blog. However, the door explosion drew the lobot, which promptly wiped her.

Clue drop: Skeeter's blog. The PCs find Jackie-I's printout of Nadine-I's blog on the office desk. Give the players the handout on page 75, which contains pertinent excerpts from this blog. The information the players should glean from it (if they haven't already figured it out)

- All the PCs were either Loyalty Assurance VIOLET executives in charge of Project Ice Pick, or INDIGO specialists working under them. All of them were reprehensible jerks.

- Luke-V-JPE, who gave them this mission, was originally Luke-B, a lead technician, at the time of the lobot's launch. Luke-B learned a lot more about Project Ice Pick than others at his level. He reprogrammed the lobot to turn against the PCs at launch.

- The lobot was to erase its creators' and its own existence, but due to Luke-B's erroneous programming, it misinterpreted the order as a command to erase all memory of itself from everyone who knew of its existence—in other words, every worker on Project Ice Pick.

Ideally each player should see the blog before going on to Floor 3. Naturally, you can expect the first PC who finds it to conceal it from the others—or, at best, the team leader will confiscate it. The solution? If necessary, plant printouts of this blog everywhere—in every office, the checkpoint booths, the bathrooms. The joke is that once some Loyalty Assurance worker got a copy—maybe from an IntSec GREEN goon—he promptly spread it around.

What will the PCs think, knowing Nadine-I's libel of their forgotten selves got around the whole office? Will they care? Would you?

2K. Stairs to Floor 3

Eventually the lobot decides the PCs must know of its existence, and therefore it must wipe them again. The bot decides to reduce their threat first—make them exhaust their ammo.

A security checkpoint—a wall of armorglass (I3)—restricts access to Floor 3. The PCs should have found a keycard in the showroom or elsewhere on Floor 1. If they didn't, you can either make them retrace their steps (especially if they



haven't found the required clues so far) or just decide the lobot has blown open the checkpoint. (Technically the lobot knows all security codes required to pass every checkpoint harmlessly, but you don't have to stick to that if it helps the mission flow more smoothly.)

Event: Darkness; lobot sighting 2. As the Troubleshooters pass the security checkpoint and head up the stairs, the bot remotely shuts down the stairway lights, plunging the stairs into darkness. The PCs hear pleasant elevator music. PCs equipped to see in darkness can see just the bot's tail, disappearing up the staircase.

The tail they see isn't the lobot itself, but another model, like the one they saw in the display room (2C). The real lobot, cloaked, is carrying the fake model in its tail, held well away from its body. PCs who fire on the visible model have no chance of hitting the real bot. Any shot on the fake should blow it to cheap plastic shards. Troubleshooters who examine the shards can easily determine that the bot has outfitted them.

If a PC does somehow manage to target the real bot, take this opportunity to demonstrate that the Troubleshooters' weapons are useless against its advanced armor.

After its staircase appearance, the cloaked lobot vanishes up the stairs and into a ceiling airvent. It retreats to area 3C or 3D, the laboratories.

Floor 3

This heavily secured floor is the actual production center where Lobot WMD-1 was researched and built. The three research labs here specialize in hardware (the bot's advanced armor and stealth systems), software (its extremely advanced AI and security systems) and medicine (for the bot's memory wiping techniques).

3A. Office of 'Chigger' (Evan-V)

The former leaders of Project Ice Pick, Evan-V-JER-2 and Vijay-V-KRI-2, had lavish offices on this level. Both were closed until recently by Internal Security pending investigation. Luke-V-JPE had just moved his office up here from area 2A when the lobot attacked earlier today. In all likelihood the players are by now so curious about their former lives, they'll search these offices on general principle. If they don't, have a mysterious noise inside one office lure them to break in. (It's, we dunno, bad plumbing.) You want the PCs to discover the clue here.

This VIOLET-painted office belonged to project lead Evan-V. Vijay-V's office is across the hall.

Clue drop: MemoMax restoration form. Just inside the door, an open plastic crate labeled 'Luke-V' holds reports, manuals, and this crucial clue. See the handout on page 76. Luke-V completed this form to authorize Tech Services to reload the PCs' brains with old backup tapes.

This form indicates "sabotage" as the reason why the PCs' current MemoMax backups were destroyed. The players probably suspect Luke-V of the deed, but Lobot WMD-1 was acting on its own when it destroyed the storage facility. Don't work hard to disabuse the players' suspicions.

3B. Office of 'Tick' (Vijay-V)

Identical to Chigger's office, this fine VIOLET-walled space belonged to the Ice Pick hardware team lead. It has a wall whiteboard with this text:

1. Bot compares target's features to internal database; identifies target; cross-indexes to IntSec DB; gets date of first treason. (1 second)

2. Bot damps noise emissions; cloaks; flies over target's head; stuns with taser in tail. (1-3 sec)

3. Immobilizes target's head in cage of arms; per Computer instruction, starts playing pleasant music to minimize suffering. (2 sec)

4. Inserts leucotome probe under target's right orbital ridge, slipping smoothly around eyeball, and drills through thin bone protecting forebrain. (7-10 sec—improve!)

5. From treason date, bot determines appropriate MemWipe catalysts; selects catalysts from internal storage (125K microdroplets of catalyst, total wt 160g); combines in internal chamber, flash-vaporizes using sonic agitation. (5 sec)

6. Injects blood-temperature MemWipe catalysts into target's forebrain. (5 sec)

Total: 21-26 sec

The Troubleshooters should understand that the lobot performed this procedure on each of them a month ago, and is about to do so again.

Clue drop: Bot override password. If Vijay-R is in his old office, he feels mysteriously drawn to one particular manual on a shelf—a worker directory. The three-ring binder contains images of all the PCs in their high-clearance lives, as well as other Ice Pick workers.

The interesting thing is, the PCs' images are circled, and no other workers are. A note in Vijay-R's (or -V's) handwriting reads, 'Code sections.' His own image is labeled '1. Citizen Cindy-ZEN's senses.' The other PCs' images are unnumbered, save for Evan-V, who is #2.

These cryptic notes refer to a code the PCs, being devious bastards, secretly programmed into the lobot before it was activated. It's a backdoor, a verbal override code—a tongue twister, actually—that, when spoken to the lobot, takes control of the bot. Each PC knew his own part of the tongue twister, and also knew who had the sections before and after his. But because

they didn't trust one another, no one knew the entire code.

Each Troubleshooter still remembers his portion of the tongue twister. But as you see from the pregenerated character writeups (pages 77-80), each PC mistakenly recalls it as a secret society password or other code signal. Seeing this clue, sharp players may actually piece together the whole thing, if they trust and confide in one another. Heh.

The override password

Each PC knows one section of the tongue twister. The entire password must be spoken correctly, either by one person or several in concert, to take control of the lobot. (If you have fewer than six players, assign the following phrases in order, one per PC, and drop the surplus.)

Vijay-R: *When Citizen Cindy-ZEN senses IntSec citizens...*

Evan-R: *...sending scrubots to scrub cots' blots free of spots...*

Freeman-R: *...she packs glass flasks in sacks—in fact, B3 she seeks...*

Jenny-R: *...'B3' she speaks, 'B3' she squeaks, 'B3' she shrieks...*

David-R: *...when B3, so sweet, streaks the sheets—*

Nadine-R: *...and pittipats to Pat-I-TAP to trap a sap at Vat C-TRAT.*

3C-D. Hardware /software labs

As the PCs arrive on this floor after their staircase encounter with the lobot (area 2K), the bot has extinguished the lights in both these labs and is waiting in one of them. Which one? Whichever one the PCs enter first. And they have to enter—their mission is to deactivate the bot.

The **hardware lab** is a spooky place, filled with mysterious big loud machines, identifiable with a Hardware roll: nanotube fabricators, diamond vapor deposition chambers, titanium injection mold devices and tons of other high-tech stuff. They all thrum with power, making conversation difficult. Wide pipes, dripping with condensation, connect the machines. The floor is a grating over meter-deep channels filled with wiring and conduits. The ceiling is high and dark; anything could lurk up there. All you need is an H. R. Giger set design and you're running *Alien*.

The **software lab** has quietly humming workstations (unhackable), a few floor-to-ceiling room-dividing partitions, chip burners, whiteboards, wall diagrams of the human skull (with measurements of thickness) and gigantic 3D holographic displays of the lobot visualized at all sizes and angles. Any one of those projections could be the actual lobot....

Little Roomba-like bot vacuum cleaners dart around the room, cleaning. Any blur of motion under a desk *could* be one of them, or....

In both labs the PCs may find a few unconscious, recently wiped workers of GREEN or BLUE clearance. Use them as last-ditch clue drops to deliver important information. Maybe they're carrying keycards to the PCs' former offices, or someone has a printout of Nadine-I's blog.

Otherwise, these two labs hold no useful clues and don't advance the plot, exactly. Their function is emotional. The events here establish the lobot as a credible nemesis, then (as befits **PARANOIA**) establish the PCs themselves as far greater dangers.

Event 1: Lobot attack. The first lab—whichever one the players enter first—is your chance, GM, to stage a tense, suspenseful hunt-or-be-hunted scene to rival your favorite monster movies.

The lobot is fully as intelligent as all the PCs; after all, they programmed it. Mention this now and then to keep the players jumpy. Use this intelligence. The bot approaches the PCs from unexpected angles above or below; it uses its reflection in shiny machinery as a decoy; it inserts itself directly between two PCs in order to make them fire on one another. Now and then, just to keep everyone tense, it darts in invisibly, plays elevator music, and darts away. Music-and-run.

Shrewd and courageous PCs can try different ways to detect the bot or compromise its stealth tech—spill paint or cleanser on it, track it in infrared wavelengths, and so on. Smart groups may have already deduced the override password, and will try shouting it to the rafters. All this is fine—as long as none of it works yet. For instance, you may decide the bot isn't around when the PCs speak the override password, or their password is just slightly wrong. Keep the bot a threat until the PCs reach the medical lab.

Event 2: Lobot sows dissension. This can occur in either the hardware or the software lab, any time after Event 1. After they've been terrorized in the first lab, the players are primed to fall for the lobot's cunning trick in the second.

When one or more PCs are separated from the others, read this to that PC's player:

You're creeping carefully along, looking for the bot, when suddenly, around a corner, you hear elevator music—and a mechanical voice. A bot voice is saying, 'I have terrorized your fellow Troubleshooters as you instructed, master. What are your new orders?'

If the PC looks around the corner, he sees the lobot hovering there. The lobot actually isn't speaking to anyone, but has positioned itself so the eavesdropping Troubleshooter can't see that. The bot intends to make the Troubleshooters suspect one of their own team has been guiding it. The lobot hypothesizes the entire team, maddened by mutual suspicion, will knock each other out (or worse), saving it trouble and expediting a second memory-wipe.

Will it work? Actually, this is an awkward time for everyone to kill each other; they're quite close to the mission's end. So aim for maiming results at worst. Unless—could there be?—a clone backup delivery system close by in area 3E, the medical lab? Is that crazy? Crazier than having clone backups to begin with?

3E-F. Medical lab/storeroom

When the lobot attacked Loyalty Assurance earlier today, INDIGO administrators took refuge, along with two dozen mission-critical BLUEs, in the high-security medical lab on Floor 3. The INDIGOs figured this would protect them, for they had changed all the security codes since the lobot's previous attack. They didn't know the lobot's creators, the PCs, had built secret backdoors into the Loyalty Assurance security system, just as they'd built a backdoor into the lobot itself. And the lobot knows everything the PCs knew....

This large BLUE-walled room was one of the most advanced medical laboratories you've ever seen—at least that you recall. Now it's wrecked. It's a mess of toppled shelves, overturned autoclaves and centrifuges, and broken spectrographs. Unconscious bodies lie everywhere, coated with a glittering blanket of shattered test tubes.

In the far left corner of the room is a large walled room with a BLUE door labeled STORAGE. There's an armorglass window in the door, and through it you see several people gesturing to you frantically.

These Loyalty Assurance workers are the only unharmed survivors of the lobot's attack. The lobot easily penetrated Floor 3 security and wiped most workers in the hardware and software labs. By the time it reached the medical lab, two dozen BLUEs and INDIGOs were safely huddled in the locked and impenetrable medical storeroom. They'd blocked the air vents but couldn't disable the cameras.

Many other workers weren't as fast as these survivors. They wrecked the lab struggling to get ahead of each other and reach the storeroom before the lobot found them. They failed.

Clue drop: Survivors in med lab storeroom. These 24 frightened BLUEs and INDIGOs have shared their suspicions, pooled their knowledge and deduced the PCs programmed a backdoor to take control of the lobot. (This is easy to explain if you assume any batch of high-clearance citizens is likely spying on each other.) Have the players yet worked out that the tongue-twisting code phrases they thought were 'secret society passphrases' (listed on their character sheets under 'Secret society mission') are actually the



sections of the override code? If not, this is your last-ditch chance to spell it out.

Event: Confrontation with lobot. Immediately after the PCs communicate with the survivors and glean the importance of the tongue-twister code, stage the climactic encounter of the episode, where the lobot makes a final frontal assault to wipe all the PCs. It turns visible directly above whoever is currently speaking the override code, hoping to draw fire onto that character; then cloaks again and repeats once or twice more. Then the bot chooses as its first victim whoever looks most threatening; it uses its tail taser and active-denial repulsor alternately, snafuing as many PCs as it can while trying to wipe the victim.



Wipe vs. tongue twister: Wiping one victim takes four rounds. If the bot gets interrupted in mid-wipe, the victim is unharmed (except for a black eye) and the bot must start over. If its target is killed before the bot finishes the wipe, that PC's next clone backup retains the memories the bot would have wiped.

Players who want to use the password should speak it aloud themselves, there at the table. The

password has one segment per PC, though any player can speak any segment. Speaking the password takes one round per segment. The entire password must be spoken correctly without pause or interruption, or the speaker must start over. Once the password is spoken, the lobot instantly releases its current victim and hovers, visible, in standby mode.

Make this confrontation both tense and manic, as the Troubleshooters try to shout their complete password while the lobot is attacking. Other clever attacks should work too; remove the bot's GM-fiat protection now. Let the bot wipe one or two PCs, if you're feeling high-spirited, but let the PCs win, and keep most of them alive and sapient for the big choice in Episode 5.

Lobot WMD-1

Lobot WMD-1 is technically a nonlethal bot, capable of quickly subduing and brainwiping traitors. It recycles menacing traitors into productive, if memory-challenged, citizens. It also uses this 'mental hygiene' approach to wipe citizens who threaten its survival or its mission; such citizens are, by definition, traitors.

The bot's AI personality is quiet, insightful and manipulative. It has an effective IQ of 150 or higher (as smart as you can play it), and lacks silly personality flaws like villainous gloating. It acts in the most efficient manner, with no concept of honor or ethics.

To subdue a 'patient', the lobot uses its stealth technology to approach silently and invisibly when the patient is alone. It typically uses its hovering ability to descend from above, though it takes an ankle-level 'nap-of-earth' approach as needed.

The lobot has an 'active denial' repulsor, a focused, invisible 95GHz energy beam. Targets feel a harmless but intolerable burning sensation, forcing them to flee. Outside the beam's range, the sensation vanishes instantly. Energy fields, farraday suits and hardened armor protect completely against the repulsor effect.

Upgrade these statistics as desired; the bot has complete GM fiat. Introduce new weapons as needed. The PCs must stay alert against the cunning bot.

Stats

Measurements: Body 1.5m (T) x 1.5m (W) x 1m (L); tail 6m (L); weight 225kg.

Frame: Titanium-coated graphite fiber (armor value 5, hardened).

Farraday field: Armor 5 vs. radiation and magnetic fields.

AI: All Stealth specialties 18 (no Disguise or Sleight of Hand); Management 15; Violence 16; Hygiene 20; Brainwipe Procedure 20.

Locomotion: Hover (sprint speed).

Body

Antigrav propulsion: Shielded coil running down spine; difficult to destroy or disable without destroying the lobot itself.

Arm cage: Interlocking arms; looks like flexible rib cage, entraps and stabilizes victim's head; Violence 18.

Active denial: The repulsor works like a stungun, except the target is snafued and can do nothing but flee.



Tail: Works as a tangler, 2m range, rating 18; typically pins victim's arms to his sides; tip has manipulators for precision injections. A jack near the end can plug into standard Alpha Complex dataports.

Spine: Fitted along its length with multiple spiderlike camera eyes and recorders.

Arm equipment

Lobotomization tools: Stored in compartments inside the arm cage: needles, drills, ice pick, MemWipe drugs, leucotomes (brain penetration tools).

Happiness tools: Lightweight stereo sound system speakers play soothing music during brainwipes.

Stealth

Sound dampening field: Surrounds bot; always on; to outside observers, music played during brainscrubbing is silenced.

Video cladding: Works like the Chameleon mutation.

5: Version control

Whether by speaking the override password, or just by hitting it enough times in sufficiently clever ways, the Troubleshooters can defeat Lobot WMD-1.

The moment the bot falls to the ground, the trapped BLUE and INDIGO workers pile out of the storeroom. Most of them make a run for the bathrooms. An INDIGO official, a small blond woman whose name badge reads *Blowfly*, approaches you with careful politeness.

She says, 'I see you've, um, come back.' She doesn't sound enthused. Nor do the half-dozen BLUE workers behind her. They look more wary than welcoming.

These citizens worked under the PCs in their VIOLET days. Seeing their old bosses in RED outfits, they don't know what to expect. None of them tries the usual high-clearance snootiness.

For dramatic reasons the PCs can't command the lobot until you finish setting up their dilemma, at the end of this subsection. Use the Loyalty Assurance NPCs to fill in whatever backstory the players missed or correct misconceptions they had. Then, after the conversation dies down:

The medical lab door slides back, and there stands Luke-V-JPE, the VIOLET who gave you this mission—and who, as Luke-B, put you in this situation by misprogramming your bot. He's still wearing his combat armor, but he's carrying his helmet instead of a weapon.

He smiles and waves to the BLUE and INDIGO workers. They all applaud Luke-V and rush to greet him.

Even with the missing helmet, Luke-V has GM fiat armor until he speaks his piece, below. If the PCs attack Luke-V, the BLUEs and INDIGOs obstruct their shots, or use (unregistered) mutations to protect him. Emphasize their devotion to their current boss, in sharp contrast to their dislike of the PCs, their former bosses.

If any of the PCs' remote surveillance drones are still active, Luke-V pulls out a remote and deactivates them.

Luke-V says to you politely, 'I understand you've pieced together most of what happened to you. I hoped you would remember the override code you programmed into Lobot WMD-1. As for the rest, I'd hoped you might not discover any of—of your story. But you need to hear the rest. Fortunately, we aren't under surveillance just now, so I have a proposal for you.'

'You may already know I programmed Lobot WMD-1 to attack and kill you when you launched it, then to self-destruct. That is true. But I acted with the best intentions. I believed then, and I still believe, Project Ice Pick is a menace to Alpha Complex. Sane people would never have created it, and you were mad to do so.'

'After the lobot wiped you and destroyed your most recent backup memories, The Computer placed me in charge of Project Ice Pick. These workers you see here, under my direction, have been covertly, undetectably, sabotaging this project. We can produce results so poor The Computer will never again pursue this research.'

'I'm asking you to let us destroy the project you created. The former VIOLET supervisors I knew never would have permitted this. But I've watched you on this mission, I believe you have proven yourselves better people as RED Troubleshooters than you ever were as INDIGO and VIOLET researchers.'

'Now, in a moment the lobot's reboot sequence will finish, and it will be under your sole control. If you are still the people you once were, you'll have the bot kill me and wipe everyone in this room. But if you agree this bot must never do to others what it did to you, you can hand over its control to me. I shall order it to wipe your last few hours of memory—from the time I gave you this mission—and then I shall destroy it. You'll resume your life as RED-Clearance Troubleshooters. No doubt you'll eventually rise once again to VIOLET Clearance, and then, I hope, you'll serve Alpha Complex better than you have to date.'

'What do you say?'

Of course the players won't believe Luke-V. Would you? But it's all true. The other workers vouch for Luke-V, for what that's worth. They testify to his efforts to save them during the lobot's original attack last month, for which heroism he earned VIOLET Clearance. If necessary, they can produce examples of the way they've sabotaged Project Ice Pick.

But you don't want to slow the tempo much here. The point is to inspire whatever doubts you can in the players' minds, then move straight to the dilemma: Do they resume their lives as utter amoral bastards, or do they do the right thing?

The lobot beeps and rises into the air. It hovers at eye level. It says, 'Awaiting your command.'

The PCs are now in control of the lobot. They can do anything they want with it...

Depending on their choice, close the mission by reading either Epilogue 1 or Epilogue 2.

Epilogue 1

A month later you're all sitting in the VIOLET dining room, lunching on boneless breast of quail in cream wine sauce with a side of asparagus risotto. Each of you has a poison sniffer perched alertly by your plate, but none of them are chirping. You're all friends here!

The Computer checks in for an update on Project Ice Pick. It's all going smoothly, now that you've replaced all those treacherous BLUEs and INDIGOs with loyal workers. At least, the new workers haven't demonstrated any treachery yet—that you know about. Hmm, maybe it's time to wipe their last few days of memories, just to be sure.

The Computer says, 'Your progress pleases me. To encourage you, I have authorized one merit promotion to ULTRAVIOLET Clearance for the VIOLET official who has made the most valuable contribution to Project Ice Pick. I shall hear your presentations in the showroom in one hour. Those who do not attend will not be considered for this promotion.'

The Computer signs off. You all look at each other. Without a word, you all rise together and move toward the door. The ones in back move to catch up, which makes the ones in front walk faster.

By the time you reach the doorway, you're all running.

Epilogue 2

Finally! You can't remember when you've been through such hassles to find your mission, and for a RED-Clearance Troubleshooter that's saying a lot.

Now you're all gathered in a bare concrete hallway in Autocar Garage DSF-10445. You're standing outside an open door into the largest illegal tire-regrooving warehouse in this sector.

The Computer has politely asked you to shut down this criminal operation and arrest everyone involved. And you know that, in Alpha Complex, satisfying The Computer is the path to advancement....

Episode 4 Secret skills

Individual PCs gain these skills as their memories gradually return in Episode 4. At certain locations on the map, a random PC spontaneously (re)gains one of these skills. It's, you know, a Marcel Proust thing—taste the madeleine cookie, and suddenly you remember a six-volume French novel. When it's time to give out a skill, pick a player who hasn't received one yet, or who has fewer of them than the others.

Skill #1: Exotic Plants

Location: Entrance checkpoint (actually at the end of Episode 3).

You've seen vids of YELLOW-Clearance hydroponics plants before—their flabby grey fungi and frail, shriveled fruits. This is *far* different—this... this... *magnanimous* GREEN gesture. Entirely without purpose except the uplifting of citizen morale! An actual lustrous-leaved *Ligustrum amurense*, though far short of its full 15-foot height! And heartbreakingly floriferous, real live *Diascia* 'Appleblossom'! And this is just the reception room. You wonder what good-hearted high-clearance citizen bestowed the plants to ornament this reception room.

As you look around the small room, your gaze falls on the mounded lavender spikes of *Nepeta faassenii*. And—is it? Could it be? Yes! a delicate, violet-hued and quite rare *Strobilanthes dyerianus*. And, oh wow! A stand of the exotic and exceedingly rare purple cultivar of *Lapageria alba*.

Alas, that at RED Clearance you are stuck with ingesting tomatoes that taste like freezer burn. You were made for better things.

You now have a Secret skill, **Exotic Plants**, at rating 14.

Skill #4: Luxury Gyms

Location: Any gymnasium on Floor 1 (area 1D).

In the course of an ordinary Troubleshooting day, you get enough physical exercise that you don't need to visit the gym. A good thing too; RED gyms are noisy, sweaty affairs. You're sure you're a better match for the tonier, high-clearance gyms. Not just free weights and stationary bikes—no! The ones you occupy in your dreams: Where graceful quasi-human spabots transport you on a velvet-cushioned palanquin from a hard workout to an exquisite pedicure. You lounge, sipping a fruity vitamin drink, before a cascading waterfall. The decor—sporty light woods and Circuit Nouveau elements. The waiting list for the executive locker room, behind frosted glass doors, never includes you.

Behind those exclusive doors, you prepare to return to busy Alpha Complex life, from your refuge of private saunas, natural fiber robes, fresh fruit baskets and personal trainers. Then, of course, you wake up.

You now have a Secret skill, **Luxury Gyms**, at rating 14.

Skill #2: Gourmet Foods

Location: Any dining area on Floor 1 (area 1C).

Savory smells start you salivating: Poached egg over braised leeks with shaved white truffle. You groan in delight. Oh, and the grilled porcini over the Parmesan risotto...divine! Never mind the comfortable scent of duck pappardelle and acquacotta wafting its way to your nose. And...could it be?...yes! chocolate mousse brûlée, and rhubarb tart side-dipped in white chocolate and topped with a strawberry. Alas, alas that you're only RED Clearance!

You now have a Secret skill, **Gourmet Foods**, at rating 14.

Skill #5: Luxury Soaps

Location: Any bathroom.

Hygiene! The very word trips lightly from your tongue. You think of soap—not the caustic, RED, skin-scoring admixtures, no! But the soap in the fine ads. You sigh with pleasure, imagining indulging in Sector DAP triple-milled soaps, with their creamy lather, exquisite fragrances, full 3% natural shea butter. You inhale glorious notes of refreshing peppermint and relaxing lavender. Your eyes sparkle in the jewel-like glow of free-rinsing glycerin suds! Oh, the sybaritic—yet hygienic—pleasures of olivewood bath brushes and textured exfoliating gloves! Alas, for more creds and higher clearance!

You now have a Secret skill, **Luxury Soaps**, at rating 14.

Skill #3: Good Theater

Location: The showroom on Floor 1 (area 1B).

You sniff at this lowbrow... production. How can they call *this* theater? It's like... a Tella-O-MLY spectacle, for goodness' sake! You recall—from your schooling perhaps—the uplifting artistic purpose of true theater, the moral certitude of Alpha Complex life, the intellectual byways of good literary patriotism... and *this is not it*. You long for the cultural nourishment of drama shared between audience and artist. True theater is not vidtape; it is interactive, and meant to create a vibrant moment alive with possibility and emotional pedigree—and all this, completely drug-free! Alas, that access to such vitality is not available at your clearance.

You now have a Secret skill, **Good Theater**, at rating 14.

Skill #6: Luxury Autocars

Location: Any office on Floor 2—the recollection is prompted by a model autocar on a desk or a wall poster or—hey, help us out here....

You eye the limo model with envy, sure you have a finer appreciation of luxury vehicles than most RED Troubleshooters. Just look at the sine-wave smoothness of that metal body. An exquisite silver Computer hood ornament, retractable for airflow assurance. And the interior details! Rich mahogany woodwork, distinctive titanium inlay, with signature interlinked AAA insignia on all door cappings. A tinted titanium fascia, bot-finished in complex reticular textures. Ah, the sense of freedom! Alas, for your current lowly job.

You now have a Secret skill, **Luxury Autocars**, at rating 14.

Skeeter's blog (excerpts)

214.01.07 I'm in. Medical subject matter expert for Project Ice Pick. Offsite time justified as 'neurological research in cingulotomy targeting techniques'.

Execs have furnished the lab and secured approval for all plans from their investors and the Board. Evan-V has completed key management hires, and is finishing approvals on tech-grade hires. Neurotic need to control, symptomatic of high paranoia.

01.14 Updates for dossiers on Loyalty Assurance firm principals:

'Chigger' (Evan-V-JER-2, project lead & hardware engineer, Team 1) – Officious boss. Background in hardware, but utterly incompetent and manipulative. Good at covering himself; supposedly always has a fall-guy set up. *Robot domain*: Spine framework, A/V, sound and stealth hardware technologies.

'Tick' (Vijay-V-KRI-2, hardware engineer, Team 2) – Smart, sadistic. There is supposedly one promotion to UV available if this project succeeds; Vijay-V collects gossip about others to ensure he's the one who advances *Robot domain*: Arm cage framework, lobotomy equipment and other robotics; titanium casting of body parts.

'Roach' (Freeman-V-MNP-2, software engineer, Team 1) – High IQ: because he is cunning, lobot will be too. Stealthy, paranoid, eavesdropping devices everywhere. Four steps ahead of everyone else. Like Vijay-V, collects blackmail material on coworkers. Suspected Computer Phreak. *Robot domain*: 'Hygiene' AI module (medical & lobotomy knowledge), stealth skills.

'Midge' (Jenny-V-STA-2, software engineer, Team 2) – Pro Tech member looking hard to steal and repurpose large amounts of equipment. Quite paranoid; contemplating mass murder? *Robot domain*: Medical weapons programming, software skills. Project infrastructure; creates software tools used by HW engineers.

'Louise' (David-V-ZAH-2, marketing) – Represents Loyalty Assurance to ULTRAVIOLET angel group, R&D administrators and Computer. Well-connected; utterly corrupt. Shepherding grant proposals. Looking to rise high on backs of other people whom he can ditch later. *Robot domain*: Funding; liaison between IntSec and R&D on traitor recycling process; 'face' of the service firm.

02.07 First company meeting. Evan-V made it clear who's in charge, though he and David-V are likely rivals. David-V is officious, authoritarian; possible high-degree Humanist?

03.02 Meetings with leads and technicians. Forbidden to share information except as it relates to my medical specialty. Techs can't know what other techs are working on. Security extremely tight.

Sporadic, uninformative meetings with execs. Evan-V insists on clearing every appointment their people make with me, and endlessly briefs and debriefs me for each meeting. Increasingly hard to get offsite.

03.07 At the water cooler today, a new hardware junior tech said his predecessor had been reassigned. I investigated. Files say Evan-V reassigned hardware tech Steve-B-CRN-6 to 'a friend's service firm, at higher pay'. Checked into possible firms—no new hires in hardware. Suspect Evan-V has 'disappeared' Steve-B-CRN.

03.09 As I suspected. The database reports two of our officers accompanied Steve-B-CRN offsite to Wellness Redistribution Center in Sector NJA. Junior techs are quietly saying Steve-B accidentally walked into med lab—off-limits to all but key hires. (Couldn't 'accidentally' walk in, given high security. Possible mutant teleporter?)

04.22 Not sure what it is about Sixdays, but people tend to confide more easily. Chase-B is Jenny-V's software programming tech. In our meeting today, he mentioned Jenny-V asked him to install a backdoor in the Ice Pick code, a master override. Verbal cue, a long tongue twister; Chase-B was told only one section of it: 'When Citizen Cindy-ZEN senses IntSec citizens sending...'

Apparently each VIOLET lead knows one section of this override, so all must be present to shut down the bot.

Chase-B said the pretext was to record his hacking method as an AI macro for Ice Pick to learn 'data access' techniques. This information would be stored in the bot's skill modules.

Evidently he's hoping for promotion. Unusually naive. Chase-B doesn't know what he's done is illegal, and Jenny-V now has the goods on him.

05.02 Luke-B-JPE is a target of interest. IntSec file indicates top scores in technical fields, and some unidentified and questionable contacts. Seems also to have a talent for subterfuge.

Luke-B has been gladhanding a lot at the water cooler. Has an inquiring mind (possible Pro Tech?). He is probing the intense security measures his boss, Freeman-V, has set in place. Luke-B claims to have found many bugs in his cubicle, and assumes there are more.

Today Luke-B told me Ian-B, Vijay-V's lead hardware tech, has been seeing docbots wheeling INFRAREDs out of the HW lab on gurneys. Ian-B hasn't gotten a close look, but the INFRAREDs all wear dark glasses coming out of the lab. He thought this strange.

05.16 REQUEST: Place Luke-B-JPE under Class 2E surveillance. Set up the bugs so they're gone before Bug Check every morning.

06.02 There has been no action on my request of 05.16. Evidently my Admin contact has been transferred without replacement. Is anyone at HQ receiving these messages? Please acknowledge.

Am setting up surveillance of Luke-B on my own recognizance.

06.17 For someone not that important to Project Ice Pick, Luke-B-JPE keeps copious notes. He stays at work as late as Evan-V allows. Luke-B tells me he's working on a tricky part of the AI stealth module. But I suspect he's trying to decipher the nature of Ice Pick. His monitors flip between showing code and showing unauthorized vidlinks to different parts of the lab. The vidlinks are just flashes, millisecond connections to avoid detection. **REQUEST:** Have Steganographic Division take stills of those vidlink flashes, and provide analysis via usual drop.

06.22 Luke-B's vidlinks are to the physically secured hardware production area and medical lab; only VIOLETs are allowed access of any kind.

I've tapped a Humanist contact to interpret Luke-B's code. I've promised him 'witness protection services' after this. He's working on it now. **REQUEST:** Notify Admin not to raid Humanist cell code TRTR-SJC-3J5a until I give word.

06.23 No acknowledgement of request of 06.22. Is anyone there?

06.24 My contact says the code is obfuscated. This isn't his specialty—he needs more time. Am applying pressure.

06.25 PRIORITY REQUEST! Luke-B-JPE has intentionally misprogrammed Project Ice Pick. Evidently he intended the bot to attack the principal executives. My contact says the code is faulty owing to use of an 'erase' command rather than 'destroy'. Unclear whether the bot remains a threat. Require instruction urgently re bot and Luke-B. Project Ice Pick launches tomorrow morning.

'WMD' handout: MemoMax restoration form. Give this to the players when they explore Luke-V's office (area 3A) in Episode 4. Find a free downloadable copy of this form (along with a blank version) on the Mongoose Publishing Web site, www.mongoosepublishing.com.

MEMOMAX RESTORATION SUPPLEMENTARY FORM TS110445-29A: AUTHORIZATION FOR BATCH RESTORATION OF NON-PRIMARY CITIZEN BACKUP

Fill in all entries, except those entries that are already filled in or that are marked as not to be filled in. Failure to fill in or not fill in an entry will result in the form or applicant being voided. The applicant should be aware of all applicable rules and regulations. Upon completing form, submit to your local Technical Services Cloning Facility; Attn: Supervisor. NOTE: Authorizing citizen must claim responsibility by affixing name at bottom and attaching appropriate proof of identity. Otherwise form will be returned for reprocessing.

Section 1A: Citizen(s) to be restored

Citizen #1: DAVID - V - ZAH - 2 Citizen ID: RYT019203067
Given name Clrnc (init) Sector of origin Current clone #

Backup ID to be used: RYTTS-CB312-MM019203067-000884I2 Date of backup: 212.01.18 23:59 Clearance of backup: R

Storage facility of this backup: CB312MMSF0836 Storage facility address: RYT SUB-D13 LVL088 SUB-C27 BLDG 5 STE 67

Primary backup ID: SCLTS-CB001-MM019203067-001167I0 Storage facility (if different): CB001MMSF0001

Address (if different): N/A

Is primary backup intact? Yes No (explain) DESTROYED BY SABOTAGE

Citizen #2: EVAN - V - JER - 2 Citizen ID: NCS045439768
Given name Clrnc (init) Sector of origin Current clone #

Backup ID to be used: NCSTS-CB259-MM045439768-000573I4 Date of backup: 211.08.21 23:59 Clearance of backup: R

Storage facility of this backup: CB259MMSF2923 Storage facility address: NCS SUB355 LVL146 CORR-HH2698 RM327

Primary backup ID: SCLTS-CB001-MM045439768-001264I0 Storage facility (if different): CB001MMSF0001

Address (if different): N/A

Is primary backup intact? Yes No (explain) DESTROYED BY SABOTAGE

Citizen #3: FREEMAN - V - MNP - 2 Citizen ID: DDW000063281
Given name Clrnc (init) Sector of origin Current clone #

Backup ID to be used: DDWTS-CB004-MM000063281-000465I1 Date of backup: 211.06.01 23:59 Clearance of backup: R

Storage facility of this backup: CB004MMSF0089 Storage facility address: DDW LVL17 HALL 05 RM08

Primary backup ID: SCLTS-CB001-MM000063281-000898I0 Storage facility (if different): CB001MMSF0001

Address (if different): N/A

Is primary backup intact? Yes No (explain) DESTROYED BY SABOTAGE

NOTE: If requesting restoration for more than three citizens, list additional citizen(s) here and attach separate Form(s) TS110445-29B 'Extension to Form TS110445-29A':

JENNY-V-STA-2, NADINE-I-HRU-2, VIJAY-V-KRI-2

Section 2: Reason for restoration of non-primary backup

Check all that apply. NOTE: If more than one citizen is being restored, and the restorations are for different reasons, submit separate Form TS110445-29A for each citizen or group of citizens being restored for identical reasons. If explanation is required, attach separate Form(s) TS110445-29C 'Explanation of Form TS110445-29A Section 2'.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Treasonous death | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Mental faculties currently nonfunctional |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Non-treasonous death | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Suitable backup(s) destroyed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Threat to security and good order | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Treasonous sabotage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Impolite or intransigent behavior | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Equipment failure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Dislikable demeanor | <input type="checkbox"/> Worker malfeasance (explain) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> R&D test | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (explain) |

IMPORTANT!

ME Card account #: SEE ATTACHMENT

Processing fee: 10cr

Insurance: 25cr

Expedited handling incentive: 5,000cr

TOTAL: 5,035cr

NOTE: All fees deducted automatically from your account upon receipt of application.

Section 3: Authorization (requires Clearance BLUE or higher)

Access Authorization # (AAN): SCLTS00038948 Date of issue: 214.06.07 15:41 Authorization code: HG-45-BW-81-VV-29

I understand restoring MemoMax data from an older backup can lead to inconvenient or dangerous side effects including but not limited to temporary hallucination, intermittent anterograde or lacunar amnesia, sociopathic behavior and/or temporary or permanent insanity. I understand restorations of non-current MemoMax recordings may have untoward effects on impulse control, judgement, language, memory, motor function, problem solving and bladder or bowel control. I understand the restored citizen(s) may experience cognitive impairments, including impairments to the ability to plan, coordinate, control and execute complex sequences of actions, and may persist with one course of action or pattern of behavior when a change would be appropriate (perseveration). I understand the restored citizen(s) may require retraining in talking, eating, dressing and proper hygiene. I agree to take civic and financial responsibility for offenses against security or good order committed by the restored citizen(s) under Technical Services regulation 204.11.15.112A rev 45, 'Commitment to Responsibility for Behavior of Prospective Traitors'.

Authorizing citizen: LUKE - V - JPE - 4

Form TS10445-29A rev 213.12.19.1

Given name Clrnc (init) Sector of origin Current clone #

WMD PC #1



Evan-R-JER-2

Male CPU Team Leader

Service firm: ConFormities Ltd.

Service firm type: Form Inventory Officers

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 1,000

Tic: Refers problems to someone else.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Vijay-R: Sir, you're team lead; could you contact HQ to get the code to open this box? I don't have authorization.

Evan-R: I could, but ask Freeman-R to do it. He has a friend in HQ, so I expect it'll go much faster for you.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 12

Bootlicking 15

Chutzpah 15

Intimidation 15

Interrogation 01

Moxie 01

Con Games 01

Stealth 06

Security Systems 10

Sneaking 10

Sleight of Hand 01

Surprise-Visit Underlings Who Aren't Working 12

Violence 05

Energy Weapons 09

Destroy Audiovisual Equipment But Leave It Outwardly Unharmed 14

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 06

Electronic Engineering 10

Mechanical Engineering 10

Chemical Engineering 01

Weapon and Armor Maintenance 01

Rig Nifty Audiovisual Systems For Personal Enjoyment 12

Software 06

Wetware 06

Psychotherapy 10

Undermine Underlings' Self-Confidence Through Subtle Comparisons With Other Underlings 12

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

WMD PC #2



Vijay-R-KRI-2

Male Armed Forces Equipment Guy

Service firm: Impress

Service firm type: Tool and Die Works

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 1,000

Tic: Recounts anecdotes and memories badly, with muddled details.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Jenny-R: And how are we today? Feeling happy?

Vijay-R: Er, I had this dream.

Jenny-R: Oh, not again. Your nightmares bring down morale.

Vijay-R: No, it's just, in this one I fell into a jumpsuit with infinite pockets. Or maybe it was a flak jacket with infinite pockets. Anyway, as I fell, I was waving this ME Card around. No, no, it was definitely a PDC I was waving around...

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 07

Interrogation 11

Intimidation 11

Chutzpah 01

Oratory 01

Stealth 04

Muffle Gadget Sounds 10

Violence 10

Energy Weapons 14

Field Weapons 18

Vehicular Combat 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 10

Bot Ops and Maintenance 14

Electronic Engineering 14

Mechanical Engineering 14

Chemical Engineering 01

Habitat Engineering 01

Nuclear Engineering 01

Repair Broken Tangler In The Field With A Paper Clip And Some Duct Tape 16

Software 04

Instill Pride And Increased Sense of Self-Worth In Newer-Model Bots 10

Wetware 05

Nerve and Pressure Points 11

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

WMD PC #3



Freeman-R-MNP-2

Male Tech Services Recording Officer

Service firm: 1-800-PDCHELP

Service firm type: Tech Support

Security clearance: RED

Credits: 1,000

Tic: Refers problems to someone else.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Vijay-R: Freeman-R, could you contact HQ to get the code to open this box? I don't have authorization.

Freeman-R: I would love to, but I don't know anyone there any more. It's urgent, is it? If you need it so quickly, ask David-R. He's really good at cutting through red tape fast.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 05

Bootlicking 09

Moxie 09

Intimidation 01

Oratory 01

Detect And Calm People's Suspicions They Might Be Under Surveillance 11

Stealth 10

Surveillance 14

Disguise 01

Violence 04

Energy Weapons 08

Forcibly Insert Surveillance Devices Where They Seemingly Can't Fit Without Breaking 12

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 04

Habitat Engineering 08

Software 11

Bot Programming 14

Financial Systems 15

Data Analysis 01

Vehicle Programming 01

Provide Completely Misleading Tech Advice 17

Wetware 06

Psychology Of Targets Who Suddenly Realize They're Under Surveillance 10

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

Freeman-R-MNP-2

Male Tech Services Recording Officer

Mutation: Hypersenses

Secret society: Computer Phreaks (degree 1)

Secret skills: Surveillance 10, Juggling 06, Hacking 10

Background: Once out of the Junior Citizens' creche, you thought life would be... well, not better, but marginally less bad. Until some fellow INFRAEDs—Armed Forces service firm thugs—in your barracks beat you to a bloody pulp. For *no reason!* Later you learned they'd 'volunteered' for experimental medication. You learned to hate all Armed Forces bullies and the experiments Armed Forces performs at the expense of ordinary citizens.

Since then, you've kept a protective security bubble around yourself: As much as possible, you know others' schedules, affiliations—at least those that are 'public' knowledge—contents of private conversations, account balances. You try to stay three steps ahead of everyone else.

In uncommon moments of self-doubt, you wonder if it'd be better citizenship to stop planting eavesdropping devices everywhere. But the way you see it, it's for self-protection. No one will look out for you but yourself. Plus, those tidbits of forbidden knowledge helped you get promoted to RED.

Unfortunately, one time you got discovered, and that led to your original Prime body's unpleasant end. At least, that's sort of how you remember it. Usually.

You should have been assigned to IntSec, but your facility with technology put you in Tech Services, where you met your Phreak pals. They taught you how to hack surveillance systems. Through your job at the help desk, you discovered how to muddle others' understanding of software, a talent that made you even more valuable to your boss. And with your new Troubleshooter boss, Evan-R, you intend to do exactly the same thing. For now, encourage him as team leader. But eventually he'll report to you.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Last month The Computer transferred you here to DSF Sector. You've never been here before, you don't know anyone, and you've had the worst time trying to connect with your society. None of the usual recognition signals or code phrases work. You've been operating on general principles, without a specific assignment.

You do recall one special countersign: 'she packs glass flasks in sacks—in fact, B3 she seeks.' You're supposed to speak this phrase in response to a line about—was it scrubots? 'Scrubbing cot spots free of blots'? Something like that....

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- (1) RED jumpsuit and pair of boots
- (1) utility belt with pouches
- (1) RED canvas backpack
- (5) black juggling balls (INFRAED)
- (1) Old Reckoning games emulator for PDC (GREEN)
- (3,492) Old Reckoning computer games (GREEN)
- (1) set Holeproof solid steel undergarments (ILLEGAL)
- (1) sheet of explanations of why you walk so funny

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

- (1) laser pistol body (no barrel)
- (2) RED laser barrels
- (1) suit RED reflex armor
- (1) Series 1300 PDC
- (1) Multicorder 1 with these programs: recorder, editing, toxin analysis, lie detector, radar
- (2) pills bintorazine ('Pointy Heads')

Vijay-R-KRI-2

Male Armed Forces Equipment Guy

Mutation: Mechanical Intuition

Secret society: Corpore Metal (degree 1)

Secret skills: Demolition 14, Haptics 06, Twitchtalk 16

Background: It was a fortunate day when you were transferred from a sadly misplaced assignment in a sensitivity training service firm to the tool and die field. You felt so out of place among those touchie-feelies in ST that some days you just wanted to break their soft-skinned, bantam necks. But old habits die hard; everyone in ST was 'encouraged' to share his dreams. You still have a hard time holding back.

Yet now the drills and lathes of T&D sing to you. They're also useful for liberating bots unjustly enslaved to the Meat Empire, so no one must know why some equipment occasionally goes missing.

Your current service firm assignment has you performing field repairs on tanglers. You've gotten good at both repairing and using them. Those skills are probably why you've been chosen as a Troubleshooter, though you can't say for sure.

They put you through a week of training as equipment guy. With your technical knowledge, you'll do well with whatever mission they throw at you. You kind of wish you weren't responsible for driving the team around, though; you didn't do so well on that training. Your memory is hazy, but you sort of recall that's how your original meat body got taken out. At least, sometimes you recall it that way. Sort of.

You half-suspect some high-up Corpore Metallic arranged your assignment as equipment guy. What better way to meet and liberate bots?

During MBD training, that Freeman-R persistently annoyed you. Yeah, he's recording officer, but what the hey? Can't he leave you alone, already? You hate those Tech Services know-it-alls—bot oppressors, that's all they are! You might have to perform some random surprise inspections on his belongings.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Last month The Computer transferred you here to DSF Sector. You've never been here before, you don't know anyone, and you've had the worst time trying to connect with your society. None of the usual recognition signals or code phrases work. You've been operating on general principles, without a specific assignment.

You do recall one special passphrase: 'When Citizen Cindy-ZEN senses IntSec citizens...' You're supposed to use the phrase only in dire emergency. What was the countersign? Something about 'sending scrubots to scrub cots'? Well, this will make sense once you finally upgrade your bloody meatbrain to clean silicon.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- (1) pocketknife with 22 blades and gadgets
- (1) RED jumpsuit and pair of boots
- (1) utility belt with pouches
- (1) RED canvas backpack
- (1) box of paperclips
- (1) roll RED duct tape
- (1) tube Super-Gum extra-strong adhesive
- (1) tube Super-Gum solvent
- (1) package baby carrots (ORANGE)
- (3) fake RED laser barrels (ILLEGAL)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

- (1) laser pistol body (no barrel)
- (2) RED laser barrels
- (1) suit RED reflex armor
- (1) Series 1300 PDC
- (1) Multipurpose Tool Kit (MTK)
- (2) pills bintorazine ('Pointy Heads')

Evan-R-JER-2

Male CPU Team Leader

Mutation: Bureaucratic Intuition

Secret society: FCCC-P (degree 1)

Secret skills: Alpha Complex History 13, Church Bingo Night 09, Propaganda (FCCC-P) 04

Background: Well, of *course* they chose you to lead the team! You're just the most responsible, well-intentioned, rigorous, structured, efficient person on the team, *plus* you know the most about forms. There really *was* no other choice. *But* you're sure at least a couple others on the team envy you enough to do something drastic. They tried to cover their jealousy by sneakily *encouraging* you to be team leader, but you're on to them. So you'll handle them with care, and with a few hidden security devices.

In case of discovery, though, you should set up evidence framing one of the others—that twit, David-R, say. You once got caught spying, and that's how you lost your original Prime body. At least, you *think* that's how it happened; your memory is hazy.

On the upside, your training as a team leader was brief and, you thought, quite easy. You're *positive* you got great scores. You've got everything under control—except maybe your teammates. Personnel issues aren't your strength; they're one of those 'soft' arts for Human Resources grunts. So when you do pay attention to such matters, which you *hope* won't be often, you'll have to work harder at them. In the meantime, just keep your teammates in line by sneaking up behind them and demanding to know *why* they're not doing as they were told.

You were transferred from an audio/video manufacturing service firm where you learned what your boss dismayingly called 'average' technical skills. Your current Forms Inventory Officer training in hardware and software forms management dovetails nicely with your position as team leader. Any idiot goon can fight; only citizens with half a brain—and sufficient incentive (minus tithes to the church)—can push Form A.687-b/c.1 through the grinding gears of bureaucracy with minimal hassle.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Last month The Computer transferred you here to DSF Sector. You've never been here before, you don't know anyone, and you've had the worst time trying to connect with your society. None of the usual recognition signals or code phrases work. You've been operating on general principles, without a specific assignment.

You do recall one special countersign: 'sending scrubots to scrub cots' blots free of spots.' In dire emergencies you're supposed to speak this phrase in response to a line about—was it 'Citizen Cindy-ZEN'? Something like that....

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- (1) RED jumpsuit and pair of boots
- (1) utility belt with pouches
- (1) RED canvas backpack
- (1) ballpoint pen, RED, high-quality (used as status symbol and to point to things)
- (6) pyroxidine (Wide-Awake) tablets
- (1) Multicorder self-destruct program (ILLEGAL)
- (1) miniaturized audiovisual recorder (ILLEGAL)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

- (1) laser rifle body (no barrel)
- (2) RED laser barrels
- (1) suit RED reflex armor
- (1) Series 1300 PDC
- (2) pills bintorazine ('Pointy Heads')

WMD PC #4



Jenny-R-STA-2

Female R&D Happiness Officer

Service firm: BrainBanter Corp.
Service firm type: RoboPsych Auditing
Security clearance: RED
Credits: 1,000
Tic: Enthused but uncomprehending.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Vijay-R: To open this, turn off the power, then adjust coupling JF2-9 by upping the ampage 14% and adding 5 mils of co-polyetherolase-2-based coolant. Can you do that while I pin these cables aside?

Jenny-R: *[Smiles brightly.]* Sure! Be happy to help! What do I do again?

Vijay-R: *[Sighs.]* Here, I'll turn off the power. When I give the word, you move this *here* and pour some of *this* in *there*. Got it? Okay, here I go... *[Sticks head in among cable trunks.]*

Jenny-R: *[Nods pertly.]* Got it. Dead simple. *[Flips power switch on.]*

Vijay-R: Zzzzzzzpppfffft.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 05

Moxie 09
 Intimidation 01
 Play Really Dumb Without Getting Yourself Killed 15

Stealth 04

Find Blind Spots In Camera Surveillance 10

Violence 06

Energy Weapons 10
 Blind Electronic Sensors With Low-Power Laser 12

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 04

Mechanical Engineering 08

Software 12

Bot Programming 16
 Data Analysis 16
 C-Bay 01
 Financial Systems 01
 Make Newer-Model Bots Feel Subservient 18

Wetware 09

Psychology 13
 Suggestion 13
 Biosciences 01
 Medical 01

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

WMD PC #5



David-R-ZAH-2

Male HPD&MC Loyalty Officer

Service firm: SubSales, Inc.
Service firm type: Subliminals Police
Security clearance: RED
Credits: 1,300
Tic: Erroneously believes himself to be the coolest clone in Alpha Complex.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Vijay-R: Could you contact HQ to get the code to open this box? I don't have authorization.

David-R: Hey, I'm your guy. Just a sec. *[Makes a call on his PDC.]* Heyyy, how are ya? Yeah? Yeah. *[Pause.]* No, the FunBall tourney. Hah, you wish. They all called *me* for tickets. *[Pause.]* Yeah, they said they didn't care about FunBall, they just wanted to come with *me*. *[Pause.]* Yeah, you know it. Heyyy, I need a code....

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 10

Bootlicking 14
 Chutzpah 14
 Con Games 14
 Interrogation 01
 Intimidation 01
 Oratory 01
 Pour On The Blarney When Finances Are At Stake 16

Stealth 09

Concealment 13
 Sleight of Hand 13
 Sneaking 01
 Disguise 01
 Swipe Gadgets Smaller Than Your Head 15

Violence 06

Energy Weapons 10

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 04

Likely Market Price Of Unusual Technology 10

Software 04

Wetware 07
 Suggestion 11
 Medical 01
 Hawk Subliminal Ads For Multicorder Programs For High-Clearance Citizens 13

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

WMD PC #6



Nadine-R-HRU-2

Female Tech Services Hygiene Officer

Service firm: IntensiCare TS
Service firm type: Medical Services
Security clearance: RED
Credits: 1,000
Tic: Likes to position people in a room.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Nadine-R: Okay, everyone, I've got good news and bad news. The chemicals we're finding here can be mutagenic in combination—let me show you. David-R, if you'd just sit down over here, you'll have a good angle to see. Jenny-R, if you could just duck a bit, your hair is in the way. Thanks. Oh, and Vijay-R, *please*, you're blocking the light. If you could just move over here...

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 08

Hygiene 12
 Chutzpah 01
 Promote Fear That Lack of Hygiene May Result In Mutation 14

Stealth 04

Violence 10

Energy Weapons 14
 Fine Manipulation 14
 Projectile Weapons 01
 Carve Message With Scalpel 16

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 04

Skin-Core Sampler Ops & Maintenance 10

Software 05

Data Search 09
 Bot Programming 01
 Dig Up Hygiene Records From Years Past 11

Wetware 09

Biosciences 13
 Medical 13
 Pharmatherapy 17
 Cloning 01
 Outdoor Life 01
 Suggestion 01

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

Nadine-R-HRU-2

Female Tech Services Internal Security Hygiene Officer

Mutation: Death Simulation

Secret society: Anti-Mutant (degree 1)

Secret skills: Power Studies 04, Craniometry 14, Propaganda (Anti-Mutant) 09

Background: You truly believe in using medicine to save the lives of people—but not mutants. Mutants are to be experimented upon. However, it's handy to have real people sedated during surgery so you can check to make *sure* they're not mutants. *Your* special talent isn't really a *mutation*—just the power of mind over body. You've got a great big mind, and you have your craniometry measurements to prove it. (*Craniometry*: measuring the skull to determine intelligence and personality traits.)

That Internal Security got you assigned as hygiene officer on a Troubleshooter team tells you someone high-clearance fears the mutant superbug the medical community has been warning of for years. Your skills in surgery and other medical arts will help you assess the situations to which your team is exposed. Watch out for that idiot Jenny-R, though. She may try to give unqualified pharmatherapeutic advice.

As a medical technician by training, you assume you're on the team to handle the aftermath of a) violence done to your teammates, and b) their exposure to foreign bodies. You know about diseases; you're pretty sure your original Prime body died from a bioengineered mutagen. At least, that's sort of how you remember it. Usually.

A little prevention goes a long way; perhaps you can convince your fellow Troubleshooters not to rush into potentially mutagenic situations in the first place. For that matter, why not check their medical histories for prior exposure to mutagens? Really, they all strike you as potential, if not current, mutants.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Last month The Computer transferred you here to DSF Sector. You've never been here before, you don't know anyone, and you've had the worst time trying to connect with your society. None of the usual recognition signals or code phrases work. You've been operating on general principles, without a specific assignment.

You do recall one special countersign: 'and pittipats to Pat-I-TAP to trap a sap at Vat C-TRAT.' In dire emergencies you're supposed to speak this phrase in response to a line about—was it 'B3 sweetly streaks the sheets'? Something like that....

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- (1) RED jumpsuit and pair of boots
- (1) utility belt with pouches
- (1) RED canvas backpack
- (2) razor-sharp scalpels (S4K Impact armor-piercing)
- (1) craniometry ruler
- (1) soap-on-a-rope (YELLOW)
- (177) downloaded songs by Old Reckoning singers (ILLEGAL)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

- (1) laser pistol body (no barrel)
- (2) RED laser barrels
- (1) suit RED reflec armor
- (1) Series 1300 PDC
- (1) Medical 6 PDC software program
- (1) first aid kit
- (1) Skin-Core Sampler Type 6
- (1) bottle Instant Kleen'N'Brite
- (6) RED hand towels
- (2) pills bintorazine ('Pointy Heads')

David-R-ZAH-2

Male HPD&MC Loyalty Officer

Mutation: Charm

Secret society: Free Enterprise (degree 1)

Secret skills: Haggling 07, Advertising & Marketing 12, Bribery 14

Background: There may be ten guys smarter than you in the complex, but hey, you're sure they're not nearly as *smoooooth*. You tell great stories, you're on top of C-Bay fashion (and IR Market and Gray Subnet fashion, *shh!*), and you have heaps of friends—at least when they're in front of you. It's when they're behind you that you worry. (*Heyyy*, it's a joke!) *With* smarts and charm, you're meant for leadership, *real* leadership. But for now, you're happy to see the team-leader target painted on Evan-R's chest.

Your current jobs as Subliminals Police Marketer, Troubleshooter and loyalty officer expedite your activities in Free Enterprise (*shh!*). *Heyyy*, what loyal citizen wouldn't want to buy more product? The purchase of consumer goods bolsters the economy; only a Communist would filshare or split his helping of Cheez Pleezer. If you make a few extra creds on the side, well hey, that's the sign of a great society! Go, Computer! *Hey!*

Gotta make sure you don't cross the wrong folks, though—all too easy in FreeEnt. You seem to recall a run-in with a thug that led to the untimely termination of your original Prime body. At least, that's the way you remember it. Sometimes.

As a Troubleshooter, you can get out of your office and do more to promote consumption. You'll have to watch your compulsion to swipe valuable stuff (for resale, of course); it could get you in trouble.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Last month The Computer transferred you here to DSF Sector. You've never been here before, you don't know anyone, and you've had the worst time trying to connect with your society. None of the usual recognition signals or code phrases work. You've been operating on general principles, without a specific assignment.

You do recall one special countersign: 'when B3, so sweet, streaks the sheets.' In dire emergencies you're supposed to speak this phrase in response to a line about—was it "'B3" she squeaks, "B3" she shrieks'? Something like that....

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- (1) RED jumpsuit and pair of boots
- (1) utility belt with pouches
- (1) RED canvas backpack
- (1) YELLOW legal pads (YELLOW)
- (6) BLUE pencils (BLUE)
- (6) RED pens
- (1) box paper clips
- (4) ChocoNuts! bars (ORANGE)
- (1) credit relicenser (just slot in a plasticred disk, and this little box rewrites the licenses on its credits so they only work for purchasing office supplies; ILLEGAL)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

- (1) laser pistol body (no barrel)
- (2) RED laser barrels
- (1) suit RED reflec armor
- (1) Series 1300 PDC
- (1) Indestructible Loyalty Transcripts Recorder-2 (ILTR-2)
- (1) backup ILTR-2
- (1) videodrone override program (you'll get this at your mission briefing; ask the GM at that time, but keep it a secret, or you get a treason point!)
- (2) pills bintorazine ('Pointy Heads')

Jenny-R-STA-2

Female R&D Happiness Officer

Mutation: Adrenalin Control

Secret society: Pro Tech (degree 1)

Secret skills: Experimental Equipment Repair & Maintenance 09, Gyroscopes 15, Demolition 10

Background: If you do say so yourself, you've got a scary combination of psychological manipulation skills, which serves you well as a robopsych auditing counsellor in the guise of a ditz. You've psychologically reprogrammed at least six bots to serve Pro Tech (take *that*, Corpore Metal!). The more servant bots you can procure in the name of Science, the better. You're more careful around bots nowadays, though, after you tried reprogramming a combot and it went kinda wrong. You lost your original Prime body that way—at least, you think that's how it happened. Your memory is sort of hazy.

You're pleased about your assignment as happiness officer. Here's a job you can get behind... with the full force of your skills. Evan-R and David-R seem envious; after all, who wants to be team lead? And of course, if any traitors are found, they're responsible. Keep an eye on those two, and encourage them to enjoy their roles. You're the only one qualified for this job. Also keep on top of Vijay-R. You're pretty sure he's been stealing gadgets *you* wanted to steal. Use his poor, can't-do attitude to get him in trouble with his superiors.

Why you're on a Troubleshooter team in the first place is a mystery. Presumably a mission came up that required mastery of software skills you learned as a robopsych auditor. Your related psychological skills may play some role too, who knows?

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Last month The Computer transferred you here to DSF Sector. You've never been here before, you don't know anyone, and you've had the worst time trying to connect with your society. None of the usual recognition signals or code phrases work. You've been operating on general principles, without a specific assignment.

You do recall one special countersign: "'B3" she speaks, "B3" she squeaks, "B3" she shrieks.' In dire emergencies you're supposed to speak this phrase in response to a line about—was it 'glass flasks in sacks'? Something like that....

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

- (1) RED jumpsuit and pair of boots
- (1) utility belt with pouches
- (1) RED canvas backpack
- (1) gyroscope
- (1) energy pistol (YELLOW)
- (1) laser power rheostat (reduces damage from laser shots; good for burning out surveillance sensors without doing visible damage; GREEN)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

- (1) laser rifle body (no barrel)
- (2) RED laser barrels
- (1) suit RED reflec armor
- (1) Series 1300 PDC
- (1) Personality Stabilizer Drug Kit (contains 5 tablets qualine [E-Z-Duz-It], 5 tablets xanitrick [Wider Awake])
- (1) PDC copy *Morale Lifters: Officially Sanctioned Jokes, Songs, Pep Talks and Dinner Speeches for the Happiness Officer in You*, 87th edition
- (1) registered account on [stayhappy.hpd](#) ('The Happiness Officer's Official Preplanned Spontaneous Activities Website!')
- (2) pills bintorazine ('Pointy Heads')