

Gamemaster Section

The Gamemaster has what may be the most important role in any Dark•Matter game session: He or she must be inventive, flexible, and creative enough to keep at least one step ahead of the players at all times. In slowly revealing a series of sinister mysteries, the Gamemaster must weave the puzzles together into an overarching plot, one clue at a time. Perhaps the most difficult part of the task involves determining where to draw the line between providing too much information and not providing enough. The Dark•Matter campaign setting offers some guidelines, but in practice just how much you should reveal depends on your players, your plots, and the overall history of your campaign.

A Dark•Matter campaign can take a thousand different forms, depending on which conspiracies the heroes choose to investigate—and which ones choose to investigate (or even recruit) them. Though this book assumes that heroes begin play as members of the Hoffmann Institute, they may find their allegiances drifting during the course of the campaign as they interact with various groups. Styles of play can differ as well. One group might burn an action-filled trail of violence across the land and end it all in a cataclysmic firefight against the forces of oppression. Another might peel apart mysteries like the layers of an onion, always finding another layer beneath. In either case, those who learn too much may have to go on the run to avoid becoming the next victims of a global conspiracy.

A Dark•Matter game can be run without conspiracies as well. Instead of (or in addition to) investigating secret societies, the heroes can explore the paranormal. This too is a source of endless adventures, because the world of the paranormal is as big as . . . well, the entire world.

Timeline Sample (1960s)

1960—Nixon, CIA agent Bissell, and others plan Bay of Pigs invasion, obtain permission to use Guatemala as launching point. Bernard Barker serves as conduit for Bay of Pigs funding. CIA buys Southern Air Transport, contemplates development of "recruitment pills" and other drugs, studies mysterious amnesia of Korean war prisoners moved through Manchuria, and contemplates giving truth serum to brainwashed American POWs. USAF pilot Francis Gary Powers shot down in U-2 over Russia; summit conference canceled. Project Ozma, searching for sign of intelligent life from another part of the universe, receives unexplained signals from space.

1961—CIA invasion of Cuba at the Bay of Pigs fails due to poor planning and cancellation of support by Kennedy; the CIA, the Mob, Cuban exiles, right-wingers, and Nixonites supposedly vow revenge. Kennedy develops extracurricular relationship with Judith Campbell, Sam Giancana's girlfriend; Giancana and John Roselli enlisted by CIA to attempt Castro assassination. Unexplained transmissions from space monitored by ham radio operators worldwide; Bob Renaud, ham operator, allegedly makes contact with aliens. First known sighting of the mothmen in West Virginia. Betty and Barney Hill kidnapped by a UFO in the first recorded abduction case. Yuri Gagarin becomes first man in space.

1962—Suicide of Marilyn Monroe under questionable circumstances. Oswald returns to America with his Russian wife, an alleged KGB agent. Dr. Edgar Schein outlines behavior modification programs for U.S. prisons, based on Korean brainwashing techniques. Cuban missile crisis. UFOlogist Williamson disappears in South America.

1963—Assassination of President John Kennedy. CIA begins weather modification project over Hue, Vietnam. Unexplained radio transmission in unidentified language interrupts astronaut Gordon Cooper during final orbit of *Mercury 9* mission. Numerous MIBs spotted in Dealey Plaza. Merchant vessel near Gibraltar notes a strange patch of calm sea, about 1.5 kilometers wide and several kilometers long, surrounded on all sides by normal turbulent water.

1964—Numerous deaths associated with Kennedy assassination. Report of the Warren Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy released; Commission finds that Oswald, acting alone, killed JFK.

1965—Assassination of Malcolm X. U.S. Army explores sites in the Middle East as potential locations for nuclear devices intended to set off earthquakes. Early prison behavior modification program, CASE, begins in Washington, D.C. boys' school. Fifth UFO flap year. Three Russian scientists receive unexplained signals from space. California highway inspector Rex Heflin takes pictures of UFOs, then receives a visit from MIBs supposedly from NORAD who take the original photographs and depart; NORAD denies involvement. Another ham radio operator, Sidney Padrick, makes contact with UFO aliens.

1966—CIA begins weather modification experiments over Cuba, technology is later used in an attempt to ruin Castro's sugar cane crop. Army conducts simulated germ warfare project in New York City. Numerous mothman sightings in West Virginia accompanied by UFOs, animal mutilations, poltergeist activity, crop circles, and Men In Black. Ancient bacteria (500 million years old) revived in a German laboratory.

1967—Rex Heflin again visited by MIBs in connection with his photos of UFOs; similar MIB incidents occur in New York and elsewhere. Another MIB, Mr. Dixsun, allegedly

visits Colorado University UFO researcher Edward Condon and offers to help him contact the space people. China explodes its first hydrogen bomb. Tramp named Bailey found in an abandoned building in London, victim of spontaneous human combustion.

1968—Assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., in Memphis and Robert Kennedy in Los Angeles. Sirhan Sirhan, Robert Kennedy's brainwashed "assassin," is proven to have shot Kennedy in the shoulder, but Kennedy had also been shot in the back of the head at close range—a woman who earlier had been seen with Sirhan leaves the scene saying, "We've shot him!" Approximate founding date of a group called The Kaisers—sixty German-Americans allegedly planning to make Nixon a dictator. FBI begins secret Cointelpro campaign against New Left and black radicals. CIA penetrates the Students for a Democratic Society at Columbia College; National Caucus of Labor Committees (NCLC) formed within the SDS. Mystery ship *Scheersberg* disappears between Antwerp and Genoa with 200 tons of uranium believed to have been taken to Israel. Astronauts circling the moon interrupted by unexplained voices. Radio stations receive mysterious distress signals from the mid-Pacific; no ships found during ensuing search. U.S. detonates hydrogen bomb 150 kilometers northwest of Las Vegas in underground test.

1969—Nixon issues Executive Order No. 11490, establishing plans for dictatorial control in the event of a "national emergency." Pentagon and Department of Interior researchers study methods of inducing earthquakes by injecting fluids into deep wells. Cuban government arrests alleged CIA spy Humberto Carrillo Colon, seizing his very low frequency transceiver and coded messages describing strange lights, a minisubmarine, and other unexplained items. MIB "Carlos Allende" visits UFOlogists Jim and Coral Lorenzen in Tucson, giving them a copy of the ONR reprint of Jessup's "Case for the UFOs." Men first visit the moon. Reportedly, *Apollo* astronauts see a number of UFOs (which they identify as huge spaceships) across a lunar crater, apparently watching them. Followers of Charles Manson ritually slaughter Sharon Tate and Jay Sebring.

Sample Location: Chicago, Illinois

Long a manufacturing hub and commodities brokering center, Chicago is also a major transportation center and home to an enormous population of hardworking, no-nonsense people with no time for the frivolous pretensions of the coasts. It is both more pragmatic and more devoted to work than the coastal cities, and justly proud of its strong work ethic. Chicagoans take a perverse pride in their town's ability to weather political, social, and climatic storms. So far, the tides of dark matter have left the city largely alone, and this has led the Hoffmann Institute to store some of its most important assets here in the Chicago Specimen Collection.

Bachelor's Grove Cemetery

The most haunted place in Chicago is this German immigrant cemetery, built near the Rubio Woods Forest Preserve and inactive since 1965. Overgrown and poorly maintained, the cemetery is frequently vandalized because of its remote location, and disinterred coffins, defaced gravestones, and animal sacrifices have been found on the grounds.

The cemetery was founded in 1864 for the use of immigrants building the Illinois-Michigan canal. In the 1920s and 1930s, gangsters often dumped their victims in the cemetery's lagoon. The cemetery's most famous ghost is the White Lady (also called the Madonna of Bachelor's Grove). Carrying a baby in her arms, she is seen only on nights of a full moon. She seems to be somehow related to a white-robed, monkish figure that also appears from the lagoon. Ghost lights and phantom vehicles are also common in the area. In all, more than two hundred ghost sightings have been recorded in the cemetery's long history.

Chicago Specimen Collection

Begun in 1931 after the Sewer War, the Hoffmann Institute Serological and Type Specimen Collection (generally called simply the Chicago Specimen Collection) has collected, analyzed, and stored more than 400,000 specimens of paranormal, mutant, and otherwise unusual biological entities—from alien bodies to ichor recovered at crash sites, blood samples to viruses, and sea monsters to noncancerous but regenerative human cell lines. If it needs storage in deep freeze or in formaldehyde, the field agents send it here.

In addition to preserving physical samples, the collection does a great deal of genetic research. The work includes compilation of known mutations and known instances of human bioengineering, as well as medical testing of vaccines, diagnostic techniques, and antigens that may help fight epidemics of various alien diseases. Because much of this work is classified, the site has been largely kept a secret from the government. What the Institute knows about the U.S. Army's biowarfare experiments, cloning studies, and continuation of Nazi eugenics studies wouldn't be healthy for Institute staff if it were more widely known at the Pentagon.

Lower Wacker Drive

Home to rats and litter and crushing rush-hour traffic, Lower Wacker Drive is a street that runs as a subterranean parallel to Upper Wacker Drive. It's also home to more than a few sites of strangeness and has connections to the Chicago sewers, electrical conduits, and the entire understory of a huge number of skyscrapers. Inhabiting this warren of technology is a small tribe of mole people (see *Chapter 8: Xenofoms*), passing as homeless humans during daylight hours.

This particular group has an advantage over their kindred souls in New York, Paris, Moscow, and elsewhere: Among them lives a powerful adept—jokingly referred to as the Mole King—who seems to believe that he and his disciples are somehow entitled to the goods of the surface

world. As a direct consequence of this belief, he preaches that his followers should raid bank vaults, jewelry shops, and other high-profile, high-value targets, then return to the depths with their loot. So far, the mole people remain unconvinced and have stuck to their traditional low-profile lives, avoiding the attention of law enforcement.

Sample Organization: The United Nations

The founding of the United Nations on October 24, 1945, was more than an attempt to streamline international diplomacy; it also established a forum for global concerns best kept out of the public eye. As a result, the UN chartered several organizations with international reach, including the Davos Commission, the World Health Organization, and a Quick Response Force that could be deployed via helicopter to trouble spots around the globe. On the surface, the UN seems like nothing more than an idealistic but relatively naive effort at internationalism. In truth, the everyday bureaucracy, bungling, petty infighting, and nepotism that characterizes the United Nations provides a perfect cover for much deeper plans. Underneath the façade of wasted funds and policy wrangles, a few conferences have helped shape the human response to the rising tide of dark matter paranormalism. More significant, however, is the fact that the UN intends to position itself as a true global governmental body for the new millennium—the New World Order.

The phrase "New World Order" comes from the works of H. G. Wells, who published *The New World Order* nonfiction volume and *The Open Conspiracy*. Following in his footsteps decades later, in 1991 the Brandt Commission—including President Bush, Robert McNamara, and many others—met in Germany to outline the New World Order. They defined the NWO as "a supranational authority to regulate world commerce and industry; an international organization that would control the production and consumption of oil; an international currency that would replace the dollar; a world development fund that would make funds available to free and Communist nations alike; an international police force to enforce the edicts of the New World Order."

This effort hasn't gone entirely unnoticed. Though they are often dismissed as crackpots, a few people have kept careful records of strange black helicopters moving through the skies of United States, Canada, and Europe. A few journalists and politicians have seen the dim outlines of the New World Order, the world government that many regard as a crucial step toward opposing the encroachment of dictators, military rulership, and alien infestation. Indeed, in the new millennium, it seems that the world population will finally see the end of polynationalism and the beginning of mononationalism, just as polytheism was replaced by monotheism. Entrenched power groups each seek to put the entire world under their control. But how do they intend to shape a response to the Greys, the ever-increasing number of paranormal events, and the rising population of psionically gifted humans?

Part of the answer is clearly military. The UN's standing army numbers more than half a million, in addition to a rapid response force of 100,000 crack troops and scattered peacekeeping forces totaling 275,000. These regiments have been deployed on the orders of the Secretary General to suppress the kinori in Africa, the sasquatch in the U.S., and the alien invaders just about everywhere. They answer to the Office of External Affairs, a small bureau of the UN that occasionally cooperates with the Hoffmann Institute in investigating alien activities.

Sample Xeniform: Mothman

The mothmen are a species of flying, vaguely insectoid creatures most famously sighted in Point Pleasant, West Virginia in 1966 and 1967. While their haunting red eyes, huge wings, and antennalike ears leave quite an impression on eyewitnesses, those who have seen mothmen are curiously terrorized by the sightings, suffering recurrent nightmares, flashbacks, and even insect phobias for years thereafter. This has been the case even when the witnesses caught only brief or obscured glimpses of the mothman, and when they suffered no physical harm.

Description: Mothmen are bipedal flying humanoid creatures with a pair of small forelimbs, powerful sweeping wings, and complex, double-jointed legs that end in clawed feet. A typical mothman stands almost a meter taller than an average human but weighs in at only 40 to 50 kilograms—a mothman skeleton is mostly composed of light, strong cartilage.

The mothman head is wide and round, with large reddish compound eyes and crowned by two pointed ears. The lack of a snout or pronounced beak makes them seem rather owl-like, but their hinged jaw is quite large enough to swallow small mammals whole. Their hearing is as keen as a cat's, and their night vision is superior—but bright daylight virtually blinds them.

Mothmen are capable fliers, able to launch themselves into the air and easily stay aloft in any environment with a reasonably thick atmosphere (0.5 atm or higher) and relatively light gravity (1g or lower). Having the ability to fly means that mothmen never suffer damage from falling, as long as they remain conscious and able to control their descent.

Encounter: Mothmen avoid physical confrontation. If violence becomes necessary, mothmen prefer to strike first and strike hard. In addition to their ability to fly, the mothmen's keen senses reduce darkness- or obscurity-based combat penalties by 2 steps (this cannot grant a bonus). However, their eyes are quite sensitive to bright light, and mothmen suffer a +1, +2, or +3 step penalty to all actions undertaken in Ordinary, Good, or Amazing illumination. Though sunglasses, dark goggles, or visors could negate these penalties, most mothmen do not use such devices.

Habitat/Society: Mothman social organization is fairly simple. The mothmen are an extradimensional species of nomadic hunters, moving from place to place when humans (or other native species) force them deeper into wilderness. Family ties are quite strong, even to very distant relations, and the family leaders serve as counsel to the tribe's chieftain.

Mothman shamans are powerful adepts, able to manipulate the tide of dark matter to serve their needs (treat as Shamanism Faith FX). For generations, these shamans have told and retold the legends of the Dark Tide. Mothman legends and lore are invaluable in identifying and fighting

Mothman Game Data

STR 9 (2d4+4) INT 7 (2d4+2)

DEX 11 (2d6+4) WIL 12 (2d4+7)

CON 8 (2d4+3) PER 8 (d8+3)

Durability: 8/8/4/4 Action check: 11+/10/5/2

Move: sprint 20, run 12, walk 4, fly 40 #Actions: 2

Reaction score: Ordinary/2 Last resorts: 1

FX energy points: 5 (shamans only)

Attacks

Wing strike 5/2/1

d4s/d4+1s/d4+2s LI/O

Talons 11/5/2 d4s/d6w/d6+1w LI/O

Defenses

+1 resistance modifier vs. ranged attacks

+1 WIL resistance modifier vs. encounter skills

Skills

Athletics [9]—*climb* [10], *throw* [10]; Unarmed [9]—*brawl* [11]; Acrobatics [11]—*fall* [12], *flight* [14]; Stealth [11]; Stamina [8]; Knowledge [7]; Awareness [12]—*intuition* [14]; Interaction [8].

FX Skills (shamans only)

Faith FX (Shamanism)—*dreamwalking* [15], host dance [15], hunter's stare [14], trance visions [11].

paranormal creatures; in some cases, mothmen know more about Earth's "mythic" monsters than humans do.

The species' goals, origins, and relationship with other paranormal species are unknown. A few researchers at the Center for Xenological Studies have suggested that they are assassins for the Greys, based on their killing claws, stealthiness, and proximity to a few cases of cattle mutilation and abduction. Other, more theologically oriented investigators such as the Knights of Malta claim that they are fallen servants of the elohim. Still others, primarily at the Institute, believe that they are a mutant strain of the Greys themselves, built as a subspecies genetically adapted to the hot, heavy atmosphere of Earth.

Mothman sightings in the historical record include mentions among the Anasazi of the Southwest U.S., the aborigines of Australia (who call them the "Wandi"), and the Dogon of West Africa; all descriptions note the species' use of paranormal abilities resembling shamanistic magic. Given the archaeological similarity of Anasazi and Dogon (both tribes built cliff dwellings), it might be inferred that the mothmen competed with the human populations for preferred cliff dwelling or nesting sites.

The mothmen have avoided human contact for centuries, and their technology has hardly advanced in millennia. As a result, they are comfortable with PL 0–3 technologies but hopelessly inept with inventions of PL 4 and up (the equivalent of the 4-point Primitive flaw).