

PARANOIA™



THE YELLOW CLEARANCE

BLACK BOX BLUES

Remastered



CLONETANK
ADVISORY
TRAITOROUS CONTENT

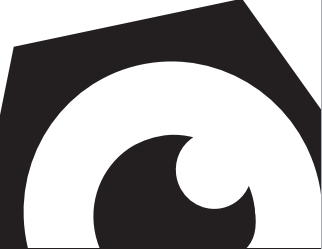
FEATURING:

ORIGINAL SONGWRITER- JOHN M. FORD

THE NEW PARANOIA EDITION- JAMES WALLIS + GRANT HOWITT + PAUL DEAN

& THE ORIGINAL PARANOIA DESIGN- DAN GELBER + GREG COSTIKYAN + ERIC GOLDBERG

PARANOIA™



A TRACK 1: BOP 'TIL YOU DROP



PARANOIA™

THE YELLOW CLEARANCE BLACK BOX BLUES REMASTERED

TRACK 1: BOP 'TIL YOU DROP

Mission Design, Words and Music, Keyboards
JOHN M. FORD

Development, Rhythm Guitar, 24-Track Remix
KEN ROLSTON

New Wave Ensemble
M J DOUGHERTY
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**ILLUSTRATIONS AND
VIDEO EDITING**

Amy Perrett &
Cheyenne Wright

**1ST EDITION EDITING
AND PERCUSSION**

Paul Murphy

**TROUBLESHOOTER
ARRANGEMENT**

Paul Baldowski

PLAYTESTERS AND ROADIES

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Margot Diamond | Steve Gilbert |
| Steve Crane | Doug Kaufman |
| Paul Murphy | Robert Tuftee |

INTENSE SUPERVISION, ERROR TERMINATION AND FEAR

The Computer

FEATURING

The New Paranoia Edition - James Wallis + Grant Howitt + Paul Dean
The Original Paranoia Design - Dan Gelber + Greg Costikyan + Eric Goldberg





INTRODUCTION

P A R A N O I A

THE TROUBLESHOOTER SPEAKS

So, one time there was this game, and it was awesome. Grim and deadly, and sometimes weird as all get-out, but awesome. And then another time there was this game, and it was the same game but thirty years later so it couldn't be the same but it had to be.

And that was a problem.

So the Powers That Be found themselves a highly skilled and motivated Troubleshooter to make it not be a problem any more. But he got killed, or reassigned, or turned into thick yellow spray or something, so they sent for The New Troubleshooter because that's what they do when someone has to be sent to Certain Doom.

The Powers That Be said to the New Troubleshooter, 'Here is an adventure, which is awesome. You must make the adventure be awesome-plus-thirty-years without changing any of it. Except for the bits you need to change. And some other things you might want to change. But nobody must see what has been changed, except for where they need to see what has been changed.'



So, the New Troubleshooter set to work, not changing what needed to be not changed and refraining from not changing what needed to be different, yet preserving the perfection and awesomeness of the original work. Eventually his work was done and the result was... this adventure. A classic, a masterpiece, updated and unchanged (except where change was desirable or inevitable; change has occurred in those places). We give you: The Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues Remastered!

(If any of that made any sense at all, you are now ready to play this adventure. If not, you might be best having a nice session of That Other Game™).

M J Dougherty

A FEW WORDS FROM THE HIGH PROGRAMMER

It has come to the Computer's attention that many end-users of products such as this mission do not use them in the intended fashion. Instead of operating the adventure as written, these users merely use it as a source of ideas for their own games.

Good.

In the first place, it is understood that copies of the mission text may fall into the hands of citizens not cleared for them. This is, of course, treason; yet for our own protection we must admit that treason exists and make allowances for it. Gamemasters who suspect their players may have access to classified material should prepare ingenious dooms triggered by the use of such material. The Computer recognises no laws against entrapment.

Second, it is not possible to anticipate every action or idea players may come up with during the course of play, brilliant or peculiar or both. Anyone who thinks otherwise is referred to the Maginot Line as an instructive example. Even if advances in behavioural psychology made this possible, it would not be desirable – if you're not in it for the interplay of ideas, you might as well play chess against a computer. (Discussions of a computer-interactive version of PARANOIA are not available at your security clearance at this time. Rumours are treason. Thank you for your cooperation.) Second-and-a-half, because any game session above the level of intellectual sterility (approximately 7th level, in most game systems) depends on a continuous supply of interesting plot twists and unexpected but logical events, there is no such thing as an

excess of ideas. In *PARANOIA*, where the atmosphere is the game, there is extra pressure to come up with events that maintain the spirit of consistently amusing terror, without being 15 more iterations of Whoops, Your Equipment Blew Up.

As to the subject matter of this mission...the original designers having run everything from golf to Communism up the flagpole and then shot lasers at it, it was only a short logical leap to sex, drugs and rock & roll. In this High Programmer's opinion, anyone likely to be offended by the material herein would have been so offended by the original ruleset as never to have bought this mission. If, on the other hand, you are a member of a censorship organisation seeking to purify the Earth of Eeevil Influences – grow up, you should be ashamed of yourself (it is not true that this mission reveals secret messages when read backwards at 45 rpm. Nosaert era sruomur. NoitarepooC ruoy rof uoy knaht).

Because we expect most of you will use this text as a source of ideas rather than The Book of Law, it was thought A Good Idea to make reading it as pleasant an experience as possible. I think we succeeded. If you laugh while you read, then we did. It is our hope, and our creditors', that thousands, tens of thousands of you will purchase this mission and laugh (this will make you all traitors. Some things just cannot be helped. Thank you for your cooperation).

I will now boggle my estimable colleague Greg Costikyan (an event worth points in Greg's game *TOON*) by saying that *PARANOIA* seems to me to be the most genuinely science-fictional roleplaying game out there – that is to say, the one that most reflects science-fiction as a form for thought experiments about society, not a collection of genre clichés. Everything else out there falls under the headings of Militaristic Space Opera or Post-Holocaust (or, The Rover Boys Go Survivalist). I've worked in both those forms, and they're fine, but it was about time for something different. *PARANOIA*'s black-comic inferno is reminiscent of Robert Sheckley or Ron Goulart. I also thought of Philip K. Dick, in whose work the truth about Reality is only available to the characters in hints and flashes (alert readers will notice a respectful reference to Dick in these pages).

Of course, there are rayguns. And there *could* be spaceships. Perhaps there's an Alpha Complex on the Moon. (Rumours are treason.) I could discuss these and many other topics, but the Computer is requesting me to report for immediate termination, and I must dispatch a team of Troubleshooters to find out what the trouble is, and shoot it.

John M. Ford



THE TROUBLESHOOTER RAMBLES ON

This adventure kinda supposes there is some sort of Outside located, you know, outside Alpha Complex. If your Alpha Complex is on the moon, or it's a space ship (ooh, now there's an idea. The players think they're in a city but it's actually a giant spaceship. I bet nobody's done that before. Oh. They have? Nuts).

Where was I?

Oh yes. The Troubleshooters go Outside in this adventure so there needs to be an Outside for them to go... err... into? Out to? Whatever. So, if your Alpha Complex is a pocket dimension with nothing outside, or Outside is an airless wasteland populated only by the corpses of previous Externanauts™ then you are, as my gran would say, knackered.

You will need to find a way for there to be an Outside-like place for the adventure to happen in...out. Whatever. We suggest indulging your creativity and presenting a carefully crafted and plausible explanation. Perhaps an experimental dimensional portal? A giant agricultural space station gone wild? A massive section of Alpha Complex that was never filled in and has somehow become filled with natural stuff....

Alternatively, just make some shit up. That usually works.



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

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

MISSION BACKGROUND

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

A group of confused and desperate traitors, while fleeing a like-minded group of Troubleshooters, found one of those areas: a long-disused passage that led to the world Outdoors.

And so they escaped, without the Computer ever knowing where they had gone.

One of them made it back alive, and was glad to be home. In exchange for the equipment and favours he needed to slip back into daily Complex life, he sold his discovery to a cell of the Alpha Complex Local History Research Group (ACLHRG), which naturally sent several expeditions to investigate the Outside.

Since these bold Externanauts were Complex-grown clones like everybody else, most of those who went out met a fate hardly distinguishable from death. But a few survived, first by dumb luck and then by acquired skills. And some of those survivors returned. (More on this in Episode 2.)

One group returned with an artefact of the Outdoors, a box of black lacquered wood, an authentic Natural Thing received in trade from an authentic Natural Person, in return for some artificial Complex-made dross like butane lighters, pocket mirrors and ball bearings. Unfortunately, the Natural Person did not tell his friends how to open the Black Box—but still and all, they thought, it was from Outdoors, and made of wood and generally a nice thing to have.

However, they also needed some money and illegal goodies to support the next expedition, so they sold the Black Box to a group of Free Enterprisers.



ALL RIGHT, HAND IT OVER! 'ALL RIGHT, HAND IT OVER! 'ALL RIGHT...'

The Enterprisers, by means of some illegal testing equipment, found the hidden catch that opens the Box. They were at first disappointed to find out the Box contained only some holographic data cartridges. But after playing one of the cartridges, they realised they had something absolutely unique. The Enterprise group was immediately torn between those who wanted to preserve the Box's uniqueness and those who wanted to make lots of copies for sale.

Since nothing whatsoever goes to plan in Alpha Complex, and most plans do not even fail in a predictable manner, the Black Box was immediately stolen. Exactly who grabbed it from whom, and who then bushwhacked the thieves before getting robbed themselves remains unclear, but it is known that at some point in this orgy of treacherous larceny the Mystics got their metaphorical (and presumably also their physical) hands on it.

Not that they kept the Black Box for long. Pretty soon they lost it to Death Leopard—in particular, to a superstar-class Death Leopard, who intends to use it as part of a Leopard-style mass disruption media event.

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

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

Be patient. Thank you for your cooperation.



THE TROUBLESHOOTER EXPLAINS

Before Alpha Complex became the paranoia-wracked cybernetic madness dream we know and love, there was some other stuff. People lived in places that were not Alpha Complex and did things that aren't done in Alpha Complex. Now, rather obviously, all this was exceptionally treasonous... but treason in the Alpha Complex sense hadn't been invented yet. So these people didn't know any better.

Well, they should have! Not knowing better is treason. Probably. Everything else is, after all.

Anyway, this era is referred to as the Time Before or the Old Reckoning by those who know it exists. Or think it might have existed. Most citizens of Alpha Complex have no idea that there was anything before the present situation in year 214 (it's been year 214 all, err, year...) and have never heard of the Old Reckoning.

Many secret society members do of course know there was an Old Reckoning, though most have no idea what it might have been like. Thus anyone coming across an object from the Old Reckoning is likely to find it weird and disturbing.

There are those, however, who are fascinated with the Old Reckoning for its own sake, and those who seek out artefacts from that previous era either as illicit treasures or because they think the object gives them some sort of advantage. Some actually do; most are just stuff left over from the world that was devastated by... whatever it was did the devastating. Most Old Reckoning artefacts are just things, significant only because they do not fit with the Alpha Complex way of being, and are therefore illicit.

Some, however, are dynamite. Metaphorical dynamite, mostly, since dynamite made during the Old Reckoning would be rather unstable by now. It might cause totally unanticipated destruction. Err, actually, that comment applies to almost any object from the Old Reckoning, literally and figuratively.

The Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues (that's this adventure, in case you missed that) revolves around the impact (not literal impact; it's just a box and would cause little damage to Alpha Complex even if thrown very hard) of an Old Reckoning artefact and its contents. Well, sort of. The Box is really just a trigger. The real fun is when a variety of Alpha Complex inhabitants, and of course the Computer, decide they want it and the inevitable orgy of backstabbing and finger-pointing begins.

MISSION SUMMARY

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

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

The Troubleshooters will be sent on four tasks in the course of this mission. First, they attempt to find the source of mysterious disruptions in communication within Alpha Complex, and find themselves caught in a crossfire between rival Death Leopard superstars and several secret societies trying to get possession of the Black Box.

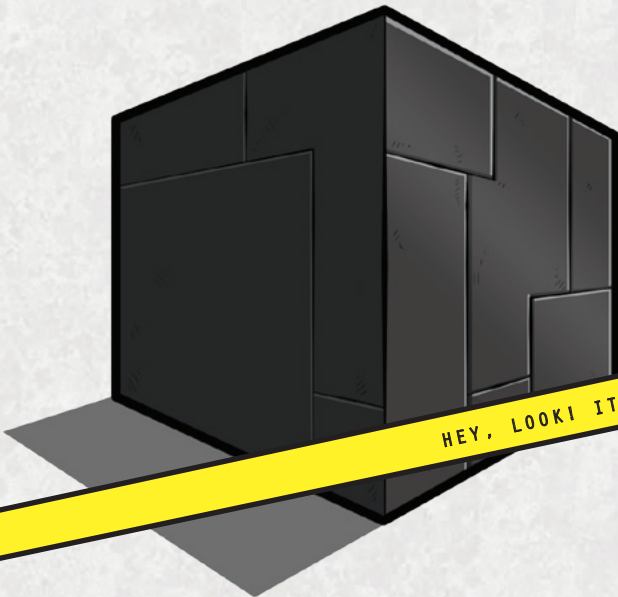
In the aftermath of this n-dimensional shootout, the Computer decides (quite incorrectly) that a cell of unregistered mutant traitors must be involved, and sends the Troubleshooters to, well, shoot the trouble. The snark hunt is further complicated by a compulsory visit to R&D, where the players will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

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

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

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

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





TRACK 1: BOP 'TIL YOU DROP

P A R A N O I A

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

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

Screaming Sarah's first triumph—the one that got her into the star classes—involved GNH-609, the sexual suppressant that lards every citizen's daily fare. Sarah/Angela-G managed to prevent the addition of GNH-609 (or 'Zero-G', as it is sometimes called) to one entire residential block's food for 43 days. The strange behaviour in Block PYT soon came to the Computer's attention.

Fortunately for Angela-G, she was able to pin the rap on her supervisor, not only escaping execution but moving into the vacated position. And so it goes.

Screaming Sarah's exploits since then have not involved the food vats, for safety's sake. But recently Angela-G discovered an unusual effect, and she has been waiting for the chance to use it to the maximum: this is the one that will send her to Ultimate Beast level, the one it might be worth blowing her cover and getting terminated for.

BOOGIE JUICE

Angela-G has discovered that the yeast flavourant Chloroziptase-L, when ingested in the same meal as algae texturiser para-2-brocco-line, produces a 'drug synergy' effect: it deranges the victim's motor nerves, causing an uncontrollable rhythmic twitching of the major muscles. Angela-G has dubbed the new compound 'boogie juice'. The effect lasts for 6 to 30 hours, depending on how much chemical was eaten, and seems to leave no permanent effect. Obviously there have not been rigorous lab tests. Equally obviously, 'no permanent effect' does not apply to those victims who were operating flybots, working with explosives, etc. at the time they lost voluntary motor control.



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

RASTERMAN GANJA AND HIS COMMERCIAL INTERRUPTIONS

Unfortunately for the politics of dancing, the gang of Leopards entrusted with the Black Box has already compromised the operation. The gang leader, who uses the *nom de freak* Rasterman Ganja, has been using his tap to broadcast short, disruptive programs of his own invention. He calls them 'commercials', after the legendary short, disruptive programs of the Old Reckoning, though Rasterman has only read about, never seen, a real commercial. His broadcasts vary in content from fake official announcements to 'advertisements' for products both real and imaginary. Angela-G has only recently discovered Rasterman's activities. So has the Computer.

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

THE TROUBLESHOOTER INTERJECTS

Yeah, me again.

The Black Box is, as we know, a remnant of the Old Reckoning (the time before Alpha Complex). You did know that? How? Please fill in this Declaration of Treasonous Information (Origins and Extent) Confession Form...

Well, anyway. So it's full of music videos. What's bad about that?

You mean, apart from *everything*?

The typical music video is full of images of sex, rebellion, conspicuous consumption, individualism and non-conformity. Yes, individualism *and* non-conformity. They're different... ish. You know how Alpha Complex has a little of these things as drugs and generations of psychomanipulation allows? Yeah.

So basically the Black Box is like a bomb full of everything Alpha Complex tries to suppress, wrapped up in a glossy presentation that actually glorifies this outrageously treasonous behaviour. And with a killer guitar solo as well.

This thing must never be allowed to surface. Clones might *explode* upon being confronted with such concentrated treasonousness.

And that would be messy.

THE MISSION

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

PRE-MISSION BRIEFING

GROUP BRIEFING

Make sure the players are ready to begin the game. Ensure they have everything they think they need for a gaming session. Then maybe take some of it away. Give everyone their equipment, secret society and mutant power cards, and their character sheet. Except that guy. Don't give that guy his character sheet. Pretend not to hear when he asks for it, or why he doesn't have one.

Eventually, inform that player that his character is in fact the imaginary friend of one of the other Troubleshooters, but don't say which one. Let them ponder this for a while.

When you get bored of yanking the players' collective chain, hand the player his character sheet and inform him that the pills are taking effect.

Now you're ready to start the adventure and the players probably aren't. Good.

Just as the Troubleshooters are queuing up to use the barracks toothbrush after breakfast (except one, who is recovering from some sort of psychotic episode... or maybe just imagines he is), a Mission Alert appears on the ubiquitous monitors, iBall displays and the error panels of a couple of nearby scrubots, just in case anyone missed it.

The Mission Alert is issued on the usual need-to-know basis. It tells the Troubleshooters to report for a briefing but none of the things they need to know. Like where the briefing is to be held, what the mission is or if they will need an extra supply of dispose-a-traitor wrappers and tags.

The players may wish to contact their secret societies or service groups concerning the mission alert, or just to pick up any juicy rumours.

If so, tell them to give the details (preferably in writing) of how they plan to make the contact (in a particular corridor or restroom, notes in a sandwich, whatever).

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

GM: It's a great day in the Troubleshooter barracks! The new equipment requisition has arrived! There were a few shortages and traitorous mutants... or maybe mutinous traitors... might have interfered with the shipment a bit, but it's here. Everything you asked for! Well, everything except the new barracks dental hygiene system. That's there. Well, some of it is. Okay, there's a new toothbrush. Just the one. But it's really good. The first nine Troubleshooters have completed Mandatory Dental Exfoliation and are filling out their Equipment Satisfaction Returns right now. Soon you'll be able to.... DO YOU HAVE YOUR LASER HANDY?

Narcoleps-Y: Huh? What?

Fallon-Y: I've got a spare one. Yours if you swap places in the toothbrush line....



Bouge-Y: I got mine right here! (Waves laser pistol enthusiastically)

GM: A fanfare blares out, then the voice of the Computer repeats, "DO YOU HAVE YOUR LASER HANDY? ARE YOU ALERT?" Then, in a soft and almost inaudible tone it announces, "Mission alert! Stand by for mission alert!"

Ant-Y: What's the mission, Friend Computer?

Lovell-Y: Can I jump the toothbrush queue while everyone is distracted?

GM: The following Troubleshooters will report immediately for mission briefing. It is your pleasure and honour to serve Alpha Complex this day! Glory and honour, and only a modest risk of vaporisation await! Mission details follow.....

Lovell-Y: Brush brush brushity brush....

Hiss-Y: I see the quietly.

THE TROUBLESHOOTER EXPOUNDS

Vulture Troopers are the fighting elite of Alpha Complex. They like to fight and they don't like to not fight. They will, however, settle for bullying, intimidating and generally roughing-up passers-by and hapless Troubleshooters. They are not subtle in their methods, and they don't like disrespect. By 'disrespect' of course we mean 'pretty much anything Troubleshooters might say or do'.

You cannot win the respect of Vulture Troopers by telling them of your traitor-zapping exploits. They'll just think you're bragging and clobber you with a nightstick. Actually, no they won't. Not the 'think' part anyway. But clobber? Yes. Much clobbering.

Vulture Troopers don't really like anything, but they especially don't like traitors, mutants, Enemies of Alpha Complex and Troubleshooters. Vulture Troopers are often sent to deal with situations that Troubleshooters have failed to handle or which have got badly out of hand. Indiscriminate clobbering is their usual response, along with huge ammunition expenditure and massive collateral damage.

You'd think they'd like that, wouldn't you? Well, they don't.

The imminent arrival of a force of Vulture Troopers is a broad hint to Troubleshooters that they are taking too long about their task, and the Computer might be displeased with the survivors. This can be used by the referee to chivy players along or to punish caution, good planning and clever tactics.

None of which are hallmarks of a Vulture operation....

INDIVIDUAL BRIEFINGS

Privately give each player a rumour from the General Rumour List. Then tell each player that he has heard rumours through his secret society concerning a thing called 'the Black Box'. No one knows what the Black Box looks like or what it's good for, but it is universally considered to be valuable, and every secret society would love to get its hands on it.

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

A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO THE BRIEFING ROOM

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

Read the following description aloud to the players:

The reception room of Troubleshooter Headquarters is a large room measuring 30 by 30 metres. As usual it is ominously empty. And as usual the entire room has changed since the last time you visited two weeks ago.

(Frequent summary executions and periodic turnover in high-level staff occasions regular redecoration of the premises.)

From the entrance doors, you see two BLUE-Clearance Vulture Squadron guards with unusually massive guns and heavy body armour guarding a pair of glass doors on the opposite side of the room. Their silvered-plexi facemasks reflect a distorted image of the room.

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

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

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

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

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

When asked for information about briefing rooms, the GREEN Vulture Guards in the alcove admit that the briefing rooms lie beyond the BLUE door, but refer the Troubleshooters to the GREEN staffer for further information about which room they need. The Troubleshooters may be able to talk these guards into letting them go through the BLUE door to look for the proper briefing room, but not without checking in at the new Experimental Security Computer Terminal.

GENERAL RUMOUR LIST

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

Following is a list of suggested rumours, to be given to players at the GM's discretion. You should be liberal in handing these out—but remember to give them to one player at a time. It's up to the player whether he wants to commit treason by telling his fellow Troubleshooters or treachery by not telling them.

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

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

1. Somebody came in from Outside, carrying a plague they haven't got any way to cure. People are dropping all over; they've had to seal off four residence blocks. (*False.*)
2. When you draw your gear from the Req Room, tell them you know Howd-Y-DDE. They'll be sure to give you equipment that works. (True and false. The name is an Internal Security code word: half the time the staffer gives the person an extra pair of laserbarrels of appropriate colour, half the time the staffer gives the 'IntSec snooper's' gear a couple of whacks with a pipe wrench.)

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

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

5. Because of a terrorist raid on one of the armouries and a hurried cleanup afterward, there are a lot of grenades in inventory with the wrong labels. *(True. Have fun with this one if someone uses a grenade.)*

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

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

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

9. Some innocent-seeming Infrareds are secretly programmed to kill on command. The code word is 'Six Megacredit Man'. *(False, though a lot of hypnotic programming has gone on, so it is possible the phrase might trigger someone to do... something.)*

10. If you follow the deep service tunnels long enough, you come up inside another Alpha Complex. Yes, really, there's another one but it's evil and decrepit and its people are Out To Get Us. That's how spies get in and out. *(May be true of certain tunnels, but none the players will encounter in this mission.)*

Showing the Mission Alert to either the GREEN staffer or any of the Vulture Squadron guards results in the Troubleshooters being taken into custody, reprimanded by an INDIGO Internal Security officer and maybe awarded a treason star for a little while for revealing a Mission Alert to unauthorised personnel, and told to go to Briefing Room AA.

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

Before the Troubleshooters may go through the BLUE door which leads to the briefing rooms, the GREEN guards insist they check in at the Experimental Security Computer Terminal, labelled 'Caution: Experimental Computer Security Terminal'. This machine looks like a video game machine with a clear plexi cover enclosing a terminal keyboard. There are two small holes for the Troubleshooter to reach inside the plexi cover and work the terminal keyboard. A boom-mounted camera and bot laser cannon track on his facial features as he approaches the machine. The Troubleshooter is asked the typical questions (name, security clearance, assignment or mission, 'Are you, or have you ever been, a traitor, terrorist, mutant, inefficient food vat technician or Enemy of Alpha Complex?') and a lie detector evaluates the Troubleshooter's responses.

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

Unfortunately, only one of the wrist cuffs can be made to open. The R&D Tech partly disassembles the console, leaving the Troubleshooter with roughly five kilos of metal locked around his hand. The Tech explains that the batteries powering the clamp will fail in seven or eight hours (your decision as to when they actually let go; signify this by suddenly shouting THUDCLANG! At some suitable juncture, and explain if you feel like it). The Troubleshooter is, naturally, required to sign a receipt for Equipment Taken Away (this may be difficult if his pen hand is inside the unit), and will receive a penalty of the GM's choosing (something petty, nuisanceful and completely inappropriate to the offence is good) if the component is not returned upon its release.



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

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

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

THE BRIEFING ROOM

Note: It is worth getting a good handle on the appearance and personalities of the four briefing personnel so you can properly portray them as distinctive personalities. As a quick guide, here they are:

AI-B-MNU-5: BLUE HPD&MC uniform. His expression looks like he's just eaten a bowl of Breakfast Yum that's gone stodgy AND sour.

Brian-B-IWR-6: BLUE Internal Security uniform. He is itching and twitching to blast some traitors RIGHT NOW!

Zach-I-VLI-5: INDIGO Tech Services uniform. He's from Tech Services. He knows about tech. He talks about tech in a way that other people from Tech Services find a bit too techy.

Dan-V-OSD-6: VIOLET R&D Uniform. He is Far Too Nice, except when he's asleep. He's probably nice then, too, but how would you know?

Read the following text aloud to describe Briefing Room AA:

The briefing room is extraordinarily high and narrow. Harsh lights shine straight down on you. The carpet is lumpy and badly worn, with several burned streaks and blotches of something that's either maroon dye or dried blood. There is a strong smell of diesel fuel.

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

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

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

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

Once the Troubleshooters are all in the room and quietly standing at attention, they can better see the four figures in the plexi compartments. Read the following aloud:

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

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

A BLUE uniform with an Internal Security insignia; the face is stern and alert; his nameplate reads 'Brian-B-IWR-6'

An INDIGO uniform with a Tech Services insignia; the figure is studying a sheaf of papers and the face is not visible; his nameplate reads 'Zach-I-VLI-5'

A VIOLET uniform, colourfully decorated and ornamented, with an R&D insignia; the face is relaxed and smiling pleasantly; his nameplate reads 'Dan-V-OSD-6'.

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

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

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

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

The other three men look at each other, then the BLUE-clad Internal Security officer leaps to his feet, points at you and loudly shouts, 'Ghzzzaahbat fhissle thorbhat mmmhena weeeeeel (SquuuuuUUUUUEEEEEEL. Hiss. Pop.)'

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

As a GM, you can simulate this unintelligible garble by speaking with a styrofoam or paper cup pressed halfway into your mouth (it's easier if you do this small end first but hey, it's your call. Also your mouth and presumably your styrofoam cup). You can yell as loud as you want, or speak perfectly normally, but the poor players won't be able to understand much of what you say. This is so much fun that you'll be tempted to use this cheap trick whenever the Computer speaks to the Troubleshooters from old monitors or wall speakers. It is hard on the cup, so be sure to have a supply of spares.

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

What Brian-B really says is, 'All right, which of you is the mission leader?' He pauses, waiting for an answer. The Troubleshooters probably haven't understood a word, but it is clear he expects an answer. They better come up with something. Whatever the Troubleshooters say, he then cackles, 'Of course you don't have a mission leader, because you don't know your mission yet, do you? Or... perhaps you traitors have already got SECRET information about this mission?' He pauses again for an answer. This continues for a few minutes, with Brian-B grilling the Troubleshooters about their mission alert, past service records, proof of loyalty to the Computer and dedication to serve the Computer without question or hesitation. Since the Troubleshooters can't understand Brian-B, their responses may be rather inappropriate, and the Troubleshooters may start to get panicky.



EXAMPLE OF PLAY

GM: Brian-B says, gaarfwoozle fjrigr jvrird urrrmble extanx aufgbnggra gherkin ddurarghfou cashramble torplex!

Ant-Y: We serve the Computer with loyalty and devotion!

Narcoleps-Y: Did he say 'gherkin'?

GM: Brian-B barks, Answer the (silence) ...jjjjjjrrrrdddr... (silence)... (more silence, though he seems to be still talking and getting increasingly agitated)... EXecUTED as a jjjrder!

Bouge-Y: I'm looking around to see if some sort of treasonous activity is stopping us from hearing properly.

Hiss-Y: I can't stand it any more! First the Dental Hygiene Kit and now this! Can this day get any worse? Well, yes of course I know it can, I was just venting. In the Approved Manner, before you say anything. And I just know you were going to... (rant continues in the background)

GM: Brian-B shouts, Popsqueeeeelll clunkclunk gaarfwoozle urrrmble torplex! Unggg! RIGHT (SQEELPOP)ING NOW!

Lovell-Y: Errr... him? (pointing at Boug-Y).

Fallon-Y: Yeah, him! That's the one. We all saw. Him. Yeah (edges nervously away from Boug-Y).

GM: Brian-B declares, Cghackckckc poppop gaarfwoozle credit to (squealpop) torplex! Congratulations, (sudden silence) ...ooter. In everybody's iBall display, a thumbs-up icon appears above Boug-Y's head.

Boug-Y: Did I just get a commendation?

Fallon-Y: Lucky bastard. I wonder why....

SECRET SOCIETIES AND THE BOX

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

Starred societies have at some time or another possessed the Box itself; all of these except the Alpha Complex Local History Research Group (which never got it open) know the contents. Other societies know of the Box by hearsay or inter-society espionage.

***Alpha Complex Local History Research Group:** It comes from Outdoors, and is made of the mythic substance 'wood' which has Great Historical Significance. Besides, we brought it here, and it's really ours.

Anti-Mutant: They think perfect pitch is a creepy mutation.

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

***Death Leopard:** The Box contains anthems of anarchic Fun. The Box is the soul of the Leopard. *(As the mission starts, they have possession of it. See Episode 1.)*

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

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

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

Illuminati: Who knows why these guys do anything? Not that it matters, since they don't even exist.

Internal Security: Seriously? You've heard what IntSec do, right?

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

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

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

Spy for a Service Group or Another Alpha Complex: This Black Whatever is obviously very important. It must be captured so that we can benefit from it if it's valuable, and defend ourselves against it if it's dangerous. *(In other words, you got it, we want it.)*

MISSION ASSIGNMENT

Eventually, Dan-V snorts loudly, wakes up and looks around. Brian-B is immediately silent, looking cautiously at Dan-V as he humbly sinks back behind the bench. Dan-V smiles at everyone, then continues the briefing.

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

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

Pause. Look pleasantly and menacingly expectant. Wait for the players to make some appropriate response, like, 'Gasp! Enemies of Alpha Complex? How appalling!' or 'We eagerly await your orders to seek out this slime and scourge it from our fair Complex!' or 'We serve the Computer! The Computer is our Friend! Please give us directions to these Extremely Undesirable Traitors and a carrybot-load of extra ammunition.'

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

'We will give you every assistance; know that the Computer itself is behind you.'

He smiles happily again.

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

If the Troubleshooters ask what sort of interference they are looking for, Dan-V says gently, 'I'm afraid knowing that, at your clearance level, would make you all traitors.' If they ask what equipment they are supposed to recover, Zach-I drones on for some while in a technical jargon the Troubleshooters do not understand, but they should get the idea that



broadcasting equipment is involved. If they ask how large the nest of traitors is believed to be, Brian-B snaps, 'Who cares how many of them there are, Troubleshooter? You don't come back until there's not one terrorist enemy of Alpha Complex moving down there!'

CHOOSING THE TEAM LEADER

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

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

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

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

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

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

When a leader has finally been selected who can summarise the mission objectives, Dan-V awakes with a snort again and looks around at Brian-B, who is holding his microphone. Brian-B momentarily freezes in terror, then he hastily replaces the microphone and slinks to his seat.

ANY FURTHER QUESTIONS?

Dan-V turns back to the Troubleshooters with a kindly smile, tells the Vulture Guard to give the mission leader the equipment requisitions and asks them if they have any questions or special requests before he sends them off to Outfitting. Let the players ponder their equipment requirements for a minute, then Brian-B asks particularly if they would like any more ordnance.

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

When the Troubleshooters begin asking for higher clearance items like tacnukes and ULTRAVIOLET lasers, Dan-V chuckles in a grandfatherly way and says something like, 'If that sort of thing were necessary, don't you think our friend the Computer would have made provisions?' He believes that, too. Then the briefing will be brought to a close.

Just as Dan-V is about to dismiss the Troubleshooters, if they haven't asked about the RF tracer upgrade patch for their iBalls, (and why would they? We've not even mentioned it to you yet, Friend GM), Zach-I says, 'Oh, hey, don't forget about the RF tracer upgrade patch for your iBalls.' Immediately Brian-B glowers at Zach-I, and Dan-V looks sternly at him. Zach-I's eyes grow wide, and he slips far back into his booth as though he expects to be immediately executed. If the Troubleshooters ask for more information about this tracer thingy, what it's for or how it works, Dan-V pleasantly says, 'Oh, don't worry, there's someone in the mission group who knows all about it. Would the Computer forget an important thing like that?'

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



THE MISSION

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

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

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

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

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

In the middle of all this harmless fun, and quite without warning, the Troubleshooters receive an upgrade patch for their iBalls. How and when this happens is best left to the GM's discretion. Perhaps the Troubleshooters start to lurch about, disorientated, in the middle of the munitions issue area, or maybe their vision goes all blurry and they have to grab the nearest flamethrower for support. Maybe there is some old-school electrodes-to-the-temples downloading, or the trigger-happy guards join in the jolly little escapade.

When the smoke clears and the cognitive disruption caused by an unexpected software patch has dissipated, the Troubleshooters will find they have a new capability. Presumably this is the RF Tracer Thingy they were not told very much about....

Of course, the Troubleshooters still do not know much about it. Knowledge lacking includes how to use the RF Tracer, what it does, and why they can't feel their left foot any more.

EQUIPMENT AND CARDS

Most of the equipment issued in this adventure is pretty standard. Everyone has a jumpsuit and laser pistol of the appropriate colour (yellow, obviously!), and standard equipment is available upon request. That does not mean it is issued upon request, of course, merely that it is available if the request is approved. Which it may or not be, depending on how badly the players think they need the item, weapon or device. However, we have supplied some cards that may be issued at the GM's whim, or perhaps handed out as rewards for excellent performance should that somehow occur.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

After kitting-out, the Troubleshooters are escorted out of the Headquarters building—and left there. If they stand around, a guard tells them, 'Hey! No loitering!' and shoos them away. Or shoots them away. That's good too.

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

If they make contact, use the following secret society missions at your discretion – or better, at complete random.

1. One of the other Troubleshooters is on a secret mission from IntSec to exterminate members of your secret society. Stop this from happening.

2. Someone is going to poison tonight's dinner. The Troubleshooter is not to stop this, as his own society members have all been warned (*not true*), but he must not eat dinner.
3. The mysterious Black Box is in the hands of an equally mysterious and generally bad personage of Presumed Ill Intent, and must be retrieved.
4. Some portable video cameras are missing from HPD&MC. According to rumour they contain footage that has not yet been uploaded to the general database and would be quite, err, embarrassing (possibly to a fatal degree) to certain high-level officials.
5. One of the Troubleshooters is told he will get a society IOU for every Frankenstein Destroyer he kills on this mission (*true*, but most of the opposition are Death Leopards, who don't score).
6. One of the Troubleshooters meets an Internal Security agent (even if he thought he was meeting a contact from his own secret society—you can give him a really nervous moment here) who tells him Traitors Of Some Kind Or Other have got hold of secret tapes, which must be recovered; he will earn many commendations for doing so.

Reunite the team and give them a little time to think—even to compare notes, if they desire to do such an un-PARANOIA-like thing—before their activities are interrupted by a loud *wheep*. After a few panicky seconds, the Troubleshooters will realise that the sound is in their heads (in some cases at tooth-rattling volumes) and is accompanied by a large red arrow appearing in their field of vision. This spins alarmingly a lot of the time, but generally points in the same direction as the other Troubleshooters' probably-not-imaginary red arrows.

If they can see past the flashing red arrow, the Troubleshooters see their iBalls and any public entertainment screens in sight have begun to display a new broadcast. It's not a mission alert or a Helpful Reminder Of How Not To Be A Traitor... no, it's... something else entirely. This is one of Rasterman Ganja's broadcasts (see 'Commercials' on page 38). The RF tracer locks onto the signal, the arrow points generally in the direction of the signal's origin, and the hunt is finally on.

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

ROUND ROBIN HOOD'S BARN

The Troubleshooters have no experience or training in the use of the RF tracer, but this is routine in Alpha Complex. Eventually they notice the frequency of the wheeps increases when they point in a particular direction. The volume of the wheeps also increases as they get closer to the signal source. If it started out loud, it reaches brain-wracking levels before long. Of course, nobody but the Troubleshooters can hear it, so nobody knows that whilst they look like any other Resolute Servants of the Computer, they're wheeping inside.

(Yes. We went there.)

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

In other words, send them up, down and around Alpha Complex, following the arrow through dining halls, INFRARED barracks, entertainment facilities, vehicular guideways (which will not stop for the team), storage areas and narrow accessways... Run the Troubleshooters ragged. Then run them some more. Maybe run them over with a vehicle for good measure.

As the characters wander about, the commercials (see page 38) occur at random intervals (that is, whenever you want). Not only do they give you a chance to entertain the players with your musical/comedic/mass-media denigration skills, but the Troubleshooters get to vaporise anyone they see who either believes the commercials, or who looks like he is enjoying them.

To help you visualise their pilgrimage, imagine wandering around five or six decks of an ocean liner looking for a hidden radio device. And imagine the ocean liner crawling with nosy and quarrelsome citizens, officious clerks, pugnacious Vulture Squadron guards and fitfully-maintained guardbots, courierbots and scrubots. A few arbitrary encounters might be appropriate. For example:

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



IT'S THE GOO (YEAH!) THAT'LL DO YA,

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

The Year 214 Committee: A group of relatively elderly citizens are bustling about decorating a hallway for the coming 214th Anniversary of something-or-other. They earnestly, imploringly, beg the Troubleshooters to pause in their mission to help them put up a few banners. If the players decline, the oldsters pull out guns and ask again.

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

When the pace begins to drag, warn players that the trace is weakening, and then have Rasterman air another commercial.

If any Troubleshooter is a member of Death Leopard, he receives a message sometime during the chase; the old soap-on-the-restroom-mirror trick is suggested. The message warns the Leopard that Screaming Sarah Slick herself instructs all Real Persons to skip dinner this evening, on pain of Missing The Fun.

This should make the dinner break interesting.

COMMERCIALS

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

1. An ad for synthetic food, featuring people trying to choke the stuff down, and the catchy jingle: 'When you just can't stand the pats, and your feets have got the flats, when you can't take no more, that's time (yes, time!) to hit the vats! It's the goo (yeah!) that'll do ya, it slides through ya oh-so-right, dump your hunger in the nearest vat tonight!'

2. An 'official announcement' that the colour BLUE has been determined to be morally equivalent to INDIGO, promising a followup on whether BLUE citizens will be promoted or INDIGOs reduced in rank.
3. An ad for Honest Har-V's Used Bot Lot, in which Har-V, wearing a crudely dyed VIOLET tunic, offers several bots at ridiculous prices. The 'bots' are actually people wearing tinfoil and metal junk. After this ad airs, the Troubleshooter with the clamp on his wrist had better find a way to get it off.
4. 'DISREGARD PREVIOUS MESSAGE.'
5. A promo spot for Teela-O-MLY, featuring someone who looks nothing like Teela-O asking everyone to stay tuned to this channel for instructions on reaching ULTRAVIOLET Clearance in three easy lessons.
6. An announcement that NYC Sector is now officially at war with LAX Sector, and asking all citizens to help the war effort by eating double portions at dinner.
7. A recruiting spot, in which a voice urges citizens to join the Vulture Squadrons, while a tape shows various aircraft crashing and exploding. (This tape is extremely illegal, and recovering it earns a Mission Bonus Of Indeterminate Proportions.)
8. A beer commercial. Citizens ride cardboard rafts over painted waves, while an offscreen figure throws a bucket of water over them at intervals. Finally they smile brightly and hold up cans with rings attached, then pull the rings. The cans are smoke grenades.

CHOW TIME

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

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

OPENING THEME

See Rasterman Ganja's TV Studio Map Card.

Sometime after the dinner hour (whether or not the Troubleshooters have eaten), shortly before tonight's Teela O'Malley broadcast, the Troubleshooters begin to wheep inside again, this time in a wild and multitonal frenzy. This is accompanied by a flashing multicoloured arrow indicating a very powerful trace; Rasterman is testing his transmitter at full power, preparing to override Teela with the Black Box.

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

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

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

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

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



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

Screaming Sarah Slick and her four Death Leopard companions are here to recover the Black Box from Rasterman Ganja. Two stay at the top of the stairs to deal with the Troubleshooters; Screaming Sarah and two Leopards dash downstairs after the Black Box.

It's showtime!

LIVE AND IN COLOUR

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

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

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

Just beyond the gun battle is a video studio set up with movable backdrops, video cameras on lightweight tripods and powerful lights.

The cameras are stencilled in large letters 'PROPERTY OF HPD&MC'.

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

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

Screaming Sarah and her two companions are engaged in a firefight with six of Rasterman's techs. Both groups are armed with laser pistols and without armour, but neither group is particularly proficient with weapons and the surroundings are absorbing most of the damage. The floor, walls and ceiling are crisscrossed with hastily strung cables and wires.

Stray shots hitting these cables produce dazzling effects. Pretty soon we get...

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

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

How will the Troubleshooters respond to this puzzling state of affairs? You can probably count on their firing off their ordnance, though who they'll shoot at...who knows? Your best bet is to orchestrate the NPCs as though the Troubleshooters didn't exist. Let them blow holes in any of the NPCs except Screaming Sarah. She has the Black Box, and she has to get away. The rest of the cast is expendable.

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

When it begins to look like the Troubleshooters are going to put Sarah's life or liberty in serious jeopardy, she and the Black Box leave by the nearest convenient door, accompanied by any surviving Death Leopard companions, dropping a choice selection of grenades behind her to



discourage pursuit. This could be the instant the Troubleshooters come down the stairs if they are a smoothly operating military unit, or could be after a half-hour or so if they are inept, backstabbing, cautious, cowardly or properly paranoid.

Note: You want the Troubleshooters to chase Sarah (see below), so subtly emphasise her escape. 'Oh dear. She's getting away with the Box. I wonder what the Computer will think about all this...' Tut a couple of times; shake your head. Annoy the players.

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

OR WOULD YOU RATHER HAVE WHAT'S BEHIND THE CURTAIN?

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

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

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

IF THEY DON'T CHASE THE BOX

In approximately 90 minutes, Screaming Sarah's Polypeptide Boogie will seize the citizenry—including our heroes, if they had dinner. If the Troubleshooters are affected, any prisoners they took at the TV studio (none of whom ate dinner) will escape. If they are not affected, they will have to explain why at debriefing.

CONNING THE PLAYERS INTO CHASING THE BOX

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

If the Troubleshooters don't chase the Box, you won't have as much fun. Therefore, you should dupe them into chasing the Box. This sort of manipulation infringes the player's free will and diminishes the expression of his inner spirit to which he is entitled as a human being and a citizen of your fair land. This is a thought crime of grave significance. Treason, in fact.

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

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

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

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

If all else fails, send the Troubleshooters a special dispatch via their iBalls as follows:

MISSION PRIORITY OVERRIDE!

TOP SECRET! TOP SECRET! TOP SECRET!

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



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

If the Troubleshooters try to confirm the order with the Computer, it tells them the order is phony, and they are to follow the order in order to reveal the traitor that ordered it. If the Troubleshooters make references to this phony mission override at a later date, the Computer interrogates them closely and assigns a treason star for receiving treasonous documents. Sigh. To be fair, make sure the Troubleshooters have plenty of opportunities to get Official Commendations by zapping lots of traitors.

A FRIENDLY GATHERING AT THE FOOD VATS

See the Food Vat Chambers Map Card.

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

Every secret society that has possessed the Black Box (starred on the list on page 28) sends a three-person fireteam to try and get hold of it. Any society contacted by one of the Troubleshooters sends a team as well. Feel free to add societies, service groups and random bands of heavily-armed but confused do-gooders until the crossfire is complicated enough for you.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

And how will the NPCs deal with the Troubleshooters? 'Do unto others as they do unto you'. If the Troubleshooters do a lot of shooting and bashing, the NPCs take notice and try to eliminate them. If the Troubleshooters sneak around and try to manoeuvre toward the control booth, they encounter NPCs with similar objectives.

And don't expect all the players to do the same things. One Troubleshooter may sit and hammer on a vat, trying to smash it. Another may find a secure spot and start working up a body count of traitors. Another may use a



mutant power to bypass the competition and confront Sarah directly. Relax and improvise. Use your NPC cast to invent entertaining responses to the players' actions.

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

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

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

WILD IN THE STREETS

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

TWIST AND SHOUT

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

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

While computers and bots are not directly affected, lots of human console operators are, so you can disrupt anything you feel like. Further, the Computer begins invoking overrides, interrupting services and switching controls to automatic systems—not always to appropriate ones. When a traffic-flow program takes over interior lighting control, lit windows start to flash arrows and messages like giant scoreboards, and guideway lights strobe, adding to the disco effect. (Remember that there is no natural illumination in Alpha Complex: when the Computer makes it dark, it's *dark*.)

Citizens are dancing out their doors, just like in a Busby Berkeley movie musical; humming something catchy from '42nd Street' or 'A Chorus Line' would be appropriate here.

Boogie-bouncing nervous systems are responsive to outside stimulus; the dancing mob soon ends up in step. When enough people dance in step, they set up harmonics that can shake bridges and even buildings apart.

The air reverberates; the characters seem to be trapped inside a giant teleprinter. The sky starts to fall. Pipes break, making it 'rain'. Bots do not work well in the rain, especially if their little rubber tires and brake shoes get wet. Bots on errands of mercy run into things and skid off other things, requiring more bots be sent on errands of mercy to help them.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

THE AFTERMATH

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

Whatever the players choose to do, things eventually return to normal and the Troubleshooters receive a summons via their iBalls to return to Headquarters for debriefing. If they do not voluntarily return in short order, combots seek them out, gas them and 'escort' them back.

When the team arrives at Troubleshooters Headquarters, they are cordially greeted and placed in 'protective custody'—a windowless, brightly lit cell—until sometime the next day, after things have returned to normal.

DEBRIEFING

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

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

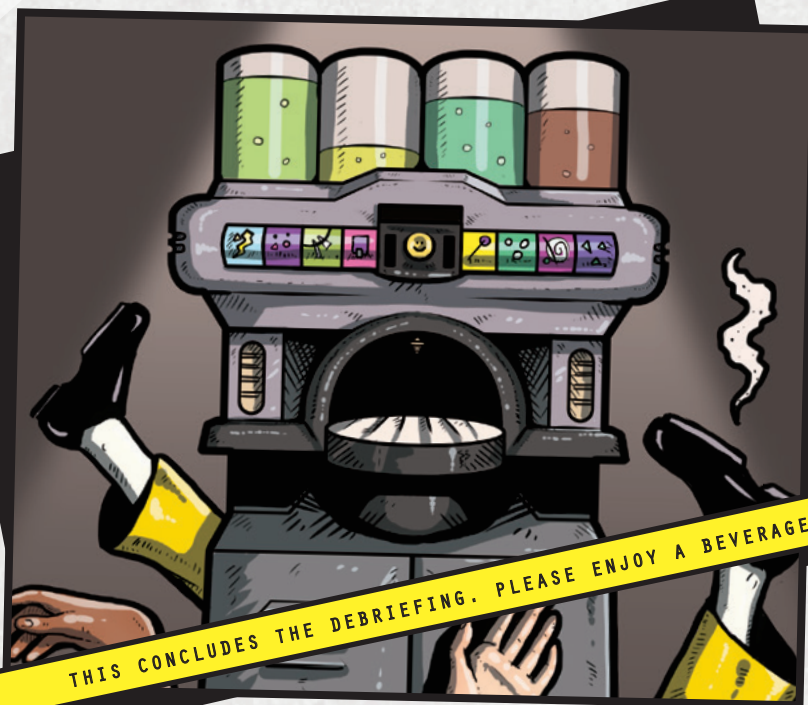
Brian-B is willing to forgive a lot if the Troubleshooters shot a lot of traitors. He is annoyed if the team leader's armour is undamaged. If the leader got smoked, on the other hand, Brian-B eulogises him as an example of everything a Troubleshooter ought to be.

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

Take reports, and assign rewards and penalties. Just before the Troubleshooters are released, Dan-V congratulates them on 'a fine performance in the Computer's sight. Friend Computer has asked me to say we hope you are never called on in such a fashion again.'

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

When the Troubleshooters get home, the Track 2 alert is waiting for them.



ACHIEVEMENTS

Discover the identity of the Teletraitors
(50XP)

Denounce the messages being treasonously broadcast over the iBall system so thoroughly that several clones are hardened against their treasonistic influences
(100XP)

Conduct the most efficient execution of the day-cycle
(50XP)

Demonstrate the blindest sort of blind obedience
(50XP)

Seize any suspicious object and ensure it is efficiently placed in the right hands
(200XP)

Give your R&D issued equipment a thorough field testing
(50XP)

PARANOIA™

THE YELLOW CLEARANCE BLACK BOX BLUES REMASTERED

TRACK 2: I WAS A MUTANT FOR THE FBI

Mission Design, Words and Music, Keyboards
JOHN M. FORD

Development, Rhythm Guitar, 24-Track Remix
KEN ROLSTON

New Wave Ensemble
M J DOUGHERTY
MATTHEW SPRANGE

ILLUSTRATIONS AND VIDEO EDITING

Amy Perrett &
Cheyenne Wright

1ST EDITION EDITING AND PERCUSSION

Paul Murphy

TROUBLESHOOTER ARRANGEMENT

Paul Baldowski

PLAYTESTERS AND ROADIES

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Margot Diamond | Steve Gilbert |
| Steve Crane | Doug Kaufman |
| Paul Murphy | Robert Tuffee |

INTENSE SUPERVISION, ERROR TERMINATION AND FEAR

The Computer

FEATURING

The New Paranoia Edition - James Wallis + Grant Howitt + Paul Dean
The Original Paranoia Design - Dan Gelber + Greg Costikyan + Eric Goldberg





TRACK 2: I WAS A MUTANT FOR THE FBI

P A R A N O I A

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

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



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

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

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

But there aren't any mutants. The Box is actually in the hands of the Alpha Complex Local History Research Group again, which is trying to negotiate with one of its Outdoors-dwelling former members for more Boxes like it. And the Free Enterprisers have decided to retrieve the Box themselves.

When the smoke clears, the Troubleshooters will miss the Box, but capture the Outsider who will lead to Track 3.

PRE-MISSION BRIEFING

When the Troubleshooters get back to the barracks, they receive a new Mission Alert. Give them an opportunity to seek contacts with their societies. Give them a few rumours (see General Rumour List, Track 1 page 20 or invent a few). Nothing new concerning the Black Box is available, but each society is emphatic about finding and snatching it if possible.

TROUBLESHOOTER HEADQUARTERS

Once again there is difficulty in determining where the Troubleshooters should report. If the Troubleshooters suggest Briefing Room AA, their supervisors immediately question them as to how they came by such information; the officials suspect a leak, and the characters must talk their way out of an immediate conviction/sentencing/ termination/good telling off (not necessarily in that order).

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

On the fourth try (again), the plate overheats, pan-frying the user's hands. Guards immediately summon a docbot to bring plastiflesh. Also a scrubot with glass cleaner and room deodoriser. For the duration of Track 2, the Troubleshooter with the resurfaced hands loses one from his NODE for any task requiring the dextrous use of his hands such as shooting, rewiring a troublesome bot or making complex secret society hand signals.

THE BRIEFING

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

At intervals during the briefings, the room begins to vibrate, and a rhythmic mechanical noise is heard. Troubleshooters get the distinct impression that the entire room is moving, on rails or tracks. The personnel ignore this effect entirely, and no explanation is available. Anyone asking why the room is moving will be ignored or counter-questioned about their affiliation with treasonous organisations. No answers will be forthcoming in any case, and the Troubleshooters really should know better by now.

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

CHOOSING THE TEAM LEADER

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



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

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

MISSION ASSIGNMENT

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

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

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

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

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

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

'Now remember, they're traitors and they're clever and they've rejected our way of life and that's stupid, so we're going to make you look stupid so you can get in there and be real clever, just like the traitorous mutants they are. Be careful, because they're not dumb, they may make mistakes but that's because they're clever traitors and they think you're stupid, but don't be dumb about it, remember they're Enemies of Alpha Complex and they're dumb and they're mutants and they're scum, and if it looks like a traitor and feels like a mutant and smells like scum it's one of you in disguise so you can give 'em what they've got coming to 'em.'

Dan-V wakes up. He says:

'One of our finest scientists, a loyal servant of the Computer and a good friend of mine, has made it possible for you to counter the deadly mental threat posed by these mutants. Take care with this equipment. It may be all that stands between you and...treason.'

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

PRIVATE BRIEFING

Brian-B reads the mission equipment requisition aloud to the group, then dismisses them to report to Outfitting. The team leader is directed to stay behind for a special private briefing. Dan-V addresses him as follows:

'Good friend Troubleshooter, we know of your loyalty to the Computer. That is why we are entrusting you with the following information—which is highly classified, and must be released to no one but your successor as team leader. In the event of your heroic death in the service of the Computer, you may assume you have permission to divulge this information to your replacement.

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



'We know that, should this become known, our loyal citizens might become afraid, not knowing when they might be innocently forced into treasonous acts. So we must keep the nature of this mission a complete secret. No one outside this room—of course our friend the Computer is here with us always—will know of your mission. You can expect no help from our fellow services—nor even from your fellow Troubleshooters.

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

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

A RED waiter appears, carrying a shiny metal tray. In the centre of the tray is a large blue pill.

'It works in ten seconds,' Brian-B says, awed.

The leader is allowed to rejoin the team, and they are all hustled off to R&D for YCA Sector. Should anyone decide to take a pill, the yellow pills are fatal about 20% of the time; otherwise they merely make the swallower feel nauseated, bloated and distinctly uneasy. The latter may not actually be an effect of the pill; anyone in circumstances where they feel the need to swallow their suicide pill might be forgiven for being a bit uneasy.

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

Taking any sort of suicide pills earns an Official Reprimand, especially if use of the pill was unnecessary.

THE FRIENDLY FOLKS AT R&D

Victor-I-VGF-6 is the last of an erratically brilliant line of research scientists. Victor-I was a mechanical genius, who devised such items as a reliable safety catch for rapid-fire anti-mob guns, a self-balancing hypocycloidal fusion containment field and a garbage bag with the twist tie attached. Unfortunately, all these items are classified ULTRAVIOLET.

Victor-1 died of piezoelectric shock while trying to develop a dogbot biscuit. Victor-2 was the first person to exceed Mach 3 while clinging to the outside of a flybot. Victor-3 was reading through his laboratory notes one day when he realised he had invented devices that exceeded his own security clearance; he promptly reported for termination. Victor-4 went into the lab one morning and was never seen again. Victor-5 is believed to have stumbled on the formula for a universal solvent, which then disappeared along with him and seven sub-basements.

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

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

In other words, the Troubleshooters are doomed from the moment they enter Victor-I's laboratory. However, this termination order will not take effect until the SM Project ends, and that could be a long time, especially in a Troubleshooter's life where a week is akin to a geological era.



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

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

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

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

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

MEN INTO MUTANTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

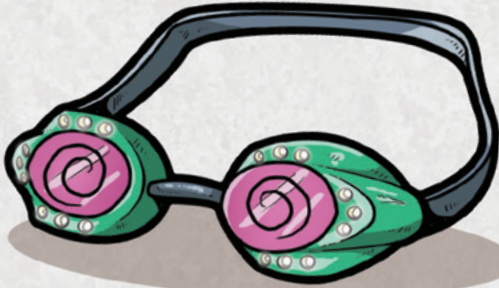
THE GOODIES

1. **Sensory Enhancer Helmet** (*Victor-I*). This is a full-head helmet with amplifying pickups for sound, hearing and smell. It works, but the gain controls are defective: audio volume may increase until a whisper deafens the wearer, or vision fades to black. Malfunctions of the scent-amplifying system are even more interesting. The unit is also rather difficult to remove.
2. **Electroshock Gauntlets** (*Willis-G*). Give the wearer shock abilities equivalent to the Electroshock mutant power. The control switches are built inside the gloves, and tend to stick; while the gloves are insulated, handling weapons with electrically live fingers can be hazardous, and careless use of hands can trigger shock accidentally.



3. **Omnigestoline-NG** (*Ned-G*). A drug that gives the user the ability to digest absolutely anything (he still has to somehow get it down his throat of course) for 12 hours. It does absolutely nothing. If the players take a pill in the lab, Ned-G will say 'Well, it takes an hour or so to get going. Make sure we get a full report.'
4. **Manipulatron** (*Victor-I*). A powered exoskeleton for the arms, giving the wearer ten times normal strength. It works just fine, except that it provides no extra support for the spine and legs, somewhat limiting the wearer's carrying capacity; the unit itself weighs about 40 kilos. Politely request the player to make occasional Mechanics + Operate checks. If failed, the Troubleshooter crashes to the ground. Two citizens are needed to help him stand. After the device has crashed to the ground a few times, the battered controls short out, causing a power-assisted case of St. Vitus's Dance. Ask the player to provide sound effects.
5. **Experimental Manual Operations Extensor, Mark 26** (*Ned-G*). This is supposed to simulate Telekinesis, and any Troubleshooter who asks for TK powers is going to be stuck with it. It is a harness mounting dozens of magnetically controlled wire filaments that can coil tightly or extend to five metres. It is controlled by nerve impulses, and comes with a thick manual of operation. The manual is censored, of course; most pages are blank and the rest are less useful than if they were blank. Of course, in use the device simply snags everything in sight, including the operator, more or less at random. Throughout the rest of the mission the user will involuntarily pluck items off walls, desks and passing citizens. But not predictably.
6. **Biofeedback Monitor System** (*Victor-I*). Victor borrowed (stole) the prototype of this from PDK Sector. He forgot to steal the documentation. It gives the user the option to add an extra dice to any Violence check. There is a 50% chance each time it is used that the user suffers from a burning itch in a random body part for the next few hours, and a 33% (2 in 6) chance that this itch intensifies if the device is used again. If so, the character is so distracted that he loses one dice from any task requiring concentration, like operating a complex device or remembering what lies he told the Vulture Troopers ten seconds ago.
7. **Neurocalculator** (*Willis-G*). This device clamps over the user's temples. It connects inductively to the brain, providing enhanced cognitive power when pondering a complex situation or concept. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it gives incredibly wrong answers. Sometimes the user stands stock still and recites the multiplication tables until his ears smoke.

8. **Teleporttransitron** (*Ned-G*). Designed to imitate the Teleportation power, this five-kilo belt device actually works and can be demonstrated. Unfortunately, the power pack is a 60 kg device mounted on a two wheeled cart which must be towed behind the user. More unfortunately, its calibration is extremely delicate, and after any bump (like walking out of the laboratory) it transmits the user, the user's equipment, the user's clothes and itself to widely separated locations. Failure to return the device is treason. Finding it after a teleport may be tricky.
9. **Suggestor Goggles** (*Victor-I*). These have whirling lights that give the wearer the Charm power over anyone he can somehow convince to look into his eyes while he is wearing them. A recorded message keeps repeating, 'Look into my eyes, look into my eyes, the eyes, the eyes, not around the eyes, don't look around my eyes, look into my eyes.'
10. **Neurofrabulator** (*Willis-G*). This device resembles a combat suit helmet with a clear bowling ball containing a live human brain bolted to either side. The brains have been artificially grown and possess the ability to read the surface thoughts of anyone in a ten-metre range, and telepathically communicate the information to the wearer. The possibilities for GM mischief with this one are endless. For example: the two brains bicker constantly; they make endless annoying suggestions to the wearer; they read the Troubleshooters' minds and threaten blackmail. Feel free to give the brains whatever names and personalities you wish: George and Gracie, Stan and Ollie, Moe, Larry and Curly (one of them is a split personality), etc.
11. **Autoresponse Imager** (*Victor-I*). A belt-mounted holographic projector that enables the user to disguise himself by showing images that follow the wearer's actions: the user can appear as a combat, Teela- O-MLY or any of 126 other images stored on microslide carousel. If asked, Victor-I demonstrates some useful settings; no complete list is available. The slide controller has a tendency to reset itself randomly in use, and the test slides are broadly selected, including Wile E. Coyote, items of furniture, Peter Lorre (in black and white) and several famous paintings.
12. **Lung/Gill Suit** (*Victor-I*). A skintight leotard that filters oxygen out of water. It is a bit sweaty in normal wear, but it works perfectly. A player assigned this will just have to figure out how to field-test it.
13. **Pedipulatron** (*Willis-G*). An exoskeleton for the legs similar to the Manipulatron above. They will not be offered as a set. If someone tries to wear them together, their combined weight becomes a considerable burden. Then one or the other shorts out and becomes dead metal.



THE GOODIES, THE BADIES & THE UGLIES

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

GM: The R&D lab is a bountiful techno-cornucopia of brilliant devices. You don't know what a techno-cornucopia is, but if you did it would look like the R&D lab does now. Extravagantly destructive weapons are casually laid out alongside sensors capable of piercing the very deepest depths of inscrutability. Things that have flashing lights on them stand on lab benches around the room. One of them is smouldering gently. The scientists do not seem unduly concerned about this.

Willis-G sorts quickly through a handful of gadgets, knocking some of them on the floor. One burns a fair-sized hole. He dashes up to you, proffering... something or other. It's got a gun sticking out of it so it must be good. Yup, it's one of those power holsters you were admiring earlier. You know you were. And it's yours! "Who wants an Improved Power Holster?" Willis-G asks eagerly.

Boug-Y: Oh yeah, I want one. Does it fit my laser pistol?

GM: It fits any handgun, thanks to its auto-resize function. The glove also resizes to fit your hand. Isn't that clever?

Boug-Y: I strap it on and give it a try.

Hiss-Y: I'm snagging one too.

Fallon-Y: Me too

GM: Crunch

Lovell-Y: Crunch?

GM: Boug-Y already has his holster and glove in place. Hiss-Y and Fallon-Y both have a holster. Unfortunately it's the same one; there's only two ready for issue right now. Thud.

Narcoleps-Y: Crunch then thud? What's going on?

Boug-Y: I draw my laser pistol and look for whatever's making the thud and crunch noises.

Ant-Y: What are the scientists doing? Anything treasonistic?

GM: WHANGGGG! And no, the scientists are just sorting through the equipment. They keep holding up items, or touching them longingly then sighing and shaking their heads. Finally Victor-I makes a decision. He grabs a weird-looking helmet with wires and electronic stuff sticking out of it, and turns to Narcoleps-Y.

Hiss-Y: What was that whang?

GM: WHANGGGG!

Hiss-Y: Was than another whang or the same one?

GM: Same one. It was more WHANGGGG! than 'whang'.

Lovell-Y: So, what WHANGGGGed? And crunched? And thudded?

GM: Hiss-Y, you've got the receiver glove on. Fallon-Y has the holster.

Boug-Y: What made the noises? Was it traitors or mutants or something? Kill! Kill!

GM: You won't be kill-killing with that pistol.

Boug-Y: Why???

GM: The holster has auto-resized itself to fit the gun. Only it's auto-resized the gun as well, crushing the barrel...

Lovell: Ah. Crunch.

GM: ... bits of which are now on the floor.

Lovell: Thud.

GM: Yup.

Boug-Y: Is my pistol fixable? Can the scientists do anything about it?

GM: Well, they maybe could have before you dried to draw it. The mechanism might be a little... overzealous. What's left of your laser pistol came out of the holster just fine. It's embedded in the ceiling now. Two floors up.

Lovell: (smugly) WHANGGGG!

GM: WHANGGGG! indeed. Oh, Hiss-Y...

Hiss-Y: (Apprehensively) Ye-e-es?

GM: Your glove is auto-resizing....

CLOAKS AND DAGGERS

Once outfitted with their synthetic mutations, the team goes to the regular Quartermaster office to sign out their more commonplace equipment.

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

At least this time the staff isn't so hesitant about providing armour, implying the team is really going to need it this time. They have several suits of 'typical of what the well-dressed YELLOW civilian wears' with concealed armour. The armour of course comes in three sizes – too small, too large and both. It is possible to match the clothing or the fit, but not both (and in some cases neither).

Once again the team finds itself on the sidewalk in front of HQ, with no idea where to begin. Suddenly a panting RED Troubleshooter runs up to them, holding a dispatch envelope. He demands to see an official copy of the team's mission orders before handing over the message.

The team has not been issued an official copy of its orders. In order to get the message, the Troubleshooters must pull rank on the RED messenger, or simply shoot him. If neither of these ideas occurs to anyone, a passing scrubot picks up the messenger and tosses him into a trash compactor; the envelope flutters to the ground, where the scrubot ignores it.



The dispatch reads:

:SPECIAL FIELD DISPATCH!
:TO TROUBLESHOOTER TEAM [DELETED FOR REASONS OF SECURITY]
:LATE INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM [DELETED]—PROCEED TO YCA
Sector BOT FACILITY 25—THERE COMPLETE MISSION TO CAPTURE [DELETED
DELETED] AND RECOVER [DELETED DELETED DELETED DELETED DELETED].
:[DELETED DELETED] IS WANTED FOR INTERROGATION. ANY [DELETED
DELETED] THAT INTERFERES WITH INTERROGATION IS [DELETED].
:GOOD [DELETED]. THE COMPUTER IS [DELETED] ON YOU. SERVE THE
COMPUTER WELL AND YOU WILL BE [DELETED].
:END MESSAGE

The message is in fact for the team, and informs them in clear and simple terms what they have to do next. Troubleshooters who wish to claim an Official Dispatch With Orders And Everything was somehow deficient can try it if they want.

ALL DRESSED UP WITH NO PLACE TO GO

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

If contact is made with secret society members, one of the Troubleshooters is informed that the Outsider named, err, Reagan Wimbledon or something like that, has been kidnapped by agents of Free Enterprise, who wish to sell him (something like that anyway). The Troubleshooter must free this person, whose name is actually Wobblepot or something very similar, at the cost of his own life if necessary. He will know him by his fuzzy vest. Much of this information is garbled but the 'fuzzy vest' part is correct. If the Troubleshooter thinks he misunderstood, good.

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

THE MISSION

The dispatch gives a location in YCA Sector, supposedly the location of the Evil Mutant Enclave. No secret society can say anything about what the address might actually be, but Power Services knows that a lot of heavy conduits run under the place.

In reality, it's a 'safe house', a room operated by the Free Enterprisers, guaranteed to be absolutely free of the Computer's surveillance devices. The Enterprisers rent it out to anyone who can pay the astronomical fee, for whatever purpose the renter desires. The room really is Computerproof, though naturally the Enterprisers have their own bugs installed, for protection and blackmail.

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

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

Oregon Warbler thinks the Local History Research Group is crazy, but he can sell certain items, especially firestarters, for a small fortune Outdoors, and if the Group wants boxes, they can have boxes.

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

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

The Troubleshooters have the address because:

1. Betty-U-YFL ordered her Programs Group to find her the Black Box;
2. A group member got the safe house location, and transmitted it to Zach-I-LVI on the briefing team;
3. Zach-I sent the message to capture the Box, with the address, to the team leader;
4. The Computer deleted all references to the Black Box from the message. Zach-I never questions what the Computer deletes and doesn't care anyway.

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

THE SAFE HOUSE ENTRANCE

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

The lobby of the Bot Maintenance Facility is a very large room filled with unmarked cartons of various sizes. A pair of large glass doors lead from the lobby down a long corridor. Next to these doors is a desk with a computer console. No one is sitting at the desk. Two heavily-armed ORANGE guards lean negligently against the wall next to the desk.

They eye you suspiciously, but do not aim their weapons. In a distant corner of the room, partly obscured by cartons, is a door marked 'NO ADMITTANCE— DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE TOXIC CHEMICALS EXTREME HEAT'.

This is a bona fide bot maintenance facility.

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

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

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

TUNNEL

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

BASEMENT CHECKPOINT

See the Safe House Apartment Map Card.

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

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

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

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



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

The room is ten by ten metres. Two large desks, one to the right, the other to the left of the door, are occupied by a pair of casually surly guards dressed in non-standard, sharply-tailored body armour jackets. Their weapons are pointed suggestively in your direction. One has a needler, several grenades and a gauss rocket launcher on his desk; the other has a minigun.

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

The Free Enterprise guards at the checkpoint do not annoy the Troubleshooters unless they make pests of themselves. The phone call is to Free Enterprise headquarters to confirm the visitors. The other guard presses a button under his desk and the rear wall panel of the room swings open to reveal a passage leading upward. The first guard leans inside, and yells, 'Company coming!' up the stairway.

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

THE APARTMENT

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

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

There are no windows, but a pair of large vidscreens show worn videotapes of the Outdoors (prized Alpha Complex Local History Research Group possessions): California, St. Croix, the Jersey Turnpike and so forth.

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

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

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





OREGON WARBLER

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

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

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

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

A FRIENDLY LITTLE ALTERCATION

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

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

THIS WAY TO THE EGRESS

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

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

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

They may consider following Oregon. Somewhat more promising.

EMERGENCY EXIT A

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

EMERGENCY EXIT B

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

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

If the Troubleshooters detonate a large quantity of ordnance in the tunnel, a gas explosion makes most of the block sink three or four metres into the earth.

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

After the hue and cry goes up, the Alpha Complex Local History Research Group gets a hit team of their own there, trying to recover the Box and Oregon Warbler.

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

Nobody shoots at the Black Box or at Oregon. All societies take considerable risks to capture it.

ENDING THE BATTLE

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

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

As the lights go out and everything gets quiet, tell the Troubleshooters they smell a funny smell. Let them wander in the dark for a few panicky rounds, then start turning off the Troubleshooters. Make a Violence check for each character each round. When each fails, ask the players to provide snoring sound effects. When everyone is buzzing and snorting, tell them that time passes. Break for munchies and a stretch.

DETENTION

The surviving Troubleshooters awake in the back of an Internal Security van on their way to detention. Wounded Troubleshooters are being treated by an onboard docbot. Oregon Warbler is with the Troubleshooters, but unconscious and receiving medical treatment. If the Black Box was in the possession of one of the Troubleshooters when the lights went out, it has disappeared. (An Alpha Complex Local History Research Group Internal Security plant has intercepted it and sent it along to higher-ups in the society. It will reappear in Track 3.)

When they arrive at the detention block, Oregon is separated from the Troubleshooters and sent to a medical facility. The Troubleshooters are sent as a party to some surprisingly comfortable detention quarters where the wounded continue to receive medical treatment. All requests for information or release are greeted with the traditional, 'I'm sorry, but that is impossible at this time.' An Internal Security clerk contacts the Troubleshooters by vidcom and asks them to begin preparing their reports. In the process he lets slip that Internal Security has no record of authorisation for their mission. (Remember that bogus dispatch they got that wasn't an official order...?) Grin a lot at the players.

DEBRIEFING

Three hours after arriving in detention, five Vulture Squadron guards appear at the door of the Troubleshooters' detention quarters to take them to Briefing Room AA. Wounded Troubleshooters are conveyed in wheelchairs. The Vultures make sly cracks about needing to lash the disabled to posts for execution. Vultures' humour is similar to that you recall from high school bullies in gym class. Not refined, but spirited and imaginative.

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

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

The Troubleshooters can salvage some dignity if they give a good account of their problems, and if they point out that they captured Oregon alive as they (think) they were directed, Brian-B is somewhat mollified. Of course, a sizable body count of traitors and/or mutants is the only thing that really satisfies Brian-B.

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

Any response that indicates they know what Zach-I is talking about (even he doesn't) will produce intense questioning by Brian-B, trying to establish that they are all really terrorists, infiltrators or Some Other Kind Of Bad Guy, and the black object is part of a secret plot to destroy Alpha Complex.

As always, assign rewards and punishments, berate the team for damage to equipment (Dan-V is very stern if any of Victor-I's gadgets were destroyed), and thank them for their cooperation.

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



ACHIEVEMENTS

Provide feedback on the effectiveness of issued suicide pills
(50XP)

Convince someone who has no reason to believe you that you are indeed a natural mutant
(50XP)

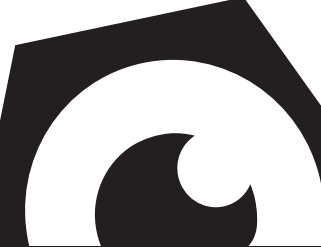
Give your mutant-power-simulation-device a good field testing
(50XP)

Successfully infiltrate the mutant enclave and discover any connections to other suspicious areas
(100XP)

Demonstrate that you are not under hostile mutant mind control
(100XP)

[REDACTED]
(100XP)

PARANOIA™



C TRACK 3: NO-ONE GETS OUT OF HERE ALIVE



PARANOIA™

THE YELLOW CLEARANCE BLACK BOX BLUES REMASTERED

TRACK 3: NO-ONE GETS OUT OF HERE ALIVE

Mission Design, Words and Music, Keyboards
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Development, Rhythm Guitar, 24-Track Remix
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**1ST EDITION EDITING
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**TROUBLESHOOTER
ARRANGEMENT**
Paul Baldowski

PLAYTESTERS AND ROADIES

Margot Diamond Steve Gilbert
Steve Crane Doug Kaufman
Paul Murphy Robert Tuffee

INTENSE SUPERVISION, ERROR TERMINATION AND FEAR

The Computer

FEATURING

The New Paranoia Edition - James Wallis + Grant Howitt + Paul Dean
The Original Paranoia Design - Dan Gelber + Greg Costikyan + Eric Goldberg





TRACK 3: NO-ONE GETS OUT OF HERE ALIVE

P A R A N O I A

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

The Computer has discovered the existence of the secret exit from Alpha Complex; Oregon Warbler, captured alive in Track 2, traded the information for his life. The Computer sends the Troubleshooters on a mission to seal off the exit.

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

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



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

And since this is *PARANOIA*, not *Some Other Game™*, the mission is finally a wild goosebot chase, as the kill-crazy Internal Security officer Brian-B-IWR-6 conducts his own airborne search-and-destroy mission on the exit, and succeeds in blowing it wide open to daylight. Then the Troubleshooters get to go home and try to explain what happened, receiving a well-earned rest. Until Track 4.

PRE-MISSION BRIEFING

The Troubleshooters, condemned for treasonable destruction of Computer property, are waiting to be used as target practice. Wearing disposable over-tunics printed with bullseyes, they line up against a pockmarked wall, confronted by a BLUE weapons training officer and a group of new and inexperienced RED Troubleshooter trainees. (You may, if you wish, refer to them as green RED Troubleshooters.) They are armed with miniguns, rocket launchers, bags of grenades and some kind of flame-projection device. None of the trainees has ever so much as seen these weapons before. Most of them never will again, either. The officer makes a brief address to the trainees:

'This is a signal honour! The Computer has chosen you insignificant RED-clearance stooges to execute YELLOW-clearance traitors! A great honour! And to use such a bountiful collection of weapons in the execution? An unheard-of honour! Congratulations. *[The officer softens his voice to a conspiratorial whisper.]* Better than a field promotion! Believe me, I know....'

The next few minutes comprise the officer's jiffy-crash course in heavy weapon operation. Here's a chance for a little GM low comedy improvisation: RED Troubleshooters peering interestedly down the barrel as they fondle the trigger—a shriek of anxiety as the officer tries to restrain a rookie trying to hammer a round into the minigun with the butt of his laser pistol—the squad standing at attention when a rocket launcher goes off and a shower of metal and plaster rains down from the ceiling. An incident involving one clone setting another on fire, leading to a grenade-related mishap requiring the activation of a clone or two. The officer gently guiding a barrel to aim in a roughly more appropriate direction. Go to town. The Three Stooges meet *Star Wars*.

The Troubleshooters are not physically restrained. They are well advised, but inappropriately optimistic, in trying to escape. The officer snaps out a net gun and casually snags a few Troubleshooters in the first couple of rounds, then guardbots with stunners round up the rest. The guardbots then restrain the Troubleshooters by claspings their ankles in their gripping manipulators. The guardbots appear to examine the RED-clearance firing squad speculatively, then they hunch down as close to the ground as possible.

Note: Troubleshooters who offer advice or assistance to the trainees or help round up fleeing traitors should receive an Official Commendation. Or at least a few XP Points.

Finally the weapons are loaded and aimed. The first volley is fired, sprayed, thrown and launched. When the smoke clears, the targets are slightly deafened but unhurt. There are shell holes in walls, floor and bots. Stuff is on fire. A grenade, its pin still in place, rolls slowly across the floor in a micro-tragedy of unfulfilled destiny. Attempts to escape in the confusion fail as before. Constructive suggestions are rewarded.

Just as the second volley is about to be fired, four Vulture Squadron guards enter the firing range. With them is Zach-I-VLI, who looks distracted as usual. A guard hands a message envelope to the training officer, who reads it, turns to the Troubleshooters and says 'Okay, you're to go with these guys.'

The Vultures take custody of the players, summoning bots to carry stunned or fainted characters. Zach-I does not go with the group. The Computer discovered his part in tampering with the orders last mission; Zach-I was too confused to defend himself.

The last things the Troubleshooters hear as they leave the firing range are weapons firing, grenades exploding and the instructor saying, 'Now you're getting the idea!'

CHECKING IN

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



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

BRIEFING ROOM

The Vultures accompany the Troubleshooters as they enter the briefing room. Dan-V and Brian-B are all who's left on the bench, which is guarded by two sleek and apparently weaponless humanoid bots. These bots are of a gleaming, polished alloy marked only with a black 'belt' painted around their narrow waists. (They are actually very effective hand-to-hand combat models.) The formerly harsh downward light is now diffused by a cloud of vapour that hangs near the ceiling. This cloud is odourless (and harmless), but during the briefing it rolls ominously and changes colours.

CHOOSING THE TEAM LEADER

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

MISSION ASSIGNMENT

Dan-V says, *'Troubleshooters, I fear I must reprimand you, for you have come close to causing our friend the Computer the most grievous simulation of sorrow.*

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

Dramatic pause. Protests that the reports were complete are met with stern reprimands and random punishments for insubordination.

'But the Computer is not fooled. The fundamental contradictions of Those Opposed To Our Way Of Life inevitably cause their downfall.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

At Dan-V's prompting, a guard hunts through the briefcase (carefully, trying not to look at it in case there are any more high-clearance documents inside) and comes up with the authorisation vouchers for the map, which the Troubleshooters must all sign. The team leader is given physical possession of the map.

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

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

Pause. Dan-V has dozed off again. Brian-B says:

'Fortunately for you, you brought one of the foreign mutant traitor... HAH! INFIL-Traitor... scum in alive. In return for his worthless traitorous life, he's going to sneak you past the defences set up by the Enemies Of Our Way Of Life. Do you think that will make it easy enough?'

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

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

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

Actually Warbler is nervous, but hopeful. In his old life as Warren-B, he was a clever, conniving sort of clone, and he thinks he has managed to con the Computer into an escape. He is contemptuous of the Troubleshooters. His

major worry is that, with the Troubleshooter team dogging him on the way to the exit, he may be caught in one of the booby traps he and his fellow Outsiders planted on the way.

Warbler is wrong. He has forgotten too much of what life is like in Alpha Complex; the greatest threat to his survival is the ordinarily screwed-up nature of life inside. Dan-V awakes and slips right back into speech, as usual.

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

Warbler is led back out.

PRIVATE BRIEFING

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

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

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

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

Dan-V makes a sententious comment about the Computer's fairness and honesty. He then slumps over on his desk and begins to snore audibly. Brian-B continues.

'But, clever, clever Internal Security operatives have devised a plan to test this Warbler's loyalty. His kit will contain weapons placed there by loyal



citizens who are pretending to be sympathisers to his particular brand of treason. The weapons are actually realistic dummies constructed in BFD Sector for training missions. Furthermore, and even cleverer, a grenade has been hidden in Warbler's pack, which you can detonate by pressing the button on a remote you will be given during equipment issue. The remote is disguised as something else. You do not need to know what that will be at this time. You must be very careful not to alert Warbler's suspicions about his equipment.

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

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

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

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

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

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

At about the time the leader realises he has heard this speech before, Dan-V nods off and Brian-B takes over.

'This one ought to be easy. You're going into an area where no one has a right to be. Everything you see is a traitor. Everything that happens down there is treasonous. I wish I was going with you. I wish I could take a squadron of Vultures and...' [Brian-B struggles visibly to control his excitement.] *'...just remember, these scum almost got you killed. I know what I'd do to someone who did that to me.'*

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

It is an authorisation for one Special Circumstances Munition, type tacnuke, Clearance VIOLET.

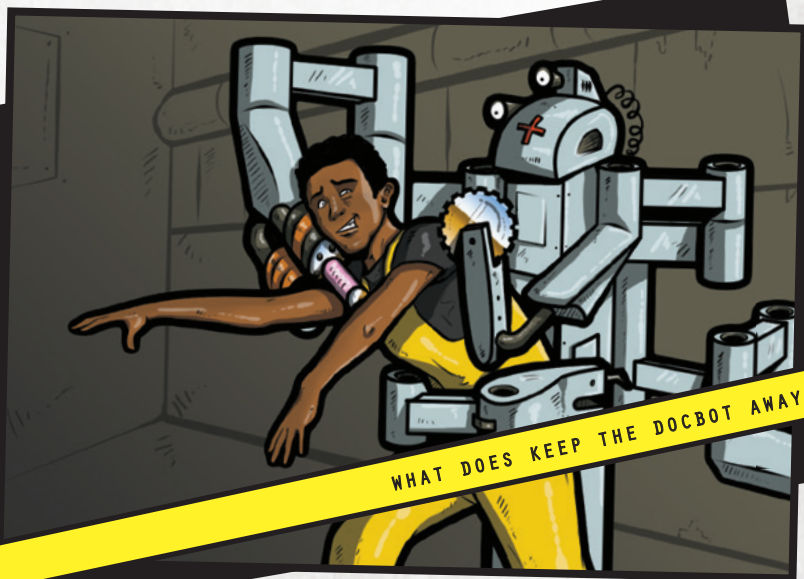
'For your eyes only,' Brian-B says.

Dan-V stirs, startling Brian-B, and says 'Serve the Computer well, and you will be well done...'

Then he goes back to sleep.

Brian-B hands the leader the mission equipment requisitions and dismisses him to join his fellows for outfitting. In addition to the items on the list, Oregon Warbler carries a backpack. This is Oregon's personal pack, and he discourages others from inspecting it, but he is INFRARED and easily coerced. The pack contains:

- 30m coil rope
- 2-day ration kit
- 1-liter water bottle
- (20) Pocket butane lighters intended as trade goods for Outdoors.
- (10) Hand lenses
- Night Cycle Vision Goggles
- Knife
- Laser pistol with GREEN barrel concealed in a special pouch; cannot be found without a thorough search of the bag.



OUTFITTING

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

The two bots appear to be in good condition. If asked about their prior service records (always a good idea, though the team is stuck with these bots anyway), the jackobot replies that it has served long, well and truly in Thixotropic End-Use Element Transport Maintenance. Anyone who shows knowledge that the bot used to be in Sewer Repair incurs a temporary treason star for possessing classified information. The docbot proudly affirms it has always been a docbot Model 8 (three numbers higher than the usual Model 5). If asked its specialty, it replies it has the latest in Preventive Medicine programs. The team leader signs for the jackobot; the team medical officer signs out the docbot.

The team leader must present his requisition for the tacnuke. If he does not, he receives a reprimand and possibly a treason star for disobeying orders. If he lets the other team members in on the fact that he has the weapon, he will definitely earn a treason star for leaking secrets (he may pass it on to a

successor leader without penalty). The tacnuke comes in a pop-top rations cylinder exactly like the ones in all packs. Under no circumstances does the QM staff allow the canister to be opened at this time; opening it ahead of schedule is not treason, but don't tell the player that.

As the QM staff distribute the weapons, they repeatedly reassure the Troubleshooters that all the weapons are perfectly reliable, and that it is just a coincidence that all of them have BFD Sector production serial numbers. (These weapons have only a normal chance of malfunction.) If a player suspiciously asks you about the significance of particular production serial numbers, say that only a real weapons expert would notice such details. If the QM staff are asked, they over-enthusiastically assure the Troubleshooters it is 'completely unimportant. Totally irrelevant. No problem. Honest.'

GM note: This is one of the prime principles of *PARANOIA*. First, specifically draw the players' attention to a minor detail. Repeatedly call their attention to that detail. Then assure them that detail is completely unimportant. Then keep calling their attention to the detail from time to time. They soon wonder what you are up to. That is called paranoia. See?

THE JACKOBOT

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

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

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

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



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

The jackobot was programmed to work underwater (actually undersewage) and prefers a submerged environment. Whenever it sees water—which will be frequently in the tunnel—it will jump in, its treads throwing up rooster-trails. It can be ordered not to do this, but the order must be repeated for every single bit of water encountered. Imagine trying to keep a three-year-old out of puddles. It's worse than that.

THE DOCBOT

This bot carries an experimental Preventive Medicine program in addition to its normal docbot programming. Unfortunately, the program has a very literal interpretation of 'preventive'. The bot is constantly running to the aid of Troubleshooters whom it thinks may need medical attention—e.g., they are all wet and might catch cold, they are eating and might choke, they are handling weapons that might go off accidentally. A Troubleshooter who becomes angry with the bot is a likely candidate for protective sedation. In a firefight, the bot runs around like a duralloy Gunga Din, trying to reach potential targets ahead of beams or bullets.

There is no way to stop this behaviour, even for the authorised operator, since bots may not be ordered to contradict their programming. Some sort of robot psychological trickery might be employed if the Troubleshooters have the inclination and the time. Lots of time.... The docbot normally ignores Warbler, though it can be ordered to heal him if he is actually wounded.

And away we go....

When the Troubleshooters have collected all the equipment authorised for the mission, wheedled and whined for other equipment, signed all the forms and endured the bored resentment of the quartermaster staff, they are ready to proceed on the mission. The Troubleshooters should all look to their leader for orders. Encourage the players to show proper anticipation of some Really Good Orders like the ones they're about to receive. Any time now...

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

When prompted, the jackobot will direct the party to the sector Vehicular Boarding Area.

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

You can use the jackobot to prompt the Troubleshooters with hints when they get bogged down or when they sit around too long in a boring fashion.

You can build a dependency on the jackobot for information and guidance. Once this dependency is established, you can jerk the players around a bit. Occasionally give the jackobot lines like, 'I don't know. I'm just a little bot,' or 'You're the leader. You ought to know where the hell we are,' or 'Well, if you'd asked me before, I had this swell idea, but now you've got things so screwed up...' If the players start looking for opportunities to push the jackobot down deep shafts, you're doing your job properly.

THE MISSION

The Troubleshooters proceed to the Vehicular Boarding Area where a large autocar, without driver, is waiting for them. Six guards hold Oregon Warbler at gunpoint by the autocar. Warbler wears his *INFRARED* coveralls and backpack, along with a smug expression. A guard steps forward, asks for the mission leader, then produces a stack of forms that must be signed before Warbler may be transferred into the party's custody. When the forms are signed, the guards chuckle, poke Warbler a few times and wander off in search of new entertainment.

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

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

THE ENCHANTED PLUMBING FOREST

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

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

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

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

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

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

After a few yards a bot comes rocketing out of the dark along the narrow pathway, headed straight for the party. The Troubleshooters and bots must make Violence + Athletics checks (one success required) to scramble up pipes or dodge under machinery along the path to avoid the oncoming bot. Anyone still on the pathway is Injured in the next round.

As the Troubleshooters struggle through the dark behind the jackobot, a few more perilous encounters with bots occur until Warbler begins to fear for his life. He then suggests a better way through the maze, along elevated catwalks accessible by ladders that rise toward the ceiling along the walls of the vast corridors. There are no bots up there, but the jackobot can slowly pull itself up the ladder by its manipulators, and the docbot can climb the ladder like a Troubleshooter, only with less accidental weapon discharges.

Warbler cheerfully tries to engineer an unfortunate fall for careless Troubleshooters. He does not use his weapons here, so close to the Computer.

THE DESCENT

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

Within is a dingy, cylindrical metal shaft four metres across, going up out of sight into grey haze, downward into total darkness. Every ten metres, a metal flange a hands breadth wide runs all the way round the tube. There is a clammy downdraft that changes every 15 minutes to a warm updraft that would smell of dead orchids if any of the Troubleshooters knew what that smelled like. Just inside the door is a metre-square platform with a broken railing.

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

Each character's knapsack contains a 30-meter coil of nylon rope and some cable splices. The rope has a (labelled) tensile strength of 1,000 kilos.



The splices (not labelled) support 500 kilos if properly used. A character with mountain-climbing experience (unlikely! Please explain...?) automatically applies a splice correctly. Anyone else makes a Mechanics check (one success required). Improperly applied splices look fine, and support a normal hard tug, but give at an inopportune moment.

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

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

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

If asked, the jackobot has a pretty good idea. He suggests that the safest way to descend (other than the folding ladders) is to splice five coils of rope into an endless loop, hook a deadman pulley to the platform, then have the jackobot hold the rope at the top while one character descends with the winch, using it for speed control (not that you can, but what a lovely idea); then winch down the remaining characters one or two at a time, leaving the rope in place for the return ascent.

The base of the shaft is a metal grille. Twenty metres below is a swirling pool of a red-lit fluid, looking much like molten metal (the characters have never seen lava, even if the players have seen movies about doom-laden temples). If a bot falls more than 30 metres, it punches right through the grille and falls into the fluid (which is lukewarm water, rancid with chemical waste and lit by bacteria). The bot is not lost: it traces the team (the jackobot by internal maps, the docbot by biosensors) and shows up again at some unexpected moment, draped in weird algae and smelling like the Computer knows what.

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

ALL HOPE ABANDON, YE WHO ENTER HERE

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

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

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

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

If you have good roleplayers, you can count on them helping you in fleshing out the details as they get into the spirit of crawling around in foul-smelling, dark, wet tunnels. They'll remind you that they are soaking wet and freezing in the fierce drafts (that you didn't even mention, but which they naturally assumed in dark, mysterious tunnels). Go with the flow.

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

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

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

THE TUNNEL

It is dark. It is wet. It is steamy hot, until it turns bitterly cold. It is lined with intrusive metal objects, which constantly trip the players or bonk them in the head. It is so noisy that people who are not standing next to one another may not communicate normally (players can try communicating using their Cerebral Coretech, but wireless coverage down here is intermittent and spotty, so this either doesn't work, or works but only after a long delay – the message suddenly being delivered long after it is useful, and possibly not until the players are out of the tunnels entirely).

Long stretches of it are flooded ankle- or knee- or hip-deep, which makes the jackobot very happy. Any weapon that gets immersed must be checked for malfunction. Backpacks keep their contents dry against splashes of water, but not total immersion. Some of the floor is stone, which is slippery; other stretches are metal grilles, which clang loudly when walked on. Weird organic stuff grows up from the grilles and cracks in the floor.

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

WAR OF THE BOTS

The Troubleshooters will almost certainly want to put Warbler out in the lead. If they do so, the jackobot protests that this presents a risk to valuable Computer property. Then the docbot begins arguing that the Troubleshooters are much more valuable than this INFRARED citizen; its programming tells it so. For example:

Doc: The traitor is obviously an INFRARED, and obviously of less value to the Computer. Therefore the traitor should go in the lead. That is logical.

Jacko: But I have been entrusted with the safety of this citizen, who is obviously of greater than usual value to the Computer because of his special knowledge. This resource must be protected at all costs. This is my programming. This is more logical than your stupid argument, which clearly reveals the limits of your processing capacity.

Doc: You can't process your way out of a plastic bag. Your artificer must have been a microcephalic mutant moron.

Jacko: Sez you. Your bot brain has obviously been exposed to hard radiation. You haven't the processing capacity of a digital watch.

Doc: Bolt barrel!

Jacko: Vat plug!

Doc: Jumped-up scrubot!

Jacko: Diddle chip!

After the argument has gone on for a few minutes, the docbot pulls rank, pointing out that it is a Model 8, while the jackobot is only a 300-series. The jackobot grudgingly concedes, humming at a low frequency and tapping its manipulators in frustration.

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

TUNNEL ENCOUNTERS

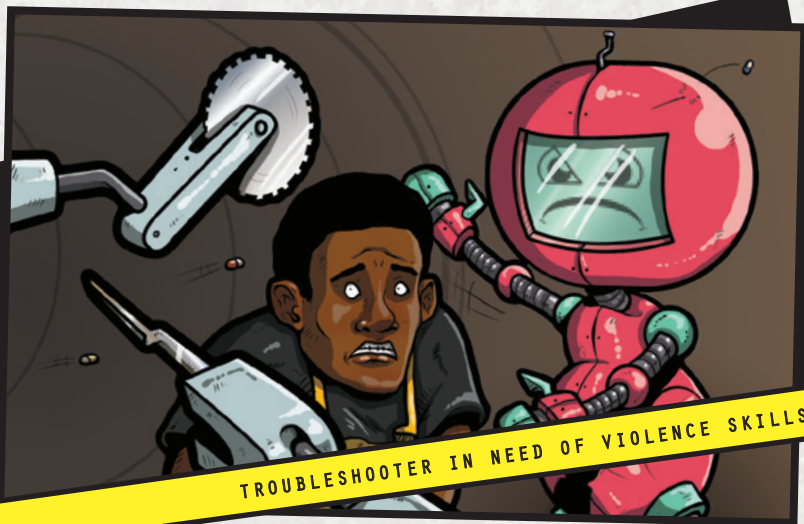
Many adventure game scenarios feature long treks through subterranean passages filled with hostile traps and creatures. In keeping with this honourable tradition, we have provided you with an ample supply of hostile traps and implausible creatures that couldn't possibly find enough to eat down here.

Often people are moved to ask why all that stuff is waiting around to clobber passers-by. In this case, the answer is simple: it is all down there to kill teams of Troubleshooters who come poking around. We have departed from tradition in that nobody here has any treasure. This is the sort of innovative mission design you have come to expect from *PARANOIA*.

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

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

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



MAPPED HAZARDS

The Divine Wind: Ten metres down a side corridor is an enormous exhaust fan rewired by the Alpha Complex Local History Research Groupers as a large-scale food processor. Microswitches under the walkway activate the fan. It may be disarmed for a few minutes (long enough to get past the trigger area) by opening a junction box on the wall and pressing a red button within.

If activated, the fan pulls a person right off his feet, and even drags bots along slowly. There are plenty of handholds; it requires a Violence + Athletics check (one success required) to grab one and a series of Violence checks to hang on.

Oregon casually observes that he remembers this fan is dangerous, but he doesn't recall why. If the Troubleshooters can be tricked into wandering onto the activating switches in the process of investigating the fan, fine. If the Troubleshooters are more suspicious and cautious, and they evince a cheerful willingness to use Oregon as a mine detector, he tries to dry gulch the Troubleshooters by lying about the length of the period of time the fan is disarmed. 'Oh, it should be safe for a few minutes. Hmm. I suppose you expect me to go through first?' He pushes the switch then strolls casually through the fan.

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

Characters who hit the fan become thousands of julienne fries in seconds. A bot will jam the blades, while getting busted up pretty badly. The fan may be stopped by getting everybody off the trigger area, blasting the junction boxes or blasting the fan (good luck lining up a shot) for enough damage to chop off the whirly bits. It is an oversize item, requiring 4 successes to do so.

Smashing the fan completely might be fun but it is not necessary, and would require further destructive energies. (Bonus XP points for zeal though, and maybe a penalty for wasting ammunition). A grenade tossed into the fan has a 50% chance of hitting the blades and exploding for effect, 50% of being sucked through harmlessly (to the fan; it has to go somewhere, and whoever is there might not be harmed by it.)



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

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

The corroded old gas tanks are labelled Oxygen and Acetylene and Explosive and other amusing things. If you're really in a fun-loving mood, have one or more of them actually contain gas.

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

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

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

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

UNMAPPED TRAPS

Steam Ambush: Warm, opaque vapour fills the tunnel. Visibility, including with infrared goggles (but not bot radar) is reduced to a metre or so. Lasers 'bloom' and are useless beyond five metres; projectile and flame weapons (and nasty things shouted at opponents) are unaffected.

A group of five Alpha Complex Local History Research Group members wait silently ahead of the foggy area, listening carefully for the sounds of the approaching Troubleshooters. When Troubleshooters seem to be deep enough in the fog, the ambushers start lobbing substantial pieces of scrap metal into the fog toward the approximate position of the Troubleshooter team.

The chances of being hit by randomly hurled scrap metal are not that high. Each round, have each Troubleshooter roll two dice. Anyone who scores a double can nominate any other Troubleshooter to be hit by a piece of flying metal. They cannot nominate themselves. If hit, there is only a 1 in 6 chance of actually incurring a wound level. Nonetheless, the rain of unidentified objects from unseen ambushers should induce some panic and aggression in the Troubleshooters, not to mention some rage and hate towards other team members.

Oregon scrambles back the way he came, covering his head. If the Troubleshooters charge forward, the ambushers withdraw immediately. Since the floor is now littered with odd bits of metal (plus whatever other impediments might be present) the Troubleshooters will more than likely stumble, trip, accidentally shoot one another and such like. Amid this chaos, the advantage of darkness and familiarity with the territory permits the ambushers to escape without interference.

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

Fifty metres down this narrow passage is a small alcove where two particularly rabid Local History Researchers lurk. Once the Troubleshooters are heard to be well on their way along the passage, they begin to yell threats like: 'Hey, if you clones come any closer, you're history!' 'Okay, back the way you came, or we blow the tunnel.'

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

Oregon pulls a variant of 'Oh, Br'er Fox, please don't throw me in that briarpatch!' 'Oh, please don't make me go first through here! I'll do anything you want, but PLEASE don't make me go first down this narrow little passage!' He'll roll his eyes, howl—the whole bit. This is, of course, intended to goad the sadistic, paranoid Troubleshooters into forcing Oregon to proceed first 'against his will'.

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

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

Deadfall: An underwater tripwire causes a crate of junk to fall on the section of walkway where the victim is standing. The victim must make a Violence + Athletics check to jump clear. (Make sure the player specifies the direction he jumps in.) Otherwise the victim is wounded. If the victim explicitly braces himself against the object's fall ('I crouch and cover my head.'), he is only Snafued.

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

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

A Message to Garcia: Two ambushers are hidden in deep cover. As the party approaches, one starts running back to warn the defenders at the exit; the other begins shooting down a 40-metre section where the passage widens considerably to cover the messenger's escape. The shooter stands for a few rounds of fire, then withdraws. The runner should evade the Troubleshooters unless they are a lot smarter than I am, or unless there is a highly creative use of mutant powers.

ARBITRARY HAZARDS

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

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

Unpleasant Puddle: The team is faced with a stretch of tunnel armpit-deep in some vile substance. The only way across without wading (and becoming semi-permanently slimed) is to hand-over-hand it along the ceiling pipes. This calls for one or more Violence + Athletics checks. The docbot has no trouble. The jackobot ploughs happily into the slime. And thenceforth exudes an odour that would make a ghoulish gag.

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

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

Collapsed Tunnel Section: As on page 24, except no ambush.

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

Wandering Botster: A docbot with deranged programming wanders the tunnels, looking for its designated operator (who has been dead for a long time). If ignored, it is harmless but annoying; if attacked, it charges in, screaming things like 'Eat my gastroscope, traitorous pathogens!'

If not destroyed somehow, the deranged docbot will show up again. If disabled and salvaged, it is worth a commendation and very small XP bonus.

Evil High Priest: A crazed former High Programmer, who has been lost down here for years with no company but a tattered roleplaying rule set. He spouts dialog straight out of a bad fantasy novel. He failed his Insanity check. He may cast the Finger of Death spell once—that is, he has a sleeve-mounted ULTRAVIOLET laser pistol with one shot remaining. Weapons don't get any more illegal than this. Finding him for the Computer is worth an inexplicably generous 100 XP point bonus. The rules set, of course, is classified ULTRAVIOLET.



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

The Missing 18 Minutes: Someone spots a briefcase wedged into the piping. It is full of secrets somebody tried to sell to Various Enemies of Alpha Complex years ago. The documents contain notes on certain High Programmers engaged in a competition that exploits low-clearance Troubleshooters.

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

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

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

GM: Ahead of you, the tunnel opens out into a small chamber with hatch-like doors in each wall. The one facing you stands open, in the sense that a ripped-off-its-hinges door is not closed.

Lovell-Y: Let's send the traitor in first to check for land mines and stuff.

GM: Oregon looks pleadingly from one Troubleshooter to the next. 'I'm unarmed,' he says.

Boug-Y: I got a couple of laser bolts you can have...

GM: 'I mean, if something gets me who will show you the exit?'

Narcoleps-Y: If our guide dies and it's totally not our fault, can we abort the mission?

Fallon-Y: Remember how we nearly got executed, and we DID complete that mission!

Ant-Y: It's just an empty room. Let's go!

Hiss-Y: I stride decisively towards the doorway, but really quite slowly so that everyone gets there before me and somebody else triggers the trap.

GM: Everyone but Hiss-Y enters the chamber. There's no trap.

Hiss-Y: Now that's suspicious.

Narcoleps-Y: What? That there's no trap?

Hiss-Y: Nope, other than the fact that the GM just came straight out and said there wasn't one instead of making us search and stuff.

Lovell-Y: Now that *is* suspicious. Let's check for traps.

GM: Okay, you begin searching for traps in the room you're already in, that I've told you there are no traps in. Hiss-Y, are you entering the room or staying outside alone in the cold, dark corridor? Does anyone want to go back out, or perhaps through one of the doors...?

THE EXIT

The secret exit is located some 25 kilometres from the fringes of Alpha Complex proper. The tunnel is a Dead Zone; the players are no longer under Computer surveillance, and no wireless communication can occur. The Jackobot (if it is still around) is recording everything, however, and will report to the Computer if/when the players return to Alpha Complex.

The Dead Zone also makes the bots very insecure; they will not actually mutiny, but they whine a lot.

The exit route goes through an abandoned nuclear power plant. Well, a nuclear power plant that was abandoned but has recently become less abandoned when some new occupants moved in. Anyway....

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

THE TROUBLESHOOTER PROVIDES USEFUL-ISH INFORMATION

Most Alpha Complex residents are totally, utterly and rather permanently freaked out by the Outside. However, a proportion adapt fairly well and some actually like it. This is probably some sort of mutation or cloning defect or something of a similarly treasonish nature.

Not surprisingly, people of this sort tend to experience an unconscious yearning to move around and explore, and maybe gather nuts and berries or build a hut... or whatever it is that people do outdoors. An outlet for these yearnings is found in the activities of the Alpha Complex Local History Research Group, and many of these potentially treasonous Outside-seekers gravitate to the society.

The ACLHRG has found various ways out of Alpha Complex in its explorings, and it maintains a presence Outside. This is made up of clones who actually rather like the strange environment found there or have been bullied into tolerating it until they go nuts. The subgroup of the ACLHRG that actually likes (or reveres) the Outside in all its organic weirdness is sometimes referred to as the 'Sierra Club', which may be a reference to something that existed in the Old Reckoning or a cheap attempt to get a wry smile from readers familiar with earlier editions of Paranoia.

So, the Sierra Club is a subgroup of the Alpha Complex Local History Research Group made up of clones who actually like it Outside. Love it, in fact. Revere it! Worship it! But that does not necessarily mean they understand it....

THE DEFENDERS

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

Smokey is an old-model bot programmed for fire control. It carries a shovel and cryochemical fire extinguisher (both equivalent to Level 1 weapons). Smokey's first priority is to put out fires. Its second priority is to put out people starting fires. After that it takes orders from Mr. Ranger Sir, but it is 1) profoundly slow and 2) profoundly stupid. It is very entertaining to watch in action, hacking with its shovel while growling, 'Only you! Only you!'



ENTERING THE COMPLEX

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

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

If the team managed to slaughter every ambusher they encountered in the tunnel, they may surprise the defenders. If any ambushers escaped, they may still surprise the Troubleshooters if some other hazard got the messengers or fugitives before they could report.

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

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

The posters most likely to impress the Troubleshooters are the ones left over from the reactor's active days, things like instructions for operation of the emergency showers and field amputation in case of plutonium-salt contamination, admonitions to check pocket dosimeters, etc.



A CORDIAL RECEPTION

If present and alive, Oregon Warbler may be used as a hostage to get past the guards. The only defenders who will attack Warbler are his fellow Outsiders, Mr. Ranger Sir, and Smokey (who doesn't know any better).

If the Troubleshooters arrive unannounced, they might be able to bluff their way inside. However they get in, you know it's going to turn into a gunfight before very long. Mr. Ranger Sir details half his troops to defend the Vault; he leads the rest to the Dome entrance. Smokey will probably be on his own.

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



LOWER LEVEL: THE CLUBBERS' QUARTERS

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

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

UPPER LEVEL: THE REACTOR DOME

Those of you who know something about reactor design, bear with us on the following: This is not a real reactor, it's a movie reactor. If the players complain, tell them 'the Alpha Complex Local Research Group made a lot of changes.' Then fine them lots of XP points for possession of classified information.

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

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

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

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

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

A band of light strips around the edge of the platform illuminates the Dome. Shooting out these lights leaves no source of illumination except the blue glow from the pool unless someone gets the exit panel open, in which case glorious sunlight floods in. This will be a very strange experience for Alpha Complex dwellers, who will never have seen natural light.

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

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

Should a Troubleshooter manage to get to the exit, he sees countryside and sky all around. The complex has been completely buried by some upheaval, and the exit is at ground level. The Troubleshooter may suffer temporary insanity at the sight of the Outdoors.

Then he sees the Vultures coming (see 'Death from above', page 37). If nobody sees them, you may wish to warn the team by having the attack theme music for the Squadron sound ominously from Outdoors; like the choppers in *Apocalypse Now*, the Vulture Squadron likes to blast music as they attack. Find some way to produce this music, perhaps by electronic

means. Jumping around impersonating an orchestra is good too. Wagner is always popular for airborne attacks, but you might also consider 'Ghost Riders in the Sky', 'Up in the Air, Junior Birdmen' or the legendary 'Windy' by Jefferson Airplane.

SIDENOTE: FIRST EXPERIENCES OF THE OUTDOORS

Any clone exposed to the Outdoors for the first time will experience a sensation of slight unease and... well, stark raving terror, disbelief, denial, shock, panic, nausea and a desire to tunnel into the ground away from ALL THAT SKY, only the ground is all soily and wormy and yucky and it's ALL OVER ME and... well, actually it's worse than that.

First contact with the Outdoors for any given clone results in the loss of 1 Moxie, after which a Moxie check must be made, rolling dice equal to the number of remaining Moxie points. Note that if a previous clone has been exposed, the point of Moxie is still lost. The shock of encountering the Outside is a once in a lifetime experience, but given how short a Troubleshooter's lifetime is likely to be....

Does He Lose It?

- If the clone knew what was about to happen and has some idea what the Outside might be like, he needs 1 success not to Lose It.
- If the clone is suddenly exposed to the Outside and did not expect it to happen, but has some idea of what to expect (e.g. he has been there before) he needs 2 successes not to Lose It.
- If the clone has no idea that the Outside exists and is suddenly thrust into its natural scariness, he needs 4 successes not to Lose It.

Note that the Outside is deeply disturbing to Alpha Complex citizens; even those who have been out there before. The Does He Lose It check is always made when returning to the Outside after more than a few minutes in the comfortingly non-Outsideness of Alpha Complex.

SEALING THE EXIT (OR, REMEMBER WHAT YOU CAME HERE FOR?)

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

IN THE DOME

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

IN THE COMPLEX

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

IN THE TUNNEL

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

(If they try this, the jackobot warns them it won't work. Afterwards, it says 'I told you so' a lot.)

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

THE BLACK BOX AGAIN

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

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



DEATH FROM ABOVE

About those Vulture Attack Squadrons....

Brian-B-IWR does not trust the Troubleshooters any longer. They simply have not killed enough traitors, mutants and assorted scum. This mission is too important to entrust to them. So he has taken matters into his own hands, and scrambled a flight of Vulture 720 strike aircraft.

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

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

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

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

DEBRIEFING

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

Because the Computer, not Dan-V, keeps all records, assign slaps and bennies as always.

Regardless of earlier threats, the Troubleshooters don't get fined, shot, irradiated or even told off for losing Oregon Warbler. They do get fined for losing the map.

Five of the envelopes contain vouchers for various services and goodies, which can be considered equivalent to an XP point award with one major detail – these points can only be used to buy stuff, not promotions. 'Stuff' includes weaponry, use of funbots, skill upgrades and such like, but trying to trade the ability to purchase stuff for a security clearance enhancement is called bribery. And bribery is treason, citizen....

Two of the envelopes contain 100 bonus XP points each that can be used immediately. Two contain 250 XP points with credit licenses specifying payment is not to occur until after the Troubleshooters' debriefing for their next mission (after Track 4), and is not transferable to clones. The fifth is for 7,642,001 XP points. These have a credit license specifying their use must be donated to an Elective Activity or Pursuit Club (a social club) of the user's choosing, in consultation with the Computer. The club must consist of members at VIOLET Clearance or higher. Under no circumstances should the XP points in the fifth envelope actually end up in the Troubleshooters' accounts. However, a sharp player may find a way to curry favour with a high-ranking citizen by donating to his cause. (At the same time, he may also disappoint many other high-ranking citizens....)

The sixth envelope contains a ticket to see Teela O'Malley perform live; the performance will take place sometime during Track 4.

Transferring the ticket is illegal, but may be done through Free Enterprise or other contacts. Depending on the seller's negotiating ability, the ticket is worth about 200 XP points in 'legit stuff', or twice that in contraband items. A smart Troubleshooter might lay in some illegal weapons for Track 4. Not that they'll help him much.



PICK YOUR PRIZE ENVELOPE!...ERR NOT THAT ONE... OR THAT ONE...

ACHIEVEMENTS

Provide useful guidance or feedback on the firing squad's performance
(50XP)

Prove that you are the best candidate for leadership of the team
(50XP)

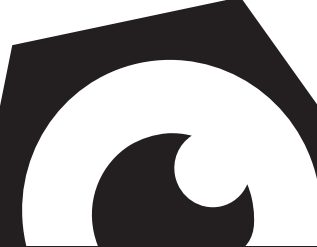
Secure the map and keep it safe, even if that means stopping others from using it.
(100XP)

Prevent the execution of Oregon Warbler for spurious reasons (i.e. anyone else's reasons)
(100XP)

Boldly lead the Troubleshooter team through the booby-trapped corridors leading Outside. Be the boldest Troubleshooter that didn't get dead
(100XP)

Find the most effective means to detect a sloping passage
(50XP)

PARANOIA™



D TRACK 4: WHY DON'T WE DO IT IN THE ROAD?



PARANOIA™

THE YELLOW CLEARANCE BLACK BOX BLUES REMASTERED

TRACK 4: WHY DON'T WE DO IT IN THE ROAD?

Mission Design, Words and Music, Keyboards
JOHN M. FORD

Development, Rhythm Guitar, 24-Track Remix
KEN ROLSTON

New Wave Ensemble
M J DOUGHERTY
MATTHEW SPRANGE

ILLUSTRATIONS AND VIDEO EDITING

Amy Perrett &
Cheyenne Wright

1ST EDITION EDITING AND PERCUSSION

Paul Murphy

TROUBLESHOOTER ARRANGEMENT

Paul Baldowski

PLAYTESTERS AND ROADIES

| | |
|----------------|---------------|
| Margot Diamond | Steve Gilbert |
| Steve Crane | Doug Kaufman |
| Paul Murphy | Robert Tuttee |

INTENSE SUPERVISION, ERROR TERMINATION AND FEAR

The Computer

FEATURING

The New Paranoia Edition - James Wallis + Grant Howitt + Paul Dean
The Original Paranoia Design - Dan Gelber + Greg Costikyan + Eric Goldberg





TRACK 4: WHY DON'T WE DO IT IN THE ROAD?

P A R A N O I A

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

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

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



Dale-U, meanwhile, has a project of his own: the reconstruction of an Old Reckoning automobile, piece by piece. Dale-U has a large contraband collection of car magazines, which have taught him that no woman can resist a guy who drives the right car. Dale-U would sacrifice the lives of thousands of Troubleshooters to obtain an intact '63 Corvette convertible. As it is, some 80 have been lost recovering the parts of his current vehicle, which consists of a 427-c.i. stock Chevy block (cracked), one Cadillac tailfin, a Rolls-Royce grille Dale-U thinks is a primitive sonic shield and a large number of Toyota and VW parts, on a Saab chassis.

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

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

MISSION SUMMARY

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

They meet two roving bands of Outsiders, the motorcycle-crazy Cyberpunks and the just-plain-crazy Nouvelle Vague. The Troubleshooters may reach one or both of their intended targets, a well-preserved Old Reckoning recording studio and a not-so-well-preserved auto dealership and service station. The recording studio is inhabited by the Studio Engineers, a money-mad crew who ritually serve the recorders and mixing boards. The gas station is home to HARV[E], an ancient self-aware military vehicle, and his only friend, the battle computer ELWOOD 3610.

Then the Computer decides the returning Troubleshooter team and their entourage are the long-dreaded Invasion of Enemies That Surely Are Just Waiting For The Right Moment, and marshals its forces (in its endearingly psychotic fashion) to destroy them.

Apocalypse Any Minute Now...

PREPARING THE NARRATIVE SEQUENCE

The early part of this mission proceeds in a fairly straightforward fashion – for the GM at least. The Troubleshooters may have to endure all sorts of twists and turns just to get some breakfast, but we're above all that. From 'Mission Assignment' to 'Into the Unknown', the sequence is linear—that is, the Troubleshooters are channelled from one event to the next in the predetermined order.

However, once the Troubleshooters leave Alpha Complex and enter the unknown (the Outdoors), there are a number of possible sequences of encounters. The players can run around from place to place and encounter to encounter in zillions of ways. 'EEEEEEEEK!' you say. 'What is happening to the First Law of Gamemaster Control?' you whine.

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

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

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

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

For example, first select a few encounters from 'Into the Unknown' – say, 'Road Badly Out', 'Really Grim Weather' and 'Encampment'. The first two are minor encounters, just to spook the Troubleshooters a little with the unpredictable problems of the Outdoors, and should take only a few



minutes each. 'Settlement' deserves a little more time so the Troubleshooters can speak with the primitives and learn a little about life outside Alpha Complex, but it is still a minor encounter.

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

There are a number of possibilities at this point, and the players control most of them. Can the Troubleshooters negotiate successfully, or will they offend the gang or even start a gang war? And which will they choose to visit first, the PACE Studio or the service station—each major sections of the mission, full of minor episodes and encounters.

Depending on the players' choices and actions, there are a lot of possible sequences of events. You must be prepared. Here's what you must do to be prepared:

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

THE TROUBLESHOOTER ADVISES

What if the players head off in completely the wrong direction? Well, maybe that should be 'so what if they head off in the wrong direction?' It's your world and it's malleable to your whim. So they go the wrong way... no wait, the studio is that way after all. They got crappy directions or something. Or they got turned around in a fogstorm (fogstorms are a thing in the Outdoors if you say they are) and ended up going the right way after all.

There are some things the players need to do, such as not massacre at least one of the gangs. It is possible for a bunch of paranoid lunatics to screw up the mission so badly that they can't complete it. Difficult, but possible. At

that point you might introduce another gang of your invention or have some helpful person provide totally unwarranted assistance. Wouldn't it be fun if the players had to rely on the help of a previous band of Troubleshooters sent out on the same mission? And if there was, maybe, some sort of betrayal along the way...

Yes, that might be a reasonable solution.

Or you could just watch them fail. Normally players get hosed in a *PARANOIA* game because the GM decides to hose them. A self-inflicted hosing might be a nice change and perhaps a learning experience.

MISSION ASSIGNMENT

The Troubleshooters have had a couple of days to recover from their last mission (visit Medical Division, scrub the muck off, etc.). Suddenly, they each receive urgent orders to contact their secret societies—notes slipped under doors, hidden in food, passed at training and so forth. As soon as they have arranged contact (as per Episode 1), they receive a new Mission Alert.

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

CHECKING IN

A huge machine now dominates the checkpoint. It's a cross between a voting booth and a submarine conning tower, enclosing a barely visible Computer console. A smug BLUE technician in a sharply pressed jumpsuit attends it with his ORANGE assistant, a grease-monkey in soiled coveralls. The usual complement of bored-hostile guards stand nearby.

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

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

If the Troubleshooters *didn't* show any hesitation – serves 'em right.



MISSION BRIEFING

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Pause here for exclamations of enthusiasm and patriotic fervour. When the cheering has died down, Dan-V has the players elect a team leader. Dan-V expounds upon the generosity of the Computer when assigning equipment for this mission, and adds that for this mission the team will be issued... a MAP! They will also be assigned something called a crawler, and, oh, everything they could ever need for the rest of their lives.

The team leader will be entrusted with the mission map, to be delivered later. The map is cleared for all players, but it is Computer property, and the leader is responsible for it. Make an issue of how rare it is to actually give Troubleshooters maps of anything.

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

'I know you will succeed. Do not fail. If you fail, your successors will succeed. Remember, dulce et decorum est programming mori.' He falls asleep.

He does not awaken. If the players try to rouse him, they trigger the automatic gas guns.

Eventually they are taken to R&D.

OUTFITTING

Victor-I's lab is much the same as in Episode 2, except that Willis-G's luck lapsed briefly, and his clone has succeeded him. The clone does not remember the players, and tries to sell them on power holsters all over again.

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

In addition to the new goodies, all the old ones are still available, *unless* the players figured out some way to make them work advantageously, in which case the last working prototype was just dismantled for test/classified/blown up/dropped by an assistant so it looks all right but fails in use in some spectacular fashion (pick one or more at your discretion).

NEW GOODIES

Bi-Axial Levitation Frame (Ned-G): A pair of jointed wings that buckle to the user's arms and shoulders. They are rocket-assisted on the downstroke, so the user really can hang in the air by flapping energetically. Until one wing breaks, causing the user to spin in mid-air like a Catherine wheel.



Procognitron (Victor-I): A briefcase-sized portable computer programmed to extrapolate events. Victor can demonstrate simple entries (like: *push hard?* > THING FALLS OVER). The device works. But it's slow and becomes geometrically slower with the complexity of the question, making it effectively useless for anything nontrivial.

Constant-Wear Prophylactic Biostasis Garment (Willis-G): Elastic long underwear threaded with wires and tubes which connect delicately and intricately to a bulky backpack containing tanks of supercooled gases, sensors and monitors and complex automatic control systems. If the wearer is seriously hurt, the suit induces suspended animation, preserving life until medical aid is available. It works, after a fashion: If the wearer receives enough damage to make him Maimed or Dead, the suit instantly freezes him solid. (Vaporised is still Vaporised.) A successful Brains + Science check (a docbot must perform or assist with this) thaws the character out in Injured status. The suit may be reused, but has a 1 in 6 chance of failure each time after the first. Optionally, you can equip it with a manual 'On' button in a highly exposed location. Note that frozen characters may break if dropped.

Probability Control Experiment (Ned-G): This comes in a heavily sealed case about the size of a lunchbox, weighing five kilos. Everyone in the lab is somewhat in awe of it. The user is warned. 'Don't ever look in the Box! You'll break the mojo! ' No explanation of this statement is available at YELLOW Clearance. It is entirely up to you whether or not the Box influences luck. It contains a horseshoe, a four-leaf clover, a frowzy rabbit's foot and a pair of loaded dice (all of which might have some infrared-market value).

Cis-9-Basoaterol (Victor-I): Synthetic Charm pheromone, to be applied to the skin (bottle is labelled For External Use Only). It certainly smells funny (you decide what's 'funny' in this context). It doesn't charm people. Outdoors, however, it will charm the socks off one species of animal or insect life, Gamemaster's choice. Chipmunks or pigeons are recommended.

Maxwell-Effect Moleculokinesic Field Device (Willis-G): This is a large and truly terrifying rifle-type weapon: It is a Pyrokinesis gun, and it can be demonstrated to incinerate targets at a distance, without the all-too-well-known hazards of flamethrowers. Its drawbacks:

1. It draws huge amounts of power. For demonstration purposes, it is plugged into the mains; it will suck a laser pack dry in one shot. It may be plugged into a vehicle's power takeoff, taking all power from all other systems (including propulsion) when fired.
2. 50% of the time it fires at reverse polarity, freezing the target (see *Biostasis suit* above for effects on people). This might be used to impress the Studio Engineers (see 'The PACE Studio' below).
3. The power cable is too light and burns through with pyrotechnic results after five shots (less if the GM is bored).

MORE CONVENTIONAL GEAR

The Req Room staff are back to their usual surly selves this time. Half of them wish they were going on a mission Outdoors. The other half thinks that giving equipment to an Outdoors mission team is the Alpha Complex equivalent of an expensive funeral. However, this mission has been classified PRIORITY (because it is being run at High Programmer request), so they can't do much but grumble and stall.

Most 'reasonable' requests for equipment not on the assignment list are honoured—but half of all extra items are seriously defective or mislabelled. Tacnuke and combot requests are met with polite laughter.



The team's docbot is an Old Reliable Model 5. If asked about its programming, the bot says it has been specially equipped with an Old Reckoning Environmental Medicine package. This is true. If somebody asks it, the bot can identify edible food (and shrewdly assess such other environmental medical situations such as 'an avalanche has buried him'). It also is loaded with Old Reckoning medical clichés, making it a cross between House MD, Dr. Kildare and 'Bones' McCoy.

Remember that everyone has to sign for the crawler and trailer. There should be some mystery about the trailer: The staff wants to know what it's for. Of course, the players don't know yet, but for them to say anything is treason.

THE CRAWLER

Picture a bright yellow Winnebago, about 8 metres long, sporting treads instead of tires. Add a laser cannon turret on top, and cover the windows with retractable metal shielding. Pretty natty, huh?

An alcohol-burning engine powers the crawler; the fuel in the tank will get the Troubleshooters anywhere they have to go. (Unless you want them to have to barter with the natives for moonshine.) Heavy metal armour protects the top, bottom and all sides of the crawler and provides adequate shielding from minor nuisances like hard radiation, but does little to improve road speed and acceleration. And by 'little' we mean 'has hugely negative effects'. At best the crawler can zoom along at about 25 kilometres per hour; some of the time it lives up to its name and can be overtaken by arthritic molluscs.

The vehicle can be controlled either manually or by autopilot. The autopilot is much too stupid to be considered a true bot brain, though it does respond to verbal commands and can answer simple questions dealing with the operation or status of the crawler. (Troubleshooter: 'What's happening now?' [Pause.] Autopilot: 'We're on fire.')

The crawler easily holds the Troubleshooters and their gear; it not-so-easily holds the docbot.

OUT INTO THE COLD, CRUEL WORLD

Those Troubleshooters who make contact with their secret societies or service groups find that all have the same thing in mind: 'While you're Outdoors, will you bring me...?' They see this mission as a trip to the Old Reckoning supermarket. There are two possible types of request:

1. Very general, for anything in keeping with the goals of the society or service group (weapons for the Armed Forces, consumer goods for the Free Enterprisers).
2. Ridiculously specific ('A blue ribbed cylinder, stencilled GX-470-Detrick—and don't touch the valve'), implying the society knows more about the mission than the player does; the Troubleshooter of course never encounters the item he must retrieve.

THE SEALED ORDERS

When the Troubleshooters arrive at the cavernous Vehicle Bay, a large fire is blazing merrily. This creates much confusion, to say the least. A technician tells the team their vehicle has been consumed, and they must replace it. This proves to be incorrect; the crawler and trailer are in another part of the bay.

The bay is a huge structure similar to an airplane hangar, but much larger and more crowded. Losing something the size of a crawler, or a Boeing 767, is no problem. The floor is covered with tire marks, hoses, cables and meaningless coloured stripes, and service vehicles race around madly. Overhead, cranes run along the girders, carrying vehicle parts and ordnance. Every so often they drop something, like an engine or a bomb.

A RED courier waits by the crawler (perhaps a clone of the courier from Episode 2) holding a sealed message pouch. He asks for a chit for the pouch. The players do not have this. He asks if they have something to trade for it. If they do, he hands over the pouch in exchange for the item, no questions asked. If they don't, he walks away... and a few minutes later, an IntSec trooper brings back the case, slightly battle-damaged.

The case contains Dale-U's map and a sheet of YELLOW Computer printout.

THE MAP

You are encouraged to actually fabricate the map: Print out a Google map of someplace rural (of any location—it doesn't matter) and work it over, stomping on it, spilling coffee, tearing pieces off, until it looks like it's been in your glove compartment for 300 years or so. Circle a couple of random locations in red ballpoint, mark a stretch of road with highlighter. If you can stamp it 'COMPUTER PROPERTY—Unauthorised Possession Punishable by Summary Execution', all the better.



If you are too lazy to find a map and mutilate it, take a piece of blank paper and print across the top of it 'EXTREMELY DETAILED AND USEFUL MAP'. You can scribble on it a bit if you have the energy. Then give it to the players and tell them, 'Pretend this is an extremely detailed and useful map.' They'll get the idea.

Note: At no point does the Computer or Dan-V suggest the Troubleshooters' destinations are indicated on this map. They are being sent out to investigate. Their methods are their own responsibility. Actually, even if the Computer knew anything, it would never divulge information about the Outdoors to lower security clearances.

TIME TO HIT THE ROAD

Before the Troubleshooters get a chance to study the map or computer printout very carefully, a firebot wheels up, sprays them with a little water, then orders them to get the crawler and trailer out of here immediately, pointing a nozzle to the exit bay doors and guard checkpoint. Failure to follow orders results in an improvised pitched battle with firebots, arrest for failure to follow orders and a standard community execution.

When the Troubleshooters pull up to the exit bay doors and guard checkpoint, a kindly GREEN-Clearance Vulture Squadron guard (sort of like a Boy Scout assisting an old lady across the street while waving an axe) steps out of his armoured strongpoint and pleasantly asks to see the Troubleshooters' authorisation for Outdoor Excursion.

The Troubleshooters sit here until they show the guard the map and the computer printout. If they are good citizens, they call the Computer for clearance to show the guard the materials; otherwise, treason charges are in order.

The sergeant casually studies the map and printout, revealing no sign of confusion at the obvious incoherence of the printout and the lack of correspondence between the map and the printout references. 'Well, everything looks to be in order,' he says, handing the materials back to the mission leader. 'If you have any trouble finding your way around out there, just stop and ask the natives for directions.' He steps back, slaps the side of the crawler and says, 'Okay, let's roll, and be careful out there.'

He strolls back into the armoured strongpoint and presses some buttons, and the exit bay doors open upon a Brave New World. The guard waves cheerily as the Troubleshooters motor off to meet their destiny.

Don't forget about the shock the Outside can be to Alpha Complex citizens. Those who have been Outside before (i.e. Troubleshooters who inexplicably survived the last mission AND whatever they have been doing since they got back to Alpha Complex) must make a Moxie check to see if they Lose It as per the previous adventure. Clones who have not been Outside before lose a point of Moxie and then make the check.

INTO THE UNKNOWN

To introduce your players to the Wonderful World of the Outdoors, read the following aloud:

Welcome to the Outdoors World, Troubleshooters! You're not going to like it here. Everything's made out of weird rough crumbly stuff, not nice clean plastic and metal. There aren't any pipes. There aren't any bathrooms (thank the Computer for the facility on your crawler)! The sky—it's not made of metal. Try not to think about that too much. And there are little alive things all over the place, doing all sorts of strange awful alive-type things.

You really wanted to turn around and go back to the safe white Freudian curve of Alpha Complex. When you tried it, extremely large weapons were pointed at you. Sigh.

Fortunately, you have your crawler, with its food supply and its weapons and its com link to the Computer. And you have the map that the Computer entrusted you with.

The first thing you notice about the map is that it does not show Alpha Complex. Eventually you notice that the countryside you are passing through bears no resemblance to the stuff on the map. Suddenly life Outdoors seems not so different from home, after all.

You have spoken to the Computer. Friend Computer has been very kind and understanding. Reading maps is a rare privilege for Troubleshooters, and you may be excused a few mistakes. The Computer points out that its very own data analysis routines prepared your order sheet. Surely any difficulties must be attributed to human error.

Well, as the nice Vulture Squadron guard said, maybe you should stop and ask the natives for directions. First, however, how to go about finding the natives...

This section describes a few arbitrary encounters the Troubleshooters might face in the process of wandering around the Outdoors in search of their mission objectives. You can probably imagine lots of others. Don't feel obligated to use ours just because you paid for them.

These encounters are just for fun and flavour. Don't get carried away. Don't spend too much time on them. And don't use them all at once. Save a few to spring on the Troubleshooters later in the mission as they travel to the gangs or the mission objectives.

Don't wait too long to introduce the gangs. Too long is when the players get bored or frustrated wandering around aimlessly, trying to figure out what they're supposed to be doing. Poor things. They just need some guidance. And the gangs are just the ones to provide it. For the right price.

LIFE IN THE FAST LANE

The following is a menu of encounter possibilities while on the road. If the team decides to drive cross-country, see the list under 'Truckin'.

Bad Weather: May slow the team's progress to a cawlier crawl than usual, force them to stop or cause them to run off the road (as in thick fog). Note that 'weather' is broadly interpreted to mean all those environmental events the players are unfamiliar with, such as rain ('a pipe must have broken somewhere!') and nightfall ('Power Services has been taken over by Some Sort of Traitors!').

After reading the description of the Studio Engineers below, you may wish to make it snow. You can. You are the Gamemaster. You can make it rain Swedish meatballs if you want. Just remember that Alpha Complex citizens don't know snow from Swedish meatballs.

Road Out: Forces a period of offroad driving. If the players don't get the hint, the broken road starts damaging the crawler's suspension, bruising passengers, etc.

Road Badly Out: A bridge is gone, pass blocked or something else requiring a long detour and hunt for another piece of road. The team may fear becoming lost. This is foolish. They are already lost. The Computer reassures them it can broadcast a homing signal. It can, but it won't until it (or both of the two High Programmers) decides that mission objectives have been achieved.

Charge Attack: Between five and a dozen natives rush the vehicle. They are armed with pointed sticks and rocks and present little real hazard.

Slightly More Intelligent Attack: This party of natives has some missile weapons—slings, bows, throwing spears—and uses them before charging the crawler (and being slaughtered anyway).

Wildlife Attack: It is hard to imagine what animals would charge the crawler (animals are much more sensible than people in this regard) but a bunch of rabid wolves or an eight-foot grizzly in a real bad mood are possibilities. Mutant wildlife, like gila monsters the size of Mack trucks, are another matter entirely.

Other Gang Attacks: If the party is traveling with the Cyberpunks or Nouvelle Vague (see below), the other gang swoops down. This is a Reasonably Intelligent Attack, i.e., the gangs use some crude tactics and retreat if they're getting badly stomped.

Really Grim Weather: From ice storms and flash floods up to tornadoes. (Speaking as an old Midwesterner, worse than tornadoes is probably not survivable.)

Barricade: Someone has piled junk on the road. The Troubleshooters must dodge around or blast through it. There may or may not be an accompanying ambush.

Boobytrap: A barricade with teeth—pits, snares, punji stakes, black-powder bombs... be creative. There will probably be ambushers unless: 1) something else ate them; or 2) they got careless setting the trap.

Wild Card: An interstate cloverleaf to get lost in (Your Tax Dollars at Work). A fast-food stand stuffed with cannibals. Mel Gibson. Use your fiendish imagination.

TRUCKIN'

Off the road, all the Weather and Attack encounters on the road are possible, plus the following:

Encampment: A humble native village, 20–50 inhabitants. They may be friendly. They may have a couple of heirloom antitank rockets. They probably carry weird diseases to which Alpha Complex citizens have no immunity.



Gang Encampment: Headquarters of one of the two major gangs (described below). Contact is possible, unless the team travels with the other gang, in which case a turf war is inevitable.

Natural Hazard: Quicksand, rockslide, forest fire started by careless cleaning of laser weapons, small earthquake, explosion of a natural methane pocket, Costikyan Settling in the Icy Reaches of Montana. **[Editor's note:** Here writer John M. Ford puns on the title of the senior thesis in Geology written by PARANOIA's original codesigner, Greg Costikyan: 'Stokes Settling in the Icy Satellites of Jupiter'. We thought of taking out this inside joke—this joke so inside it borders on subterranean—but it is not for mere game editors to meddle with the words of John M. Ford.]

Reconbot: A small twin-copter observation bot, pretending to be on a secret mission for the Computer. Actually it has been 'freed' by traitors of some description and spies on Vulture manoeuvres and missions such as this one. It knows some secret society passwords and could be helpful. Then again, maybe it's really a double agent for the Computer. You can't trust anybody.

EXAMPLE OF PLAY

GM: The crawler is rocking, like some invisible hand were pushing it from side to side. There is an eerie moaning sound every time the vehicle tips. Small pieces of water slap into the windows and run down them.

Boug-Y: The Enemies of Our Way of Life have an invisibility device! I knew it!

Narcoleps-Y: Friend Computer!

GM: Yes, Troubleshooter?

Narcoleps-Y: Do the bad guy have an invisibility device?

GM: That information is not available at your security clearance, Friend Troubleshooter.

Lovell-Y: Then what's happening?

GM: Please describe what is happening.

Lovell-Y: Water hitting the windows, something rocking the crawler!

GM: Telemetry from your vehicle indicates that (static).... And will shortly (static).

Hiss-Y: AAAARGH!!

Ant-Y: I'm gonna leap outside and blast whatever's rocking the crawler!

Fallon-Y: Good luck with that.

GM: You start to open the crawler's side door. It is all but torn from your hand and bangs against vehicle side. Little bits of icy water hit you in the face, and there is a strange howling sound. Loose small items start moving around inside the crawler.

Hiss-Y: It's in! It's INSIDE!

Ant-Y: What's rocking the crawler?

GM: You can't see anything, but you can figure out roughly where it is. If it's pushing the side of the crawler then it must be...

Ant-Y: Eat hot lasery death, confirmed but unspecified threat!

Fallon-Y: Stop shooting the crawler!

Narcoleps-Y: Wait a minute... is this like a ventilation malfunction? Is it just wind?

GM: What's this wind thing? And how do you know about it?

Narcoleps-Y: I'm calling the nearest maintenance station.

GM: Okay... after a moment you get through to a technician. There's a lot of static and interference, and that weird moaning sound makes it hard to hear what he's saying.

Narcoleps-Y: Hey, can you turn down the ventilation in our location, d'you think? We're experiencing, err, excessive movement of air. And water. Also small items and debris.

GM: What is your location?

Narcoleps-Y: Where are we? Anyone?

Fallon-Y: Just tell him we're Outside. They can track the crawler.

Narcoleps-Y: Yeah, we're.... Umm, never mind. We'll just shut the door.

Fallon-Y: Damn, almost (snigger).

Boug-Y: Soon as Ant-Y finishes shooting at the wind, we'll be on our way.

Hiss-Y: Outdoors. I hate it. I mean really, really hate it. The aircon is broke and the water system is leaking into it, and the lights don't work half the time. How long have we been out here?

Boug-Y: About seven minutes.

Hiss-Y: And how long is this mission going to take?

Boug-Y: More than seven minutes.

Lovell-Y: On the bright side, we do have suicide pills....



THE GANGS

These two groups are fairly large, upwards of 100 members total, and well-organised for the Outdoors. (Actually, a prairie dog village is well organised for the Outdoors.) They are in a state of constant and total war, and roam the countryside on and off the roads, looking for enemy parties to bushwhack. They are distinctive enough that they do not mistake the Troubleshooters for the enemy gang; if the team travels with enemy gang members, that's another story.

The gangs are the devices you, the Gamemaster, use to draw the players to the two main mission objectives: the PACE Studio (where Black Boxes abound) and Uncle Ken's Super Service Station (where the fabled Corvette and even a Thunderbird may be found).

To get the cooperation of the gangs, the Troubleshooters must do two important things: 1) ask the right questions, and 2) offer an appropriate payment for the gang's cooperation.

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS

For each mission objective, there's a series of key words which a few of the leaders or wise men of each gang recognise.

Acoustic readable data disks or *black boxes* are the key words for the PACE Studio; the leaders recall the jargon as typical phrases tossed about by the Engineers who staff PACE Studio.

For Uncle Ken's Super Service Station, the key words are *Corvette* or *Thunderbird*; the gang leaders and sages recall that these names are written in shiny metal on two of the odd, autocar-like objects found at the service station.

OFFERING THE RIGHT PAYMENT

The gangs are neither civic-minded, patriotically loyal to the Computer, nor subscribers to the Social Contract. They expect to be paid for information or assistance. No tickee, no shirtee.

Acceptable forms of payment include but are not necessarily limited to:



Alpha Complex Trade Goods: Anything manufactured in Alpha Complex—weapons, bots, experimental devices, routine Troubleshooter gear, household items, anything that is scarce in the primitive economy of the Outdoors.

Military Assistance: Each gang has a grudge against the other, or covets something valuable at PACE Studio or the Service Station. Aiding the gang in pursuing such a grudge or covet could be fair payment for information or assistance.

A Piece of the Action: The Troubleshooters might propose a raid or assault on a mission objective with gang assistance, with a percentage or specific reward promised.

Note also that mutant powers or persuasive skills may be used to supplement or replace payment in some cases. The Troubleshooters must also avoid two serious mistakes: 1) butchering gang members who can lead them to their objectives, and 2) getting themselves butchered by the gangs for rude and offensive behaviour. This may be very difficult for trigger-happy paranoids.

If the Troubleshooters manage to alienate one gang, a hint from the Computer may be in order. 'Hello, there, Troubleshooters! How is the mission going? Have you found any natives to assist you in locating the valuable equipment we sent you after?' If the Troubleshooters got wiped out, a hint to their clones suffices.

THE CYBERPUNKS

A post-everything cycle gang, the Punks wear leather and chrome and silicon chips, and like anything shiny and high-tech in appearance.

They are armed with knives and swords, leafspring crossbows and the occasional ancient gun.

The motorcycle is sacred in Cyberpunk mythology. Some of them have real derelict bikes; most of the rest have imitations cobbled together from junk. None of these function—the riders push them along with their feet. This looks very silly, and the Punks will kill you if you say so.

The Cyberpunks do have a vague sort of honour code: they fight duels one-on-one, and prefer shooting people in the front.

They covet the Troubleshooters' hardware like mad, of course, and try very hard to get hold of any motor that looks adaptable to powering a motorcycle. (If for some reason the team has a motorcycle, they stop at nothing to get it. A person with a working bike would automatically be Lord of the Punks.)

The current Cyberpunk leaders are a brother and sister named Jake and Elwood. (She's Jake.) They wear black leather blazers, snapbrim fedoras and dark glasses. Jake carries a handgun (S&W .38 Police Positive, with four rounds in the cylinder and six more in her pocket; Troubleshooter ammo won't fit, but Jake doesn't know that). Elwood packs a big smile and the Charm mutation.

The Cyberpunks know the location of the PACE Studio and are on fairly good terms with the Studio Engineers, who play them heavy-metal music in exchange for stuff the Engineers think is 'money'. They know the location of Uncle Ken's Super Service Station very well indeed, and have been trying to loot it for years, but HARV[E] (see below, 'Wouldn't you really rather have a Buick?') always runs them off. It certainly occurs to Jake and Elwood to have the Troubleshooters destroy, or at least divert, HARV[E] while they rob Uncle Ken's.

If the Troubleshooters survive to go home, the remaining Cyberpunks try to follow them back to Alpha Complex, which they imagine as a giant Harley-Davidson showroom. (More on this later.)

NOUVELLE VAGUE

If the Punks are heavy-metal, the Vaguers are folk-rock. They think of themselves as 'true people of the land', totally without justification. They wear clothing in earth colours, usually with a thick coating of the real thing. Nouvelle Vague pursues a sort of nature mysticism crossed with Gary Cooper-movie individualism: imagine a culture built entirely on readings of Timothy Leary, French movies, Hermann Hesse and Ayn Rand.

The Vaguers are friendly toward Alpha Complex Local History Research Groupers and Mystics (real or claimed), and fascinated by any psionic mutations the players choose to reveal (or pretend to have). They offer to share their humble but chemically sophisticated fare. They are not actually anti-technology, unless it reminds them of the Cyberpunks; they find items like warm clothing, ice guns and tanglers fascinating.



The Vaguers are strongly anti-war. They think it is a much better idea to set traps and sneak up behind people. They may do this because they desire what the party has, or because party members infringed on their enlightened self-interest, or because Mars is in the eleventh house and Scorpio is rising.

Nouvelle Vague has no organised leadership. ('We're an anarcho-syndicalist commune!') This means that if a particular Vaguer wants to kill somebody, no one tries to interfere with his Karma in doing so.

When the Troubleshooters ask to speak to leaders or knowledgeable folks, they are directed to the Guru. The Guru is a bona fide psionic with a complete repertoire of all the psionic mutations. He is Totally Aware, man, and Cosmic. Wow.

Initially, when out among the public, the Guru answers all the Troubleshooters questions with obscure parables ('Ah, that reminds me of the story of the Grasshopper and the Microwave.') and bland homilies ('What, Me Worry?'). However, when the Guru gets the Troubleshooters in private, he turns into a wheeler-dealer. He drives a hard bargain, but he can deliver the information, and if the price is right, he can use his psionic powers and pseudomsytical blather to persuade the Nouvelle Vaguers to get together behind his trip.

The Vaguers are on slightly worse terms with the Studio Engineers than the Punks are, because they, like, can't get behind the money trip the Engineers are on. Still, they pay for concerts whenever possible and can get the Troubleshooters to the PACE Studio. They know of the Service Station, but consider it a place of many negative waves and never touch anything there, so HARV[E] lets them alone.

They, too, try to follow the team home, out of curiosity and to pick off the Cyberpunks one by one.

THE PACE STUDIO

See the Pace Studio Map Card.

Tucked away in a small valley is a smooth white dome, reminiscent of a tiny Alpha Complex. On its roof are a set of corroded microwave antennas, trained on long-decayed satellites. A weathered bronze plaque on the door reads PACE Pilot Recording Studio and shows a record surrounded by orbiting electrons.

Promoters Allied for Cheap Energy built this place as the prototype of a totally self-contained, highly automated recording facility. Nuclear powered and computer-controlled, it was to be the test site for exotic new equipment that would make unionised crews obsolete. Then they would go about replacing musicians. Alas, the end of the Old Reckoning arrived before the project could be completed. The staff, living rather well in their self-sustaining quarters, passed on their knowledge to another generation. And another, and another. But as everybody knows, each later generation of a recording contains some new errors. So now there are...

THE STUDIO ENGINEERS

These people wear jumpsuits with their names stencilled on the pockets. (That is to say, they take names to match those stencilled on the suits.) The jumpsuits are brand new: they are of a paper fibre that is broken down and reassembled by the automatic laundry.

The Engineers pay little attention to the service equipment, since it needs none. They spend their time on the video games in the Recreation Room, and on the Studio gear—the recorders, mikes, multitrack mixers, equalisers, etc. It is almost an object of worship. But not quite. That role is reserved for money.

The Engineers are obsessed with money. They offer to do just about anything for money, except sell any equipment from the Studio (including the Master Recordings). There is only one thing they want almost as much, and that's snow. Literally. Crystallised water. Its other meaning has been lost. They don't know what they want it *for*, but that's how tradition is.

They speak a rapid-fire *Variety*-style slang: 'Sure, we'll lay you down a track, just ink your Hancock on the dotted line and we'll have the boys in Legal shoot you down a contract before you can say Hix Nix Stix Flix, have a cigar, after all you're gonna be spinning platinum soon, we must have lunch but don't quote me....' When recording matters are involved, this becomes an even less intelligible tech jargon: 'So we got to use gated cardioids, drop it 4dB and Dolbyise through the Revox, unless you're not afraid of the Nagras printing through...'

They have the language down cold, and they know every knob and button and capstan-drive in the Studio, all of which is in perfect working order. Unfortunately, they don't have the faintest idea what to do with any of that hardware. If promised enough money ('At least four percent over union

scale, man.'), they promise to 'cut a master, lay down some serious tracks, do a pressing that'll be Number 1 with a bullet,' but all they can really do is make the equipment hum and rotate in an interesting fashion, and occasionally produce a deafening scream of acoustic feedback.

They *can*, however, operate the playback decks, if a Master Recording is loaded (an almost ritual act).

There are 20 Engineers of ordinary rank, 5 higher ranks called Producers and the Studio Head. The Head (also called the Mogul, Boss Honcho, etc.) has four personal bodyguards called Goons. Goons wear mirrored sunglasses as a badge of office. They are armed with brass knuckles, which are equivalent to electro knuckles without the electro part. They're not made of brass but since armed with knuckles' sounded less than awesome, we're going to call them brass knuckles.

Engineers refer to death as 'going on the road'. They believe that some day, a crew of Roadies will arrive to take them all out on a Concert Tour. This could give the Troubleshooters a way in; however, the Cyberpunks tried that trick once long ago, and the Engineers are wary.

PACE STUDIO

The Troubleshooters are here for *Acoustic Readable Data Disks* or *Black Boxes*. All the Engineers but the Head Honcho are so thoroughly divorced from reality that they fail to catch the significance of the Troubleshooters' interest in the acoustic readable data disks—the Master Recordings. The Engineers just keep spouting encouraging talk of how big the Troubleshooters next hit is going to be and directing them to talk with the Boss Honcho.

The Boss Honcho catches on immediately that the Troubleshooters are looking to loot the Master Recordings. He listens patiently to what they have to say, then shrugs his shoulders, grins cooperatively and says, 'Well, I'm sure we can do business here...' Then he turns to his Goons, gives a secret hand sign, and the Goons open fire. From this point it is a to-the-death battle for the studio and the Master Recordings.

ENTERING THE STUDIO

Just inside the Studio doors is a reception lobby, with kitschy vinyl furniture, plastic ferns and a terrarium with some dead lizards. The walls are hung with gold records and incomprehensible abstract paintings. This motif of very expensive bad taste is present throughout the Studio complex. Everything is very clean and well maintained, thanks to the automatic maintenance systems. Most of these systems are invisible—special airflow vents that keep things dust-free, for instance—but the occasional sweeperbot appears whenever it will most startle the players.

One of the low-rank Engineers mans a desk in the lobby. This person's purpose is to send people away politely but firmly, 'I'm sorr-ree, but he's in conference and can't be disturbed until August. No, they're all in Gstaad. Are you representing investors, or yourselves? Requests for employment must go through the office in Marin County.' And so on. The receptionist is really just an annoyance; any reasonable excuse gets the players past the front desk.

Once past the desk, the Troubleshooters will have to wander around looking for someone official to talk to. All the Engineers are 'just hanging out', chatting in obscure jargon and polishing the hardware. The Troubleshooters are consistently given polite, encouraging and unresponsive answers to their questions—'We're with you all the way, solid on your concept. Just need to finalise the contract wording and check with marketing. See the Boss Honcho, and we'll be ready to go to the limit. Awesome.' The Boss Honcho is 'around here somewhere'; nobody is quite sure where.

The Boss Honcho is in the last place the Troubleshooters look for him—that is, the Troubleshooters run into the Boss Honcho when you tire of sending the players around through the studio after him, and when you are ready for a little shoot-'em-up.

THE ENGINEERS' QUARTERS

These apartments are well-equipped but rather plain; there are more decorations (album covers, concert posters, autographed 8x10 glossies) in the upper ranks' rooms. All rooms have telephone intercoms, and monitor speakers and video screens are connected to the deck in the main equipment area; twice a day an Engineer, called the DJ, plays an hour of programming for the entire staff. (This means the players should have some chance to see the recordings and what they do.)



The Studio Head's apartment contains its own playback deck, and he alone may borrow recordings for his own entertainment. The Studio Commissary serves synthesised meals considerably superior to Alpha Complex vat product. (Unfortunately the Commissary equipment is not portable.)

The Recreation Room contains video and other games, including an electronic skeet range (the guns look real but are harmless low-power lasers) and a full-size Bally Fireball pinball machine. The 1980s video game *Berzerk*, with its laser-armed hero fleeing killer bots, is probably treasonous but should fascinate the Troubleshooters.

The Concert Hall is an auditorium to which paying customers are admitted to watch playbacks. It contains no equipment other than a holographic projection stage.

THE STUDIO ITSELF

The Control Room is filled with electronic hardware: rack after rack of metal-fronted components, dangling patchcords, bouncing meter needles, green-glowing screens, whole galaxies of twinkling LEDs. Imagine the showroom of a huge and upscale electronics store, multiplied by at least ten. The most prominent feature is the 64-track mixer, a vast ocean of slide-pots and timbre controls.

On the other side of a soundproof window above the mixing board is the performance area, a stage big enough for a dozen musicians and their equipment. The walls are lined with sound-deadening material, surfaced with a shiny silvery stuff. The walls can be used as projection screens in the production of video clips; there are hologram projectors and laser lightshow generators mounted near the ceiling. The lasers are harmless but don't look it. Triggering the projectors during a battle could be very exciting, as images of flying saucers swoop to the attack, tanks roll, Mick Jagger struts...

Both parts of the Studio are off limits to all but Engineers, though a heavily escorted guest might be taken on a 'backstage tour'.

Twenty metres below the Control Room, accessible by a narrow service ladder, is the Studio's isotope power plant, which still has a decade or two of operation before internal neutron decay causes it to collapse into a lump of unbelievably radioactive butterscotch crunch, melting the bedrock and causing the Studio to relocate toward China. The reactor chamber is dramatically lit by coloured displays and contains a number of confusing controls: tinkering with these could cause an early melt.

STOREROOM A

This room is filled with musical instruments: synthesizers, horns, drums, lots of guitars. The Engineers can't play any of them, though sometimes they take them out and lip-synch.

Troubleshooters do not know what musical instruments are, either. They should probably have this room described as a sort of armoury: guitars are rifles, keyboards are computer terminals, mariachis are a kind of grenade.

STOREROOM B

This is where the Master Recordings are kept, the Studio Engineers' greatest treasure. The room, which is carefully cleaned and maintained, is lined floor to ceiling with—how'd you guess—Black Boxes. They all used to say things like 'Creedence Clearwater Revival Master Recording Set', but the Engineers have polished them so many times they're down to plain black wood.

There are over 300 Boxes, each of which contains 24 hours' worth of audio or video disks (all play back on the same deck). This is more than the Troubleshooters' vehicle and trailer will hold, even if they should get a chance to take so many, which they shouldn't.

The Engineers will die to protect the Master Recordings. Every so often a Box does get stolen by a visitor (without labels, it's hard to keep track), like the one that made its way to Alpha Complex. If the Engineers should all be killed, the Cyberpunks and Nouvelle Vague will be hot after the music. If the Computer finds out about the hoard, it will be a war between Philip-U trying to recover them all, and maybe the Studio equipment too, and Dale-U trying to steal them if he can and destroy them if he can't. The Computer itself will want the Studio and everything in it obliterated, and will order a massive Vulture airstrike to do so, which will set a nice time limit on Troubleshooter actions.

WOULDN'T YOU REALLY RATHER HAVE A BUICK?

'Uncle Ken's Super Service Station' appears to be a vehicle sales and service facility. It is surrounded by what Troubleshooters should be able to recognise by their wheels, seats and general configuration as vehicles of some kind, probably autocars. It appears to be deserted. Attentive players will notice two things that are odd about the Station:

1. It is a very long way from a road.
2. The Cyberpunks have not looted it bare. Uncle Ken's is actually a secret military experimental station. There is no road because the experiment was interrupted by the end of the world. (If it had been completed, they would have *built* a road. R&D logic is unchanging.) The Cyberpunks have not stripped the car lot because the experiment, Project Pooka, is operational.

HARV[E]

HARV[E] (Heuristic Automated Recon Vehicle [Evaluation model]) is an extremely sophisticated tank. Also a very powerful one. If HARV[E] had passed his evaluations, he and a team of units like him would be deployed in 'militarily sensitive' areas, on constant silent vigil.

Silent? Yup. HARV[E] moves on a set of baffled hoverfans so quiet that he can sneak up to within a few metres of a person unheard. He can also hit 100 kph flat out, rather more noisily.

And invisible—the antiradiation coatings on HARV[E]'s smooth flanks, coupled with thermal and acoustic chameleon transducers beneath, make him undetectable by visible light or any sort of electronic sensing: radar, infrared, magnetic. He can only be detected if he breaks radio silence or fires his weapons. (Certain psionic powers might be able to detect him.)

HARV[E] is armed with a turreted laser cannon, fore and aft sonic blasters, and an anti-missile phalanx-laser battery (intended mostly as an anti-personnel weapon, since no conventional missile can lock on to HARV[E]).

HARV[E]'s mind is that of an eager young recruit who has been told to 'wait outside' while his test scores are processed. He has been waiting for centuries now. But he is very patient (part of his scout programming). He has grown to like the little woodland creatures, the squirrels and grizzly bears and giant mutant wolf spiders. He will wait until someone comes (with the proper authorisation, of course—HARV[E]'s sentry programming is very strong) to tell him whether or not he has passed his evaluations.

Until then, silent, deadly but meaning well, HARV[E] patrols the countryside in a ten kilometre radius from his camouflaged base, allowing no one to damage Uncle Ken's, or hurt his one friend, ELWOOD.

ELWOOD

No, not the Cyberpunk leader. ELWOOD 3610 (Electronic Long-term Warfare Outpost Operations Device) is the other half of Project Pooka, an immobile self-aware tactical computer intended to coordinate the actions of ten HARV[E]s. ELWOOD knows the war is over and high command is dead and nobody's ever going to take HARV[E] home. But he hasn't told HARV[E], because then the tank would have no purpose in his life, and besides, if HARV[E] went away, soon the scavengers would be in to scrap ELWOOD—and HARV[E] would be all alone.

Sort of gets you right there, don't it? ELWOOD 3610 completely fills the trunk of a 1967 Thunderbird convertible, parked in the Service Station garage area. ELWOOD weighs two metric tons (concealed supports hold up the car's back end). His power and external data bus cables run through the car and out the hood (where they look like battery-charge cables) to, respectively, a buried isotope generator like the one at the PACE Studio, and an antenna array on the roof, concealed inside a giant fiberglass Studebaker with a giant fiberglass Uncle Ken waving from behind the wheel.

He has an external speaker, which he uses to talk to HARV[E], or friendly passers-by. ELWOOD is genial (if you want to make him sound like Jimmy Stewart, we have no way of stopping you). The machines also have a radio link which is not normally used (so the tank can 'maintain radio silence') but which ELWOOD will not hesitate to use if threatened.



WHAT YOU CAN'T SEE CAN'T HURT YOU. RIGHT?



If ELWOOD or his car are moved more than a few centimetres, the aging cables give way, and ELWOOD 'dies'. This makes HARV[E] very angry with whomever killed his friend. Simply reconnecting ELWOOD is not sufficient: he must be run through a cold start procedure, using Mechanics + Program, to get his higher logic areas going again. ELWOOD can be operated off the crawler's power plant; the crawler may not fire its weapons during such operation.

HARV[E] and ELWOOD vs. the Troubleshooters

'Oh, boy!' I hear you say. 'An invisible, silent tank! Boy, am I going to have some fun with those poor Troubleshooters!'

Actually, the problem is going to be finding some excuse not to turn the Troubleshooters to applesauce. What we have here is the equivalent of an invisible, silent, fire-breathing dragon. No way the Troubleshooters are going to walk away from that one. The best they can hope for is to leak slowly away.

ABOUT HARV[E] AND ELWOOD

Though HARV[E] and ELWOOD are a great idea, they are just too tough in game terms. So we have to make them psychologically wimpy pacifists, or your players are going to get a lot of practice roleplaying wisps of vapour.

Use these principles to keep Project Pooka from crushing your players' morale:

1. HARV[E] is *almost* silent and *almost* invisible. His hoverfans make a barely noticeable hum, and his designers never quite handled the problem of disguising his shadow—in poor light, the shadow is masked, but in strong light, like sunlight, the shadow is faint but noticeable. Whenever the Troubleshooters are quiet and looking around, HARV[E] is probably right behind their backs, keeping an eye on them. Tell the players about an odd, faint buzzing that seems to come from no particular direction. And when they are looking over the station, tell one of the players by note he caught a glimpse of something moving out of the corner of his eye, but there was nothing there when he turned to look. This sort of thing keeps the players on their toes and paranoid, so they won't get careless and do something rash. Probably.

2. HARV[E] and ELWOOD always give a series of verbal and physical warnings before they unleash their main arsenals. For example, as the Troubleshooters approach the station, ELWOOD addresses them through his external speaker, 'Caution! This is a restricted area! Danger! Tactical weapons testing in progress! Warning!'

And if the Troubleshooters do something foolish like start shooting up the station, HARV[E] politely warns the Troubleshooters by broadcasting 'I'm sorry, I have been directed to destroy you if you do not desist these actions. Please stop immediately.' If the Troubleshooters don't desist, he turns their trailer into Swiss cheese (it was full of Black Boxes? Oh, sorry). If that hint is insufficient... Go ahead. Fry 'em.

FILL 'ER UP, UNCLE KEN

Everything here is worth salvaging: the cars and the bots especially—even the ancient vehicle service manuals *might* not crumble into dust at a touch. Of course, if the players figure out a way to deactivate (lotsa luck) or distract HARV[E], the Cyberpunks will be on Uncle Ken's like locusts. And Nouvelle Vague will decide it's a real good time to ambush the Punks. As for the Folks Back Home, Dale-U will kill for cars, or even parts; Philip-U will kill to keep him from getting them; the Computer will want ELWOOD captured or destroyed. Probably destroyed; the Computer has a big ego problem about other computers.

If a fight starts and ELWOOD is still connected, you might wish to throw in his perimeter defences: a belt of mines around the Service Station, and a remote machinegun turret inside the dummy car on the roof. All but a few of the mines have deteriorated and merely make thick black smoke, and the sighting camera for the gun is broken, so ELWOOD must shoot blind.

You have probably noticed the computer has the same name as one of the Cyberpunk leaders. This not only allows the designer to get in an extra pop-culture joke, but opens up lots of opportunities for further confusion. For instance, if the players talk about killing Elwood the Cyberpunk while HARV[E] can hear them, the tank assumes they mean ELWOOD 3610, and is very upset with them. Likewise if the Punks, especially Jake, should hear about grabbing ELWOOD and taking him back to Alpha Complex.



NO DIRECTION HOME

By now the Troubleshooters should have a) assembled a load of loot to take home, or b) gotten involved in a gang war, or c) caused the Computer to order Vulture strikes on the Studio, the Service Station and/or themselves (in any combination), or d) all the above.

It is time to consider a strategic and orderly withdrawal (sample of Troubleshooter humour: 'What do you call 40 Troubleshooters hanging off the skid of a flybot?'). The less the Computer knows about mission status, the easier this will be, because many fewer things will be hunting down the Troubleshooters.

However, the more things that are in fact breathing down their necks, the more effective the climax to this episode (and with it, the entire mission) will be. This is the part of the narrative, familiar to all from movies and television, called The Chase. And as Mack Sennett knew, the more things in The Chase and the crazier they are—cops, firetrucks, steamrollers, roller skaters, baby carriages, and don't forget the truckload of custard pies—the better.

Imagine a long cone laid on the countryside. The point of the cone is the Troubleshooter team, trying to make their very slow crawler go very fast, without losing their trailer load of videodiscs and spare shock absorbers or the Nash Rambler being towed from the trailer's rear hitch. If the crawler has conked out, it is being towed by a straining transport flybot, possibly using Troubleshooters as tow cables. Behind them come the Cyberpunks, pedalling their toy motorbikes like mad. (Feel free to insert a downslope here to help them out.) Behind the Punks come the Vaguers, laughing hysterically with murderous intent. Then the surviving Studio Engineers, in the Studio Head's BMW with the Goons on the running boards. Some miscellaneous natives for local colour. Siberian Communist timberwolves. The Great Jihad. Sandworms of Dune. The Last Secret Weapon of the Third Reich. Emperor Ming's Death Squadron. You get the idea. Don't forget HARV[E]: ol' Gomer Pylebot certainly hasn't forgotten the bad men who killed his buddy Sergeant ELWOOD.

And above it all, just behind the Mothership and the Killer Bees, flies every Vulture the Computer has been able to get airborne, with orders to bomb, strafe, scatter, destroy, do *something* to the long-dreaded-and-finally-here Invasion of the Post-Apocalypse Mutants from Hell. (Hey, what a great title for a mission!)

INTO THE WILD BLUE YONDER

So, what happens when they reach Alpha Complex?

Consider the possibilities:

You could find some way to defuse the whole explosion, what we writers who want to show off our Latin call a *deus ex machina*:

1. One of the warring High Programmers shoots the other dead, and the Computer freezes all destruct orders until the contradictions are sorted out.
2. The Computer finds out about the High Programmer's treason and has them both shot. (Same results as #1.)
3. Another Alpha Complex, seeing the mass concentration of, well, stuff, thinks it is being invaded, and launches a counterstrike that exactly neutralises this one. (Impressive, if a trifle desperate.)
4. Great Cthulhu rises from sunken R'lyeh and eats everybody, no saving roll. (Sorry, got carried away.)

THE ANTICLIMACTIC ENDING

If you take the easy way out and let Alpha Complex survive, there will, of course, be a debriefing.

A squad of BLUE Vulture Squadron guards takes the characters to the doors of Briefing Room AA and leaves them there. No security device bars the way: instead, a large, leatherette-bound book sits on a small table. Attached to the book by a chain is a ballpoint pen. A small sign above the table reads: 'Enter and sign in, please.'

The pen is almost out of ink; it runs out after the third Troubleshooter has signed in. (Whether some or all the Troubleshooters do not sign in makes no difference; the information in the book is classified ULTRAVIOLET, and no one will ever read it.)

The Troubleshooters probably enter the briefing room with trepidation, no doubt expecting to face a stern Dan-V ready to blame them for everything: destruction of Computer property, leading a horde of presumably treasonous and definitely hostile Outsiders to Alpha Complex, violating the Prime Directive, etc. However, when they do summon enough courage to enter, the room is empty. The high bench is vacant: a single spotlight is focused on the chair that Dan-V used to occupy.

Even the Computer's terminal in the room is deactivated.

After about ten minutes, the spotlight goes out. Time passes....

Eventually the Troubleshooters should get tired of standing around in the dark and go home.

Actually, the Computer has decided the mission was a failure. Since this would imply a mistake on the Computer's part in okaying the mission, and the Computer never makes mistakes, the Computer has decided that the mission never occurred. Therefore no one has come to the briefing room to be debriefed, because there is no mission to be debriefed from. Dan-V has been executed for wasting valuable Computer time requesting status reports on a mission that never existed.

The Troubleshooters earn no rewards or penalties for Episode 4. If they keep their mouths shut, they can keep everything they found Outdoors. No one will ever admit anything ever happened, anywhere.

THE BIG BANG

Another option, one that is suitable to *PARANOIA* as to few other games, is to let nature take its course. Think about it. In fantasy, Cosmic Evil is never *really* allowed to overthrow the nice pastoral feudal autocracy. In space opera, the planetoid never *really* hits the inhabited planet. The villain *always* has a button that blows up his headquarters, and *always* shows Agent 007 where it is.

Haven't you always wanted to see the logical thing happen, the world *not* get saved at the last instant? Remember the first time you saw *Dr. Strangelove*? Well, now you can. Your players shouldn't mind. People who get upset when their characters don't reach 15th level don't play *PARANOIA*. (Not twice, anyway.)

A suggested scenario to bring the mission to a memorable socko finish:

The cross-country motorcade draws close to the walls of Alpha Complex. The doors show no sign of opening. The chase shows no sign of slowing down. The Vultures peel off, screaming, for attack runs. Everybody is shooting. Some of them are even hitting things, not that it's making any difference.

One of the Troubleshooters (perhaps remembering the Vulture raid at the end of Episode 3) points out that the bombers are going to late-apex their dives again: wherever the bombs and beams hit, the Vultures are going to plough right into the city.

Every com and iBall display begins flashing:

YOU ARE ALL TRAITORS EVERY ONE OF YOU I KNEW IT FROM THE FIRST BUT NOW I HAVE PROOF OF IT BY GEOMETRIC LOGIC IT WAS THE STRAWBERRIES ABSOLUTE PRIORITY ORDER 001 ALL VEHICLES I SAY AGAIN ALL TRAITOR VEHICLES TERMINATE POWER INSTANTLY I, THE GREAT OZ, HAVE SPOKEN

The air is suddenly quiet as all the Vulture engines die. There is only an ominous whistling of wings.

Now, of course, the Vultures can't pull out of the dive, nor can they dump their ordnance loads.

By the hundreds, they punch through the walls and roof of Alpha Complex.

There is a moment of stillness, and then the bombs go off. Another pause (play it for all it's worth) and then secondary explosions occur in power plants, armouries, chemical storage; everywhere. The earth heaves as all of Alpha goes up.

Everyone stares for a while. They start arguing about where to go next. There is supposed to be another Alpha Complex only a couple hundred clicks away, not so bad if they can hot-wire the crawler and figure out a hundred clicks which way.

HARV[E] noses up and levels his laser. 'Are you going to take my friend ELWOOD home now, or do I have to get mean?'

You might ask the players if they have any better ideas...

ACHIEVEMENTS

Display enthusiasm for the mission
at all suitable opportunities
(50XP)

Bring back useful samples of
stuff from Outdoors for study
(50XP)

Investigate the world Outdoors
and Learn Useful Things
(50XP)

Bring the peace and order of Alpha Complex
to the lawless barbarians of the Outdoors
(100XP)

Be the one to secure the Black Box
(200XP)

Report a critical threat to Alpha Complex
before anyone else and be believed
(100XP)



NPCS, BOTS AND OTHER OBSTACLES

P A R A N O I A

This is the section where in *That Other Game* we'd present detailed stats for the people, bots and whatnot the Troubleshooters might encounter. But *PARANOIA* is not like that. Nope, here at *PARANOIA* Central we believe that stats just stifle your creativity and tie you down to using preset levels of opposition that might not be appropriate to the players you have.

Besides, we're lazy.

So instead of detailed stats we're going to give you some advice.

PARANOIA is about the Troubleshooters and the things they do. NPCs and other obstacles are simply things the Troubleshooters interact with. If the interaction takes the form of a meaningful exchange of information you probably don't understand how to GM *PARANOIA* yet, but thanks for trying.

Anyway, there are two ways Troubleshooters can interact with the people and things around them: Violently and Non-violently.

You don't need detailed stats for non-violent encounters. Does the Vulture Trooper Backup Squad buy the Troubleshooters' explanation of why they had not yet completed their mission? That's down to what the players do and say, and what cards they play. The players. They're the focus, not the Vulture Troopers. Whether it's pushing a button on a Bouncy Beverage Delivery Machine or pushing the buttons of an NPC to inspire a rampage, it's about what the players do and say. They act, you adjudicate, the subject of their actions does something that seems to make sense to you.

You also don't need detailed stats for violent encounters. Does the Vulture Trooper Backup Squad buy it when the Enemies of Alpha Complex blast them? That's your decision, depending on what you want to happen. If the players do something to influence the outcome of the firefight, they're the focus. If they succeed, they get the result they want... ish. If not, they don't. The Vulture Troopers and the Enemies of Alpha Complex are dramatic elements, or scenery if you prefer. Not very scenic scenery, but this is Alpha Complex.

It all comes down to this: you present a situation, the players try to do stuff, you adjudicate and apply the results to the opposition or subject of their actions in whatever manner seems to make sense. Rinse and repeat.

But what of damage, you wail!

Cease your wailing, Friend GM, for here is the answer to your question. This is the Only Game Mechanic You Need And Even This One Is Optional.

- Weak opponents (and collateral targets) have one wound box.
- Ordinary opponents have two.
- Tough Goons have three wound boxes. Most non-combat robots would also have three wound boxes.
- Characters (anyone with a name) have four wound boxes, like Troubleshooters do.
- Tough Characters have five wound boxes. Combat robots might have five, if you can be bothered to keep track.
- Very Tough Characters have six wound boxes.

You can of course simply ignore this and say that targets go down when you think they should, or impose special conditions to take out a particular opponent. For example, rather than wound boxes you might decide that one success (i.e. one wound inflicted) drops the average mook, goon or bystander. Two success simultaneously (i.e. two wound levels inflicted in

the same attack) takes out a tougher opponent, and three at once are required to put down a serious threat. Lesser numbers of wounds have no effect other than to rough up and annoy the target.

In the end, it doesn't matter all that much. *PARANOIA* is Not Like Other Games. It's governed by a law enshrined in the original edition, one that has been dear to the heart of this Troubleshooter for many years:

Put on a good show, and fate will smile upon you.

So you see, you don't need detailed stats. You need an idea of who an NPC is and what they want. That's in the adventure text. For many NPCs you will need some idea of how many laser bolts it takes to blow their toenails off. This is covered above and also on page 96 of the *Gamesmasters Handbook*. The *PARANOIA* one, not the one for That Other Game. You will also need a sense of the dramatic and the sheer cheek to sit down with players and subject them to the exercise in mental torture we lovingly refer to as 'playing *PARANOIA*'.

Get it right and they'll come back for more.

They just can't get enough, the poor fools.....

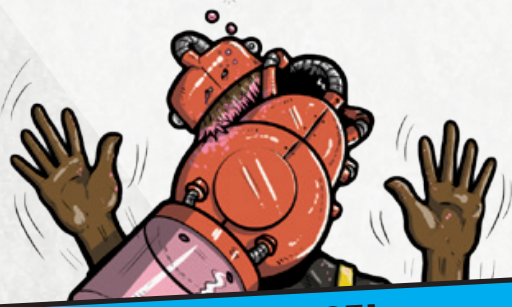


HOW TO USE

1. Print.
2. Cut along dotted lines.
3. Fold cut pieces in half.
4. Apply glue to unprinted side.
5. Press together firmly.

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BOT RAMPAGE!

IS THAT SCRUBBOT SUPPOSED TO BE DOING THAT?

ACTION ORDER: 5

A nearby bot goes out of control in some manner helpful to you. Warbots shoot the wrong target, scrubbots scrub the wrong thing, docbots AAAARGH!. Describe the incident in lurid detail. The GM has veto over your description.



ACTION

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

BEARANCE LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET

FUN IS MANDATORY!



THE WHOLE HOLE

WHO LEFT THE COVER OFF THAT INSPECTION CONDUIT?

ACTION ORDER: 4



There is a hole in something nearby. It might be big enough for someone to hide in or fall down, or might be a fairly small leak. Describe how the hole affects you and everyone nearby. The GM has veto over your description.



ACTION

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

BEARANCE LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET

FUN IS MANDATORY!



GET A GRIP!

GET A GRIP, MAN! GET A GRIP!

ACTION ORDER: 1

You or another clone gets a real or metaphorical grip. You can make a Chutzpah + Bluff, Charm or Intimidate check to get someone who is freaking out to not freak out so much. Or you can get a grip on something. A tough, unshakable grip that just keeps on gripping.



ACTION

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

BEARANCE LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET

FUN IS MANDATORY!



INFRARED RABBLE ROUSING

IN DUI SECTOR THEY GET EXTRA GRUEL RATIONS TWICE A WEEK!

ACTION ORDER: 3

A nearby group of Infrareds are influenced by your words. You might cause a riot or send them off to do your bidding. Of course, they're Infrareds so don't expect (or describe) great things. But you have to work with what's available. The GM has veto over your description.

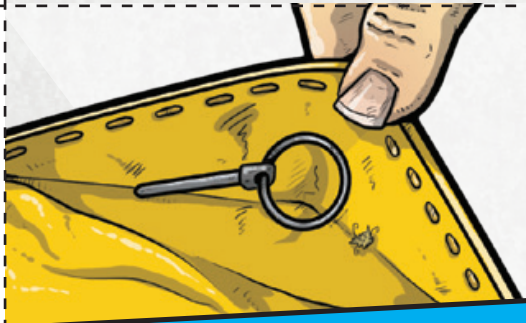


ACTION

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

BEARANCE LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET

FUN IS MANDATORY!



WHAT HAVE I GOT IN MY POCKET?

A MAGIC RING? HOW FORTUNATE.

ACTION ORDER: 2



You have something in your pocket. It's tremendously important to the Fate of the World but you don't know that. You can use the something from your pocket to solve your current problem, then you lose it. The GM has veto over your description.



ACTION

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

BEARANCE LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET

FUN IS MANDATORY!



IF ONLY I'D THOUGHT OF THAT SOONER

THAT'S WHAT WE SHOULD HAVE DONE?

ACTION ORDER: -



After any action you take ends in total unmitigated disaster (as usual), you can choose to have done something else instead. What just happened was what you realised would happen, so you did this other thing instead. A whole new disaster awaits!



ACTION

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

BEARANCE LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET

FUN IS MANDATORY!



INSPIRATIONAL SOUNDTRACK

BADAA-DAADUM! BONG BONG BONG BADIUUM!

ACTION ORDER: 6

You find a way to play or create music that will inspire your fellow Troubleshooters or Loyal Citizens of Alpha Complex in their current endeavour. Describe your efforts and maybe add some sound effects. A good performance is worth an extra dice on any action taken whilst your inspirational soundtrack is playing. You might even get two dice for a really dramatic performance.



ACTION

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

THREAT LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET

FUN IS MANDATORY!



PERFECTLY GOOD EXPLANATION

IT'S NOT EVEN MY PENGUIN!

ACTION ORDER: 1

You can explain. It wasn't really you that was caught on eleven security cameras being treasonous, and in any case the action was not treason because reasons. Explain your reasons. Make it good and the GM may take pity on you.



ACTION

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

THREAT LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET

FUN IS MANDATORY!



DOUBLE-BARRELLED LASER PISTOL

ACTION ORDER
VIOLENCE +2

SMALL
LEVEL 2

Lasering a traitor twice is better than lasering a traitor once. This weapon can be used as a standard laser pistol, or you can give that traitor both barrels for two extra NODE dice. This discharges the power pack and makes an exciting noise.



EQUIPMENT

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

THREAT LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET

FUN IS MANDATORY!



GRENADES, PROBABLY

ACTION ORDER
VIOLENCE +3

SMALL
LEVEL 2

These three grenade-shaped objects are probably grenades. If you throw or otherwise activate one, roll a dice. On a 1-3 the grenade is whatever type you wanted it to be when you threw it. 5-6 indicates it's a standard fragmentation type. On a 6 it's soup.

EQUIPMENT

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

FUN IS MANDATORY!



PERSONAL PROTECTION

ACTION ORDER
REACTION

LARGE
LEVEL 1

ISSUED BY: ALL SECRET SOCIETIES

Doesn't everyone's jumpsuit have concealed armour plates? No? Well, that explains the Cake Fork Incident.

EQUIPMENT

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

FUN IS MANDATORY!



SPLENDID HEADWEAR

ACTION ORDER
CHUTZPAH +0

MEDIUM
LEVEL 3

You have a hat of truly awesome proportions. In the right circumstances this hat may impress other clones or convince them that you are a member of their secret hat club or something. In any non-combat situation you may use the hat to convince, order, bribe or otherwise get other clones to do your bidding.

EQUIPMENT

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

FUN IS MANDATORY!



RECHARGIGATOR

ACTION ORDER
BRAINS +2

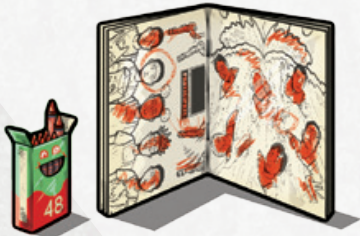
SMALL
LEVEL 2

The rechargigator is a one-shot power recharger which can be used to, you know, recharge stuff. Pretty much anything from a laser pistol to an autocar can be recharged, using up the power in the device. If used to recharge a clone, the rechargigator causes an automatic Hurt level of damage and a squeal of protest.

EQUIPMENT

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

FUN IS MANDATORY!



SPOT-A-SABOTEUR RED CLEARANCE COLOURING BOOK

ACTION ORDER
BRAINS +0

SMALL
LEVEL 1

This delightful colouring book serves as a guide to the various ways a traitorous saboteur could traitorously sabotage stuff in Alpha Complex, providing endless amusement as well as heightening vigilance. Comes with a pack of 48 red crayons.

EQUIPMENT

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

FUN IS MANDATORY!



OMNITOOLOMATIC

ACTION ORDER
MECHANICS +0

MEDIUM
LEVEL 2

This incredible piece of engineering excellence has a tool for every occasion, deployed by selecting the correct option from a simple 948-entry drop-down-roll-up-scroll-sideways menu. For your safety and convenience, all tools retract after a preset delay (defaulting to 17 seconds) to avoid any chance of injuring yourself on a pry-screwblade left carelessly exposed.

EQUIPMENT

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

FUN IS MANDATORY!



BOX O' BITS

ACTION ORDER
MECHANICS +0

SMALL
LEVEL 2

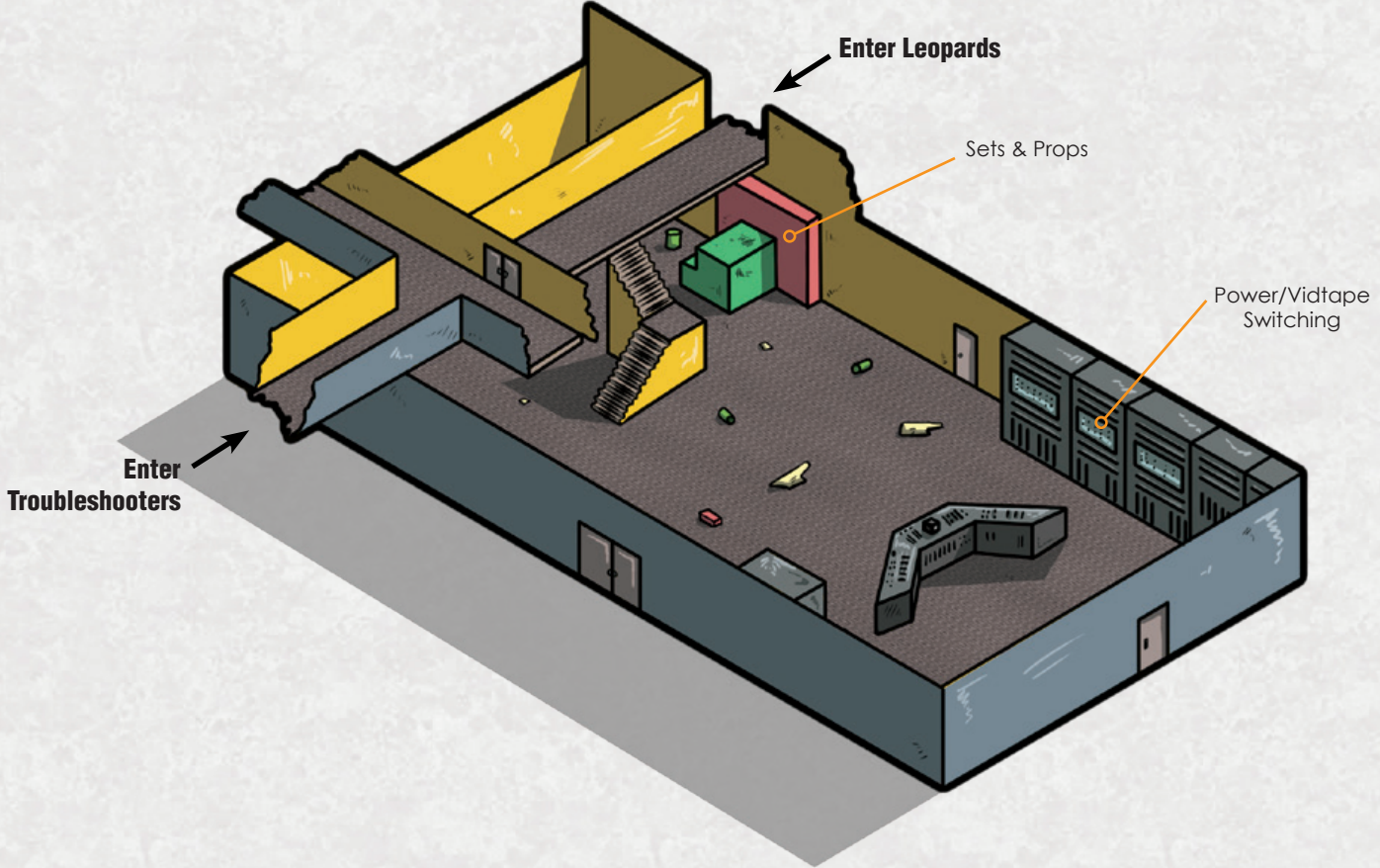
This small plastic container contains its contents. Which include all manner of small fasteners, clips, screws, links and Highly Useful Items. It bears no resemblance at all to the 'what we cleaned up today' boxes used by maintenance crews when they sweep under desks and food preparation machinery.

EQUIPMENT

WARNING! WARNING! WARNING!

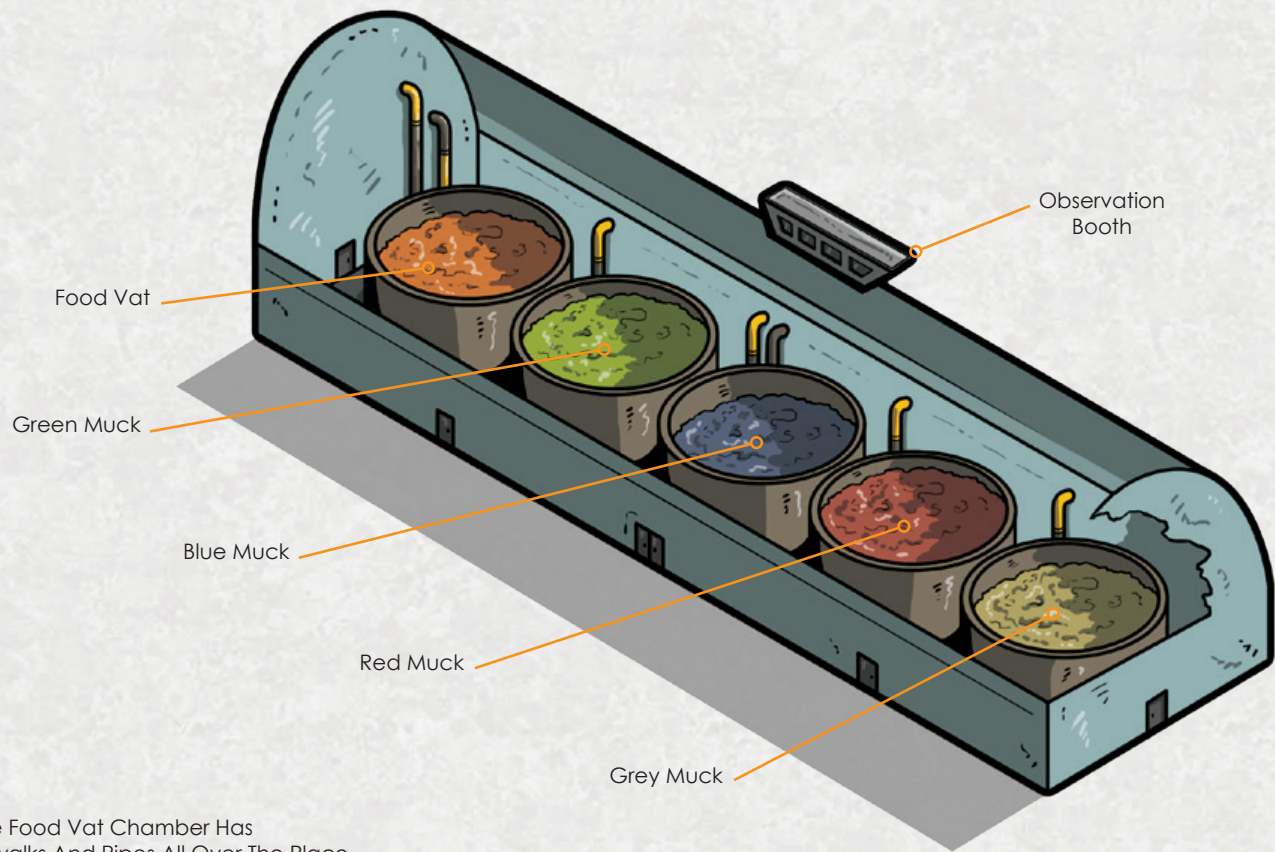
FUN IS MANDATORY!

CLEARANCE LEVEL: ULTRAVIOLET



B FOOD VAT CHAMBERS

TRACK 1



Food Vat

Green Muck

Blue Muck

Red Muck

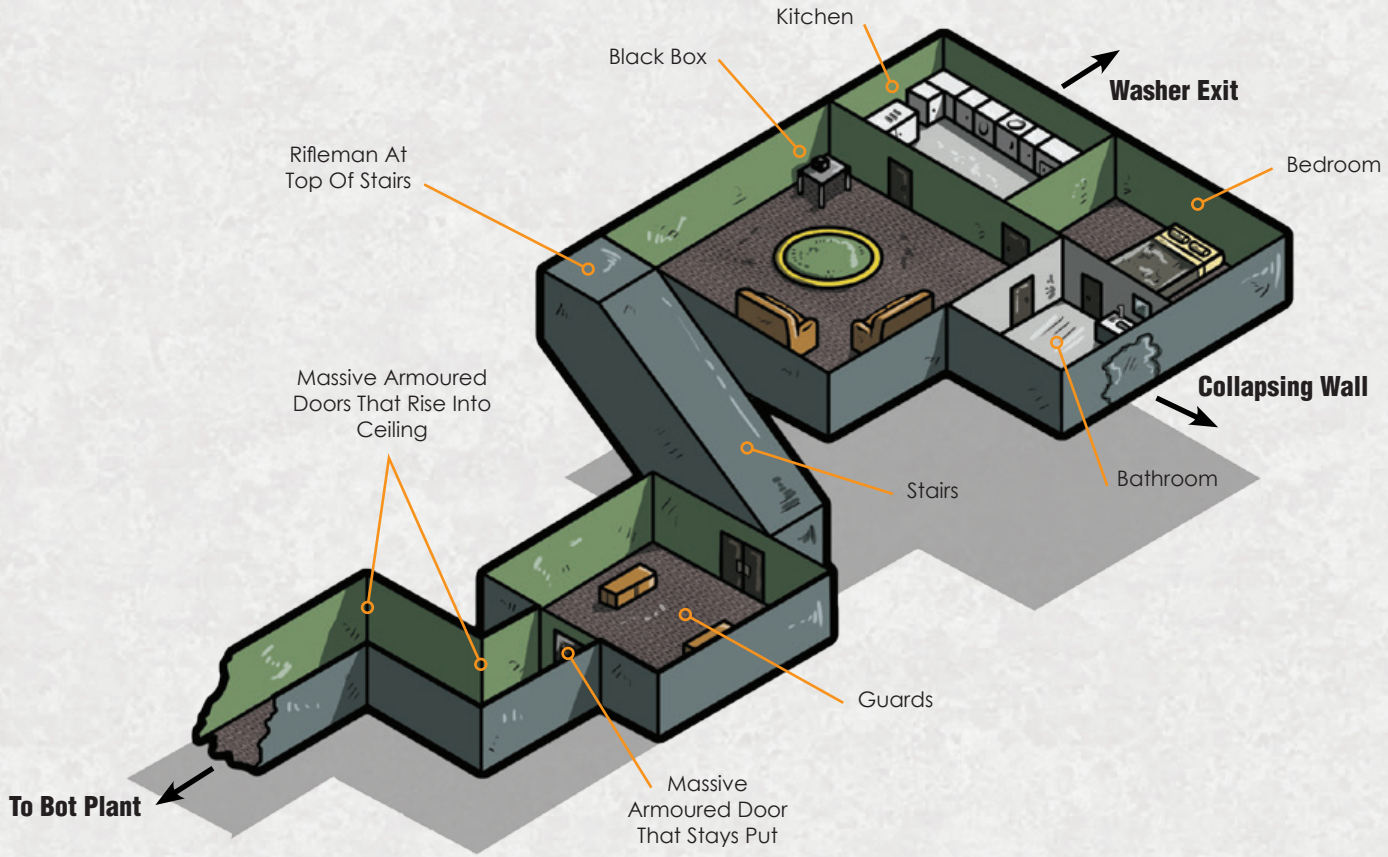
Grey Muck

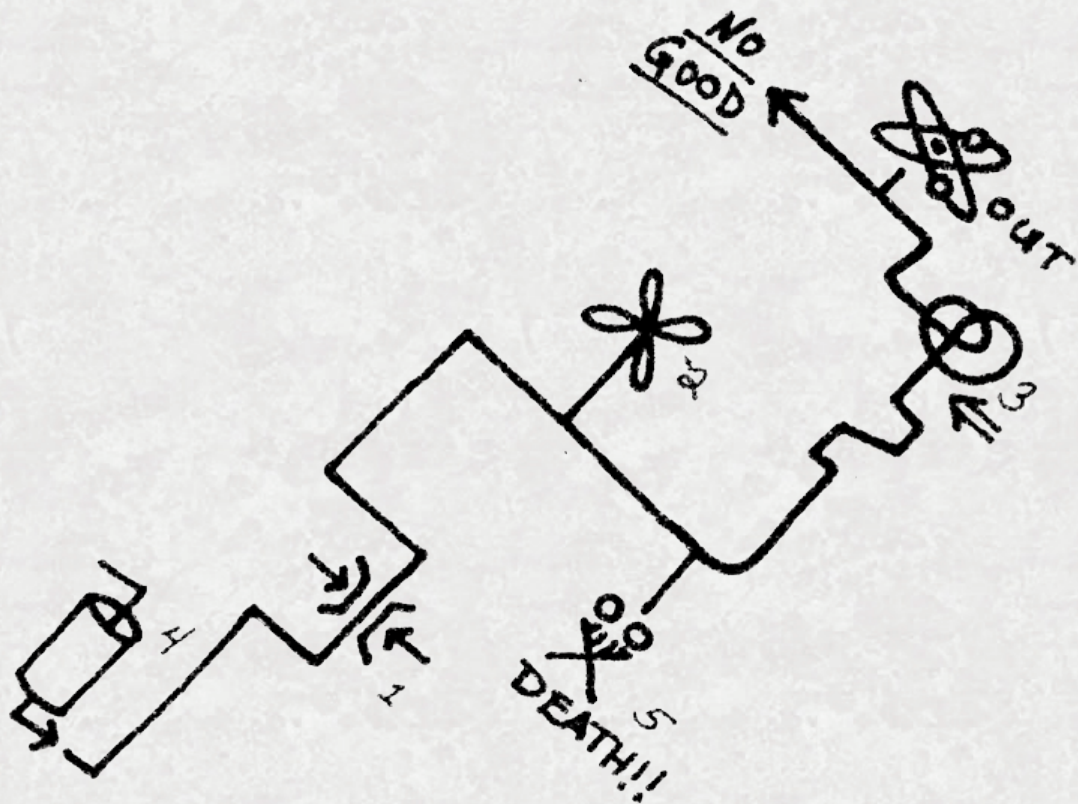
Observation Booth

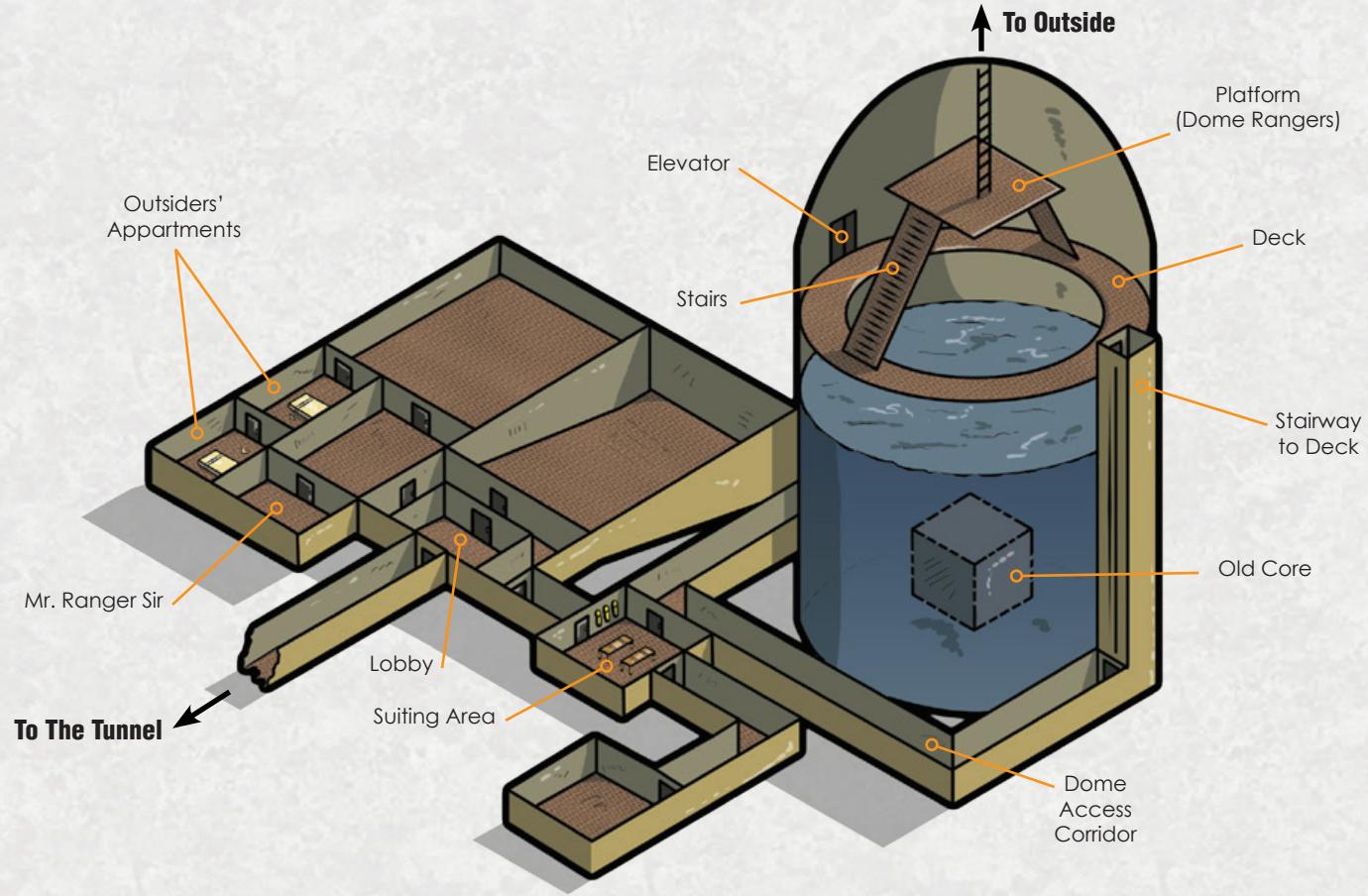
* The Food Vat Chamber Has Catwalks And Pipes All Over The Place

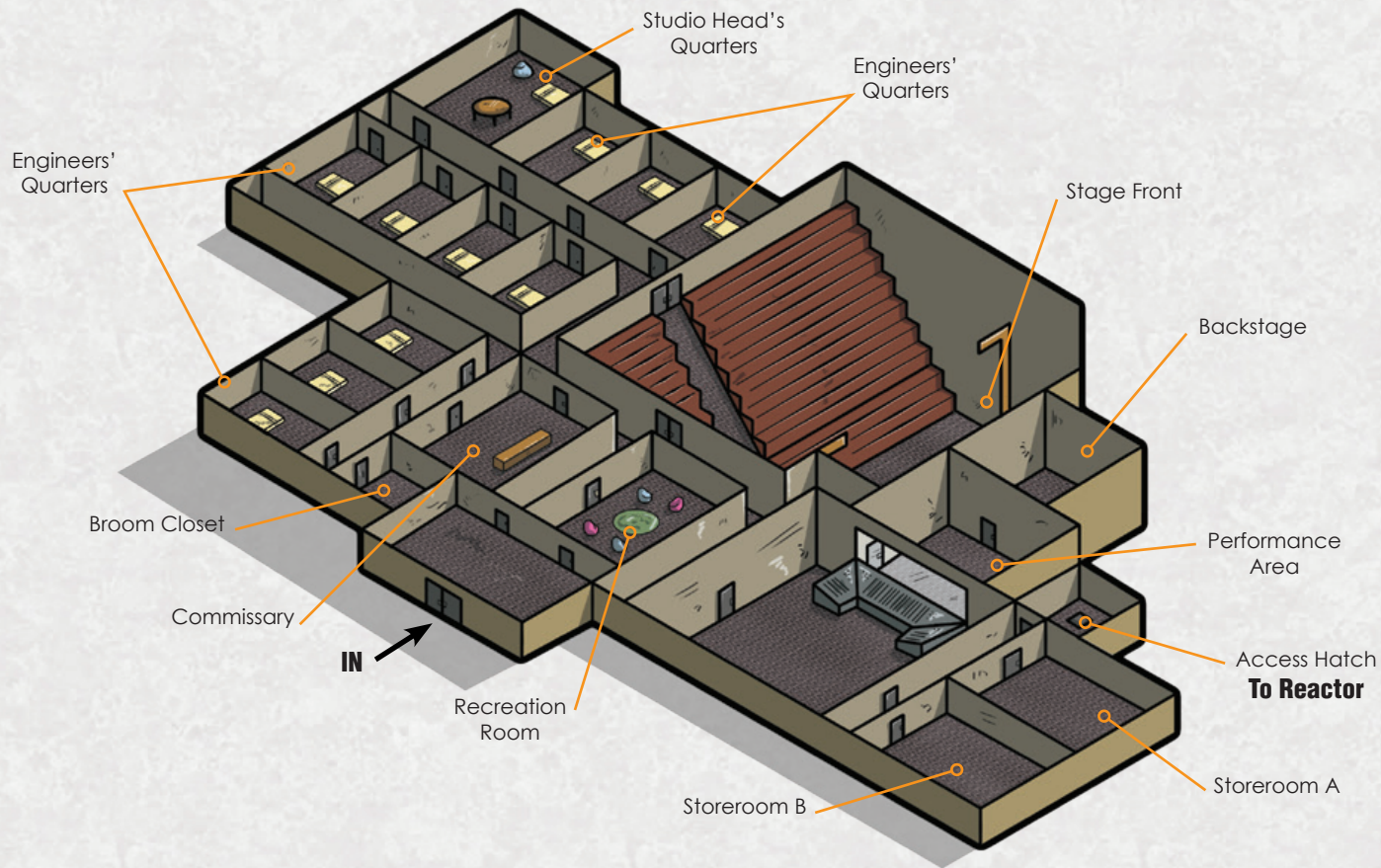
A SAFE HOUSE APARTMENT


TRACK 2











You are YELLOW Clearance! Congratulations!

The original Yellow Clearance Black Box Blues – revised, updated... Remastered!

One of the most famous missions in Troubleshooter history has returned to enhance the lives of a new generation of clones. Once more Troubleshooters can pursue the elusive Black Box, explore Outdoors, and bring peace and security to Alpha Complex.

We can't tell you what this adventure is about (except that lots of confused and desperate people are killing each other over a mysterious black box), but we can tell you what it (the mission, we mean, not the box – the black box, that is, not the one you are holding now) contains.

"AT YOUR SERVICE"

What's in this Mission?

"WHAT IS YOUR SECURITY CLEARANCE PLEASE?"

Clearance YELLOW, Friend.

"THIS MISSION WILL GIVE YOU MANY EXCITING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE THE COMPUTER AND YOUR FELLOW CITIZENS OF ALPHA COMPLEX. AS A TROUBLE SHOOTER, YOU WILL BATTLE AGAINST TRATORS TO THE COMPUTER, INCLUDING A DEADLY CONSPIRACY OF COMMUNIST TERRORIST MUTANTS OF UNBELIEVABLE POWER, ARMED WITH WEAPONS ONE CAN HARDLY BEGIN TO IMAGINE."

But can I survive that?

"I AM SORRY. THAT INFORMATION IS NOT AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME."

Why worry
when
we can
Rock?

- This box contains:
- Track 1: Bop 'til You Drop (mission book)
 - Track 2: I Was a Mutant for the FBI (mission book)
 - Track 3: No-One Gets Out of Here Alive (mission book)
 - Track 4: Why Don't We Do It In The Road (mission book)
 - 8 unique equipment cards
 - 8 new action cards
 - 3 two-sided map cards

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