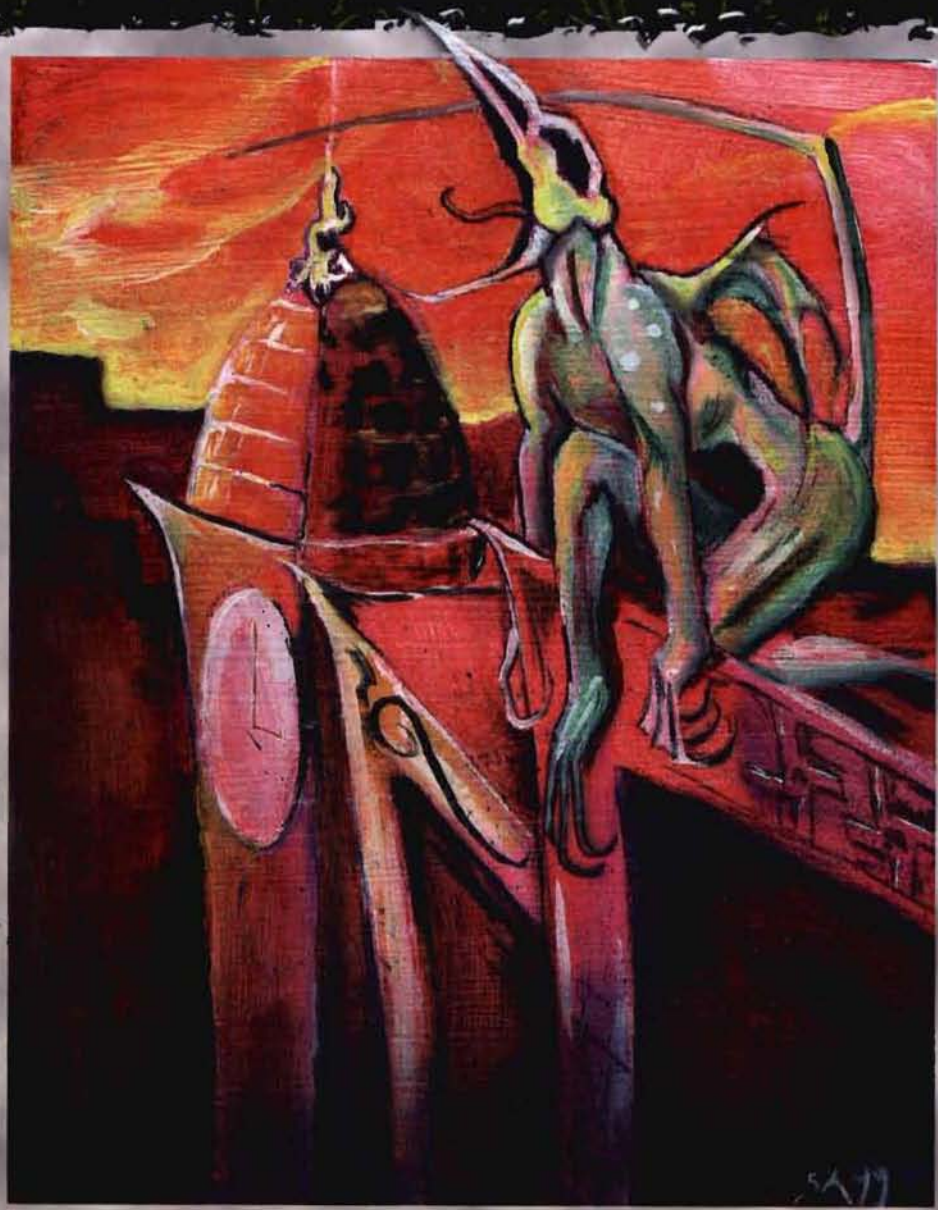


THE SHADOW FALLS™

SIN CITY: VOLUME ONE



AN ADVENTURE FOR THE WORLD OF DARK CONSPIRACY

**THE
SHADOW FALLS**
SIN CITY: VOLUME ONE

**by
Mike Marchi**

An adventure for the world of Dark Conspiracy

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For my wife Becky, who never stopped believing I could do this.

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FOREWORD

When Dynasty Presentations decided to release *Dark Conspiracy Second Edition*, we spent a lot of time talking with the elite gamer who still played in this dark world created by Lester Smith. We asked for a wish list and then threw out the ones that would cost us over a million dollars to produce. -)

Of all the requests, the number one thing that *Dark Conspiracy* needed was a decent "backstory". The second was to create a place where referees could place PC's that truly represented the world of *Dark Conspiracy*. So, as line manager, I called upon three talented individuals: Mike Marchi, Geoff Skellams, and Marcus Bone and we began to brainstorm. Together we created a place that a referee could unfold a plotline that would really set the world of *Dark Conspiracy* apart from any other RPG out there.

Over the next year-and-a-half we will present six books for you to play, create, and explore. Each book will expand the *Dark Con* universe in new directions, covering mega-corporations, the underground, new creatures, new weapons, and endless possibilities for really cool gaming.

Dynasty will continue to listen to your wants and needs as we continue to expand the conspiracy. On behalf of everyone who helped create this new series, we welcome you to New Centennial, or as the locals call it, "Sin City."

Thanx,
Ken Whitman
Product Manager, DPI

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CITY SOURCEBOOK

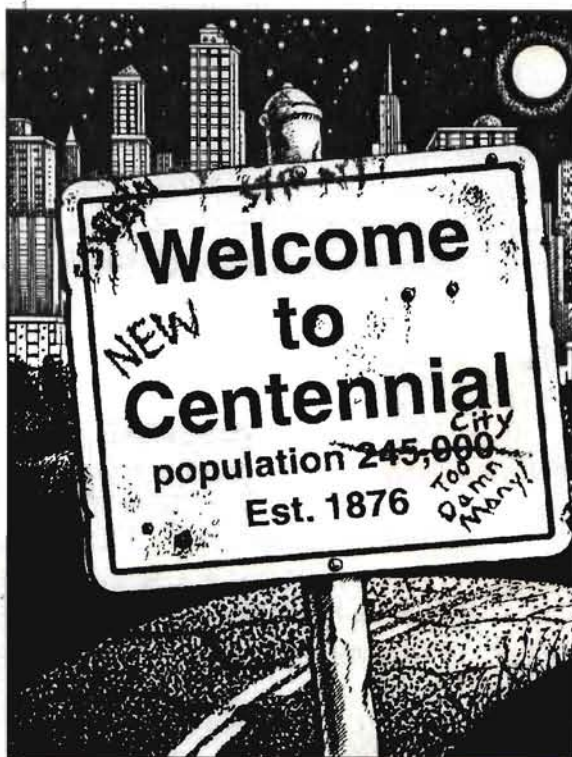
INTRODUCTION

This section of the book is intended to be a companion supplement for the "Sin City" line of adventures for Dark Conspiracy 2nd Edition. It details the metropolis that serves as the backdrop for all six adventures in this series. Each book will contain a supplement section like this, detailing a different aspect of the city. This first adventure supplement gives a broad overview of New Centennial City. By the end of the series, you will have a fully detailed campaign environment that you can continue to use for your own adventures.

LOCATING NEW CENTENNIAL CITY

New Centennial City—or "Sin City" as its inhabitant's call it—is like many cities found in popular comic fiction—it is not real. There is no such city anywhere in the world today. Further, it is located in no specific part of the world. This is completely intentional.

New Centennial City is intended to be a global resource for Dark Conspiracy Referees everywhere. It can be located anywhere the Referee wishes to place it. For continuity with other modules to come in this series, it is imperative that you place "Sin City" on your map adjacent to a large body of water—a wide river, an inland sea, or even an ocean. It is recommended that you place the city somewhat close to a geographic area with which you are familiar. It will make describing the surrounding area that much easier for you.



SIN CITY: VOLUME ONE

You may wonder why we have decided not to pinpoint New Centennial City's exact location. The answer is simple. It is our intention to provide a living, breathing campaign environment for your Dark Conspiracy games, not to lock you in to a specific geographic region. Rather than force referees to adapt and move their existing games to another section of the globe, access to Sin City can be accomplished in game terms with a couple hours' travel. Further, once the Referee places New Centennial City on the map, it is for all intents and purposes within that campaign, a real place. The players need never know that it is a fabrication.

NEW CENTENNIAL CITY IN A NUTSHELL

New Centennial City does not draw its inspiration from any one place or culture. By design, Sin City it is an amalgam of many places. If the modern day world is characterized by a melding of cultures, the world of *Dark Conspiracy* is even more so. New Centennial City has grown and evolved from humble beginnings to a bustling trade center in a relatively short span of time. Because of that rapid growth, the city is the victim of poor urban planning and overcrowding – elements that combine to create the very poorest of living conditions. On the other hand, it is also a playground for the financially elite.

If, by the end of this supplement, you picture in your mind a city somewhere between Tim Burton's Gotham and the Los Angeles of Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* in appearance, you've probably got the right idea.

New Centennial City is a new Hong Kong – a place of trade, commerce, opportunity and relative sanity in an insane world. But it was not always thus. New Centennial City arose from much more humble beginnings...

WELCOME TO CENTENNIAL

Established in 1876, or whatever time is appropriate for the geographic region that you choose, the town of Centennial rose from the untamed wilderness surrounding it. The town sprang up on the shores of a major waterway, and thanks in large part to a natural channel which offered relative shelter from the swiftly moving waters, was quickly established as a shipping port. From its early days, Centennial was a trading center for the other nearby towns that lacked convenient access to the water. That relationship with the outside world has been maintained throughout its history.

The people of Centennial have gone to great lengths to create a peaceful community. Despite the constant traffic of goods passing through the trade center,

Centennial has managed to retain its small town charm. A picturesque hillside extends up beyond the town. In summer, the sunlight glinting off the water, the hillside covered in a lush carpet of grass and serving as a backdrop for the steeples and clock towers of the town, combined to form an image that would have made Norman Rockwell jealous.

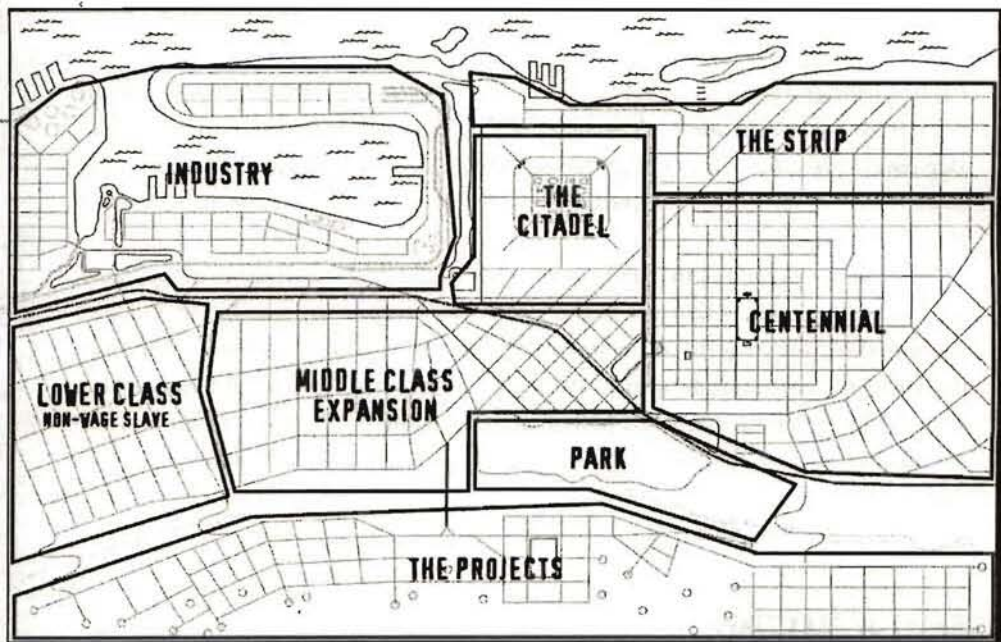
By the last decade of the 20th century, Centennial had stabilized to a population of around 245,000 inhabitants. The docks and supporting warehouse facilities accounted for the majority of employment opportunities in Centennial. The town itself was not located right next to the docks, allowing the people of Centennial to keep the hustle and noise of the harbor from intruding on the town itself. It was a good-sized town, which had a well-established and necessary place in the local economy.

Then everything changed...

ONSET OF DARK TIMES

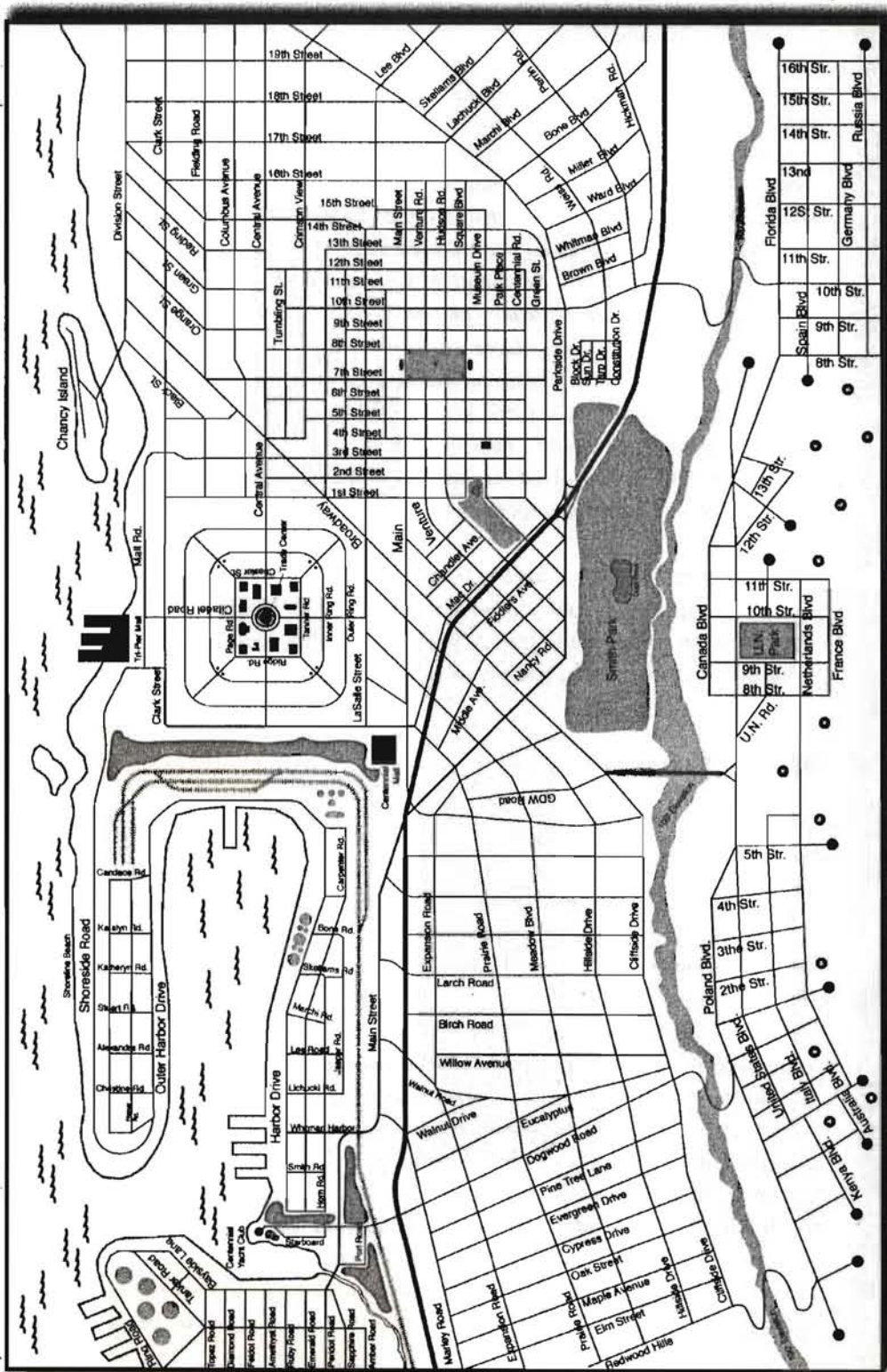
When the global economy collapsed in '93, it took the world with it; dragging it down into the depths of despair. Many corporations and most governments suffered fatal blows in that fateful market move. In the aftermath of the collapse, millions of government and private sector employees found themselves without work. Unemployment soared to an all-time high. Without gainful employment, it didn't take long for people to devour their savings. Soon, many were forced to try to sell their homes just to make enough money to eat – a near futile effort considering that without an active work force, there was no one buying. Foreclosures became regular occurrences as financial institutions tried calling in debts. Government subsidy programs, already pushed to the breaking point, failed under the sudden increase in demand. As the government scrambled to position itself to weather the worst of the storm, programs were cut, budgets were slashed and workers were downsized.

Those located in the outlying areas felt the crunch first. Anyone who relied on the outside world to supply material goods suddenly found supplies dwindling. Shipments came few and far between - if at all. Locating the necessities of life became a challenge few were able to face. The people in rural areas divided into two groups: those who thought they could survive unaided, and those who knew they could not. There were far more of the latter group than the former. These refugees from the countryside fled to the cities, hoping to find jobs and the basic necessities of life in abundance. What they found was overcrowded slums and never enough food to go around. They were unable to find work, and as such, unable to come up with enough cash to move on. They became trapped in a nightmare world of poverty.



MAP KEY

- TWO-WAY STREET
- - - UNDERGROUND TWO-WAY STREET
- 4-LANE HIGHWAY
- METHANE VENT
- CUL-DE-SAC
-  PARK
-  OIL TANK
-  RR TRACKS
-  WATER
-  POND/WATER



SIN CITY: VOLUME ONE

Unable to maintain support levels for individuals, the governments focused on helping as many of the destitute as possible. The government assisted housing complexes started out as a good idea. They didn't stay that way for long. The constant budget cuts reduced the number of federal inspectors to ridiculously low levels. Sometimes more than a year would pass between inspections of these facilities. A lot can go wrong in an overcrowded building in a year's time - too much to repair in a timely fashion. So violations were noted, and nobody would return to follow up and make sure the repairs had been completed. Unfortunately, there were too many tenants to shut the places down. Overworked, and lacking the authority to enforce their sanctions, the inspectors gave up trying and looked the other way.

With the government-assisted housing programs on the ropes, the way was paved for alternative housing - namely, corporate-assisted. These projects came in two flavors. The first involved corporations providing housing for their own workers. The second involved corporations selling food and shelter in return for proxy voting rights.

Some areas were too small to warrant the government assistance. In those areas, the corporations took a more active role. Corporations would actually buy an entire town, promising to provide jobs in return for lower operating costs. Such company-sponsored towns had advantages over their unsponsored neighbors.

NEW CENTENNIAL CITY

If not for the harbor, Centennial might well have succumbed to the collapse. Many of the neighboring towns especially those with an established manufacturing base, gained corporate sponsorship. Each of those communities became essentially manufacturing centers of a single product. Those products needed to be sold, and that meant finding a distribution point to the rest of the world. In the depression that followed the collapse, the cost of air travel became prohibitively expensive. Travel via the highway system through remote regions was becoming increasingly dangerous. As the people fled the outlying areas, and those areas degenerated into the Outlaw, it became necessary to supply guards for all overland shipments. The combination of cost of security and the relatively small payloads of the trucking industry took its toll on that distribution method as well. Which left rail and ship - and for good or ill, Centennial possessed both.

Ironically, it was its very status as a shipping hub that not only preserved Centennial through the depression, but also allowed it to retain its seeming autonomous status. No single corporation could afford to buy the shipping facility for its own use. Any attempt to do so was met and matched by the other com-

peting corporations, who also had an interest in the operation. After repeatedly subverting each other's attempts at sole control, they at last banded together to form The Centennial Trading Council. Each corporation appointed an officer to sit on the council and see that their interests were represented. To symbolize this unprecedented alliance, plans were drawn up for a corporate business center with a tall administrative tower at its heart. Encircling this tower, each corporation would build an office building of its own. The resulting citadel of power was to stand atop the verdant hill, overlooking Centennial.

Meanwhile, the collapse of the rural lifestyle continued apace. Swarms of people fled the countryside toward any place that looked like it could provide a livelihood. Although the corporate towns around Centennial could offer a guaranteed wage, many of the rural refugee's felt that path was a little too much like selling their souls to a master. In defiance to their would-be lords, they sought to make their own way in the free-market economy promised by the growing trade center. The borders of Centennial swelled, devouring the surrounding area, spreading out like a giant amoeba across the countryside.

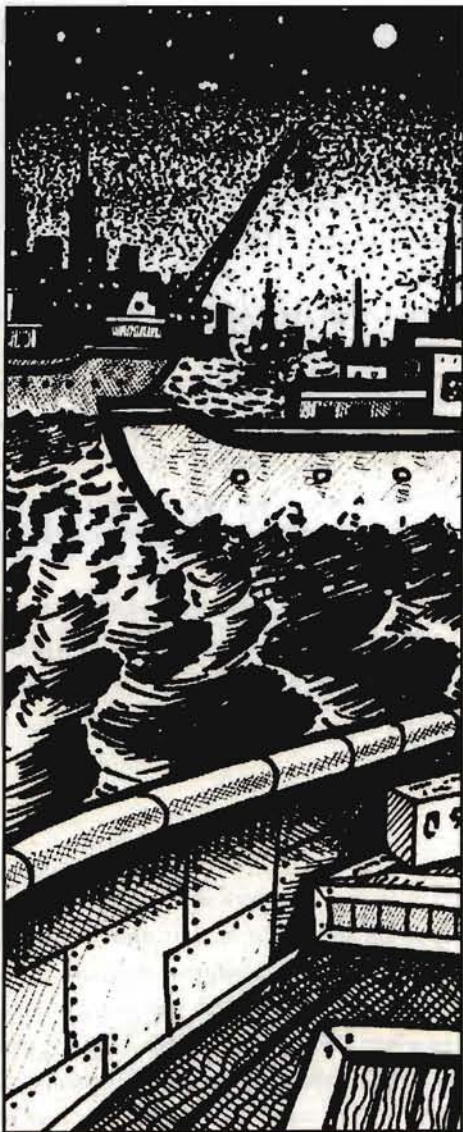
The construction of the Citadel was halted within two months of its onset. As it turns out, the hillside overlooking Centennial was honeycombed with subterranean caverns. That combined with the fact that the good people of Centennial had been using these caves as their trash dump for over a century rendered the site unsuitable for the grand structure of the Trading Center. Instead, construction was moved to a smaller region, much closer to the water. Then, in a gesture of abject bureaucratic indifference, the hillside became rezoned for the new public housing projects.

By 2010, the population of Centennial had grown to well over a million inhabitants. No longer content to have the new metropolis bear the moniker of its tiny predecessor, the Trading Council voted to rechristen it with the new (more appropriate) name and New Centennial City was born.

LAY OF THE LAND

New Centennial City sits on the bank of a major waterway. A deep, natural channel cuts into the shore, forming the perfect spot for a harbor protected from the raw currents of the water. The shore slopes gently upward from the bank of the water, creating a steep grass-covered hill. This hill is laced with a network of caverns which were cut into the rock long ago when the waters were much higher, and Centennial was just another wide cove along the shore. The cavern system had several well-hidden entrances scattered across the face of the hill. As a matter of

safety, the Centennial city council voted in the 1930's to plug all the known entrances save one. That entrance – the largest, was used as an access point for the town's landfill. Each year, millions of tons of garbage and waste were deposited in these deep labyrinthine caverns. Although this move preserved the surface beauty of Centennial, it doomed the city to a future of costly methane mitigation systems.



NEW CENTENNIAL CITY ARCHITECTURE

The architecture in New Centennial City tends toward the gothic. There are ornate columns and mill-work around the roofline of the newer buildings - many of which were constructed with a retro-style hearkening back to a simpler time. Some of the common architectural cues include (but are not limited to) stone gargoyles mounted at key points on many of the buildings. It is not uncommon for a single building to have one of these statues on each rooftop corner. This is especially evident in The Citadel and outer reaches of The Square.

The imagery of the gargoyle dates back a hundred years to the early days of Centennial. Native burial grounds featured carvings of these creatures to serve as sentinels against unwanted intrusion. The sentiment was apparently carried over to early Centennial architecture, and later incorporated into New Centennial City expansion architecture. Most of the inhabitants of Sin City just take the presence of the carvings for granted.



NEIGHBORHOODS OF SIN CITY

NEIGHBORHOOD: THE SQUARE

This is the original center of Centennial. On one of the rare days when the sun shines, and the sky isn't blotted out by gray sooty clouds, a person standing in the center of The Square would almost believe that Centennial survives in its pre-collapse form. Great pains were taken to ensure that the roots from which Sin City sprang were preserved. The Square itself consists of a three block long quadrangle. The Centennial Courthouse, a large, white-column building with an ornate capital-dome, dominates one end of the quad. The Centennial Town Hall, an even larger white brick building fills the opposite side of the picturesque, park-like quadrangle. Today, Centennial Hall is the site of many of New Centennial City's premiere cultural events. Opera, ballet, orchestra recitals and plays are just a few of the many events one can attend in this grand old building. A large fountain sits in the center of the square, providing a perfectly timed show of directed waterspouts and color-shifting lights. The outer edge of the square is ringed with tall trees, which enhances the peaceful-ambiance. The most coveted retail spaces in all of New Centennial City are the forty-two shops that comprise the storefronts just across from both of the entrances of the park. Each of these shops is housed behind a cultured marble façade, accessed via impeccably maintained sidewalks, and separated from the tree-lined park by the vintage cobblestone streets. The storefronts for the first few blocks radi-

ating out from the square are the original business district. Office and retail space in these buildings is slightly more reasonably priced than equivalent spaces adjacent to the park. It is interesting to note, that the buildings directly next to the square are only a single story high, while the farther out one travels, the taller the buildings get. City ordinance prohibited the construction of any building so tall, that a person standing at the center of the square (where the fountain is located), and gazing up at the adjacent rooftops could see a taller building. This resulted in a definite sloping effect up from the center of the park, as each subsequent block produced buildings one floor taller. This ordinance applies only to the original section of Centennial, and is still enforced today. It has been said that to a person looking down upon The Square from one of the corporate spires of The Citadel, the center of Centennial looks like a gently sloping dish with the fountain at its center. In a show of civic pride, the Mayor of New Centennial City holds his office in the original Centennial courthouse.



NEIGHBORHOOD:

THE WATERFRONT

Row upon row of docks jut out into the water, forming an artificial platform on which the bulk of New Centennial City's livelihood passes. A half dozen huge cranes stand sentinel over the ancient piers. All of the docks lie within the boundaries of the deep natural channel which branches inland from the main waterway. The docks themselves are owned and operated by the Centennial Trading Council – a participatory ruling body consisting of board members from the largest corporations doing business in Sin City. The largest of these corps, have private warehouse facilities adjacent to the docks. The smaller businesses rent space in the large public storage facilities. Security is tight. Sabotage, although rare, is always on the minds of the corporations.

At the opposite end of the harbor, the channel narrows dramatically. This

is where the Centennial Yacht Club is located. This exclusive facility, located adjacent to the expansion, and just down the street from The Citadel is buffered from some of the less savory areas of Sin City - with the possible exception of the docks themselves. All manner of watercraft can be found in the Yacht Club. The largest of the luxury craft is *The Centennial Star*, the private party barge of the Trading Council. At least once a month, *The Centennial Star* heads out to sea for an evening of drunken merriment. It is considered the highest honor to receive an invitation to board the 120-foot, three-story ship.

NEIGHBORHOOD: THE STRIP

If you're looking for the center of Sin City's nightlife, you'll find it at The Strip. Beginning at the edge of the Waterfront, and skirting the edge of old Centennial, The Strip is home to nightclubs, bars, casinos, arcades, tattoo parlors, and brothels. The Strip takes its name from the fact that it fills the narrow strip of land between the original borders of Centennial and the water. Just offshore at the center of the strip is a long sandbar that barely qualifies as an island. In the relative shelter provided by this land, several businessmen have constructed another dock facility. This one is used for floating casinos and tour boats. A number of artificial breakwaters have been installed along the edge of The Strip closest to the harbor channel. Behind these breakwaters, fishing boats, both commercial and charter are berthed. At night, the entire waterfront along The Strip is alight with every color imaginable. Most of the buildings at the water's edge are restaurants that have large dining rooms with windows overlooking the water.

The nightlife along the streets of The Strip is teeming with activity. Pushing through the crowds, one can pass on a given block, beggars, prostitutes, street vendors, musicians and preachers. Anyone with a cause to champion or a speech in search of an audience can be found standing atop a plastic milk crate along the streets of The Strip. By the same token, anyone with a cause to forget, or steam to blow off is probably there as well, partying like there's no tomorrow. The police who patrol The Strip don't try very hard to enforce order. As long as nobody is getting killed, they're usually content to stand by and watch the crowds flow past.

NEIGHBORHOOD: THE CITADEL

In stark contrast to both the quaint charm of The Square and the overcrowded nightmare of The Projects is the true center of power in New Centennial City. The Citadel boasts a dozen new skyscrapers clustered around a single spire which vaults upward into the gray, overcast sky. Atop the spire is the meeting place for The Trading Council. Each corporate tower is architecturally unique. They were each built within the last decade of Sin City's history and draw upon designs from famous structures in larger cities. The upper levels of the corporate towers hold the offices.

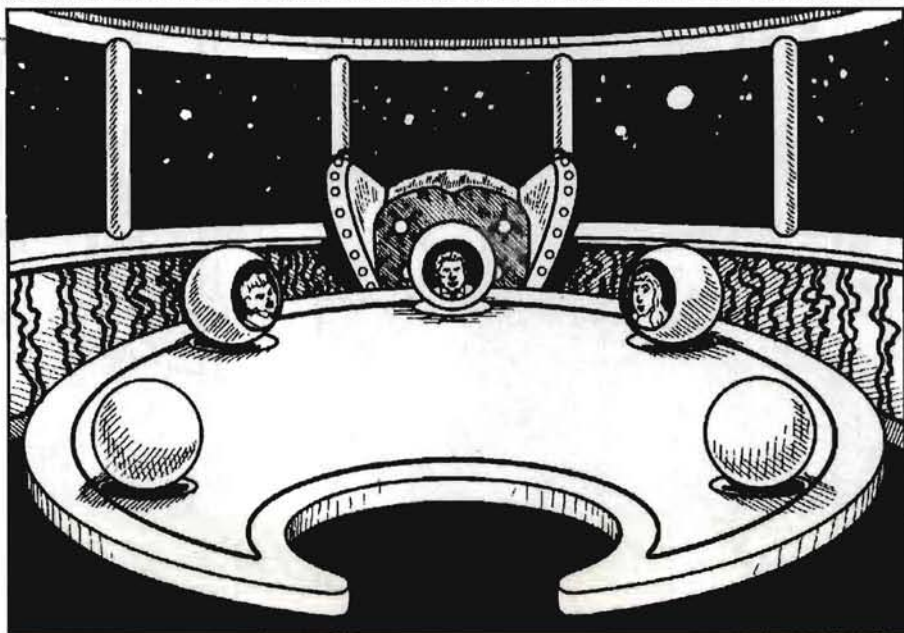
Here, high above the sprawl of Sin City, the deals that keep commerce alive are conceived and executed. The lower levels of the towering skyscrapers are rented out to the well established, as well as the up-in-coming young executives of the corporation that owns the tower.

When plans were first drafted to give Centennial its booming rebirth, the Citadel was intended to be located upon the hillside overlooking the sprawl of the city below. But fate was not on the side of the privileged, and it was soon discovered that the network of caves beneath the hills made the construction of towering skyscrapers problematic at best. Construction of several structures had already begun when the geological survey results finally found their way from the lowest members of the corporate hierarchy up to the top brass. It was not a happy day for anyone – particularly the unfortunate geologist who conveyed the news. It is rumored that he was buried deep within the hill along with the anchors for the first of the gigantic methane towers. Urban myth notwithstanding, The Citadel was rezoned closer to a considerably smaller area between the docks and The Square. As a result of the blunder, the layout of the Citadel does not flow well with the rest of the urban sprawl. It looks unnaturally tall, ringed with a halo of raised roadbeds and parking structures. At night, the citadel glows with the careless lighting of the well-paid executives who work and play there.

NEIGHBORHOOD: THE TRADE CENTER

The Centennial Trading Council meets in-absentia in the tallest tower of the Citadel known as the Trade Center. Not much is known about the day-to-day business conducted in the Trade Center. Any citizen of New Centennial knows that each mega-corporation operating in Sin City has a member on the council. Rather than have these powerful men and women actually be located in New Centennial, they are all linked via videoconference to the boardroom of the Trade Center. This is not to say that none of them actually live in the city. Video conferencing allows the key members of the council to maintain a certain level of mystery about where they are and what they are up to. Whether the board member is traveling abroad, or enjoying a cigar in his own living room, nobody knows. Due to the cutthroat nature of the business climate in Sin City, the council members agreed long ago that they should never all be located in the same place at the same time. Some say the reason for the security is it would be too easy for a rival power to take out the entire ruling body of New Centennial City. Those in the know think it may be that the ruling council was also wary of even its own members.

The council gathers whenever a new policy decision needs to be made. From their virtual Star Chamber, they hand down rulings and decrees that filter down through the corporate hierarchies – ultimately appearing as reality on the city streets below.



Ironically, the poor and underprivileged people who live in The Projects up on the hill provide the power for the council, by the sale of their proxy votes in return for food and shelter. Each corporation on the council has at least one public housing unit in the Projects. The votes that they control are used in federal, state and local elections to steer the outcomes in the direction that would be most favorable to the corporations. Thus the key to the corporation's power base lies with those poor bastards up on the Hill, who struggle for survival beneath the guttering smoky flames of the methane towers.

NEIGHBORHOOD: THE PROJECTS

The hill overlooking the city is home to the bulk of Sin City's population. The buildings in The Projects are stark and uninviting. They tower over the garbage-strewn streets and bear silent witness to the suffering of the unfortunates packed inside their utilitarian walls.

The most noticeable feature of the projects would have to be the odor. The methane produced by the decay of a century of garbage in the underground landfill permeates the entire area. In the summer months, the air gets so thick with the smell of decay that only the people who live up on the hill can stand to be outside without some sort of breathing filter. When the cooler weather comes, the speed of decay slows somewhat, so the smell is more bearable, even for the uninitiated. To combat the methane buildup, the city has installed a dozen methane venting tow-



ers. These huge pipes are sunk deep into the hill and tower over the tenements, spouting a constant flame of burning gas. The towers are the second most noticeable features of the Projects.

The people who live in The Projects are the lowest level of the social order in Sin City. The unemployed and unemployable all wind up here eventually. Not to mention those members of society who just want to disappear. There are a number of inhabitants in the low-income housing projects that are there by choice, trusting that their enemies will not be able to find them among all the human flotsam. The Projects have the highest population levels of any other sector of the city. The stark utilitarian buildings that make up the projects are like little beehives of humanity. The narrow halls are lined with doors to tiny cell-like apartments. The ceilings are usually lower than normal, allowing the builders to squeeze a few extra levels of habitation out of the building. Living conditions inside the buildings ranges from depressingly deplorable all the way up to barely adequate. The latter is the exception to the rule.

There are three kinds of housing available in the projects. The first is the corporate housing. These are the largest and nicest of the buildings. These are the people who finally succumbed to the hopelessness of their situations and sold their proxy voting rights to one of the corporations. In return for this privilege, the corporation will provide food, a small apartment, and an even smaller allowance. But each one of those proxies is key to the power that is wielded from the heights of the council chamber, so the corporations have ample incentive to keep the housing projects operating. This is another example of corporate democracy in action.

The second type of housing is the government-subsidized housing. The conditions in these tenements are by far the worst. The people who live here receive no money. They are fed, but the amount of food delivered to a given building has remained constant, despite an alarming increase in the number of mouths to feed. This is due largely to a shortage of government housing inspectors. The funding for these programs has been cut to the bone, and until a government employee can get in to perform an updated report on the building population, no modifications to the supply schedules can be made. So the people who live in these gray walls are bordering on starvation. Many of them will do anything to supplement their diets. Garbage picking and rat hunts are common ways of supplementing their dietary needs.

The third type of housing available are the shanties. These cardboard and tin hovels can be found in any alley or widening of a sidewalk, as well as a few former parks. They are the homes of the homeless, and being homeless in New Centennial City means you're either too proud to take the government handout, or without residence to sell voting rights. Thus, it's fair to say that most of the men and women who live in these rickety shacks have stories to tell.

Gang activity in The Projects has been on the rise for several years. The younger members of the populace, seeking an identity in the faceless system trapping their parents have banded together. The earliest gangs started as youth groups within the tenements. Membership provided a family atmosphere for these troubled kids. They would watch out for each other and do what they could to see that their members were provided for. They took on a sort of Robin Hood mentality - taking from those who appeared to have in more than their share, and distributing it to the needy in their group. At first, they just stole from the other people around them in the projects. Now as their membership swells, they are becoming increasingly territorial, and realizing that there is real money to be had in the city below. The gangers are just now beginning to venture into the suburban areas below, testing the waters to gauge the response of the authorities. For the moment, their fear of the New Centennial City police with their heavy armament is keeping the gangs in check. But that fear is starting to fade.

NEIGHBORHOOD:

THE METHANE VENTS

Deep in the earth beneath the hill, the waste and refuse of a century of habitation rots. The byproduct of this decay is methane, a gaseous hydrocarbon with a foul smell and a propensity to burst into flame. The methane would build up in the subterranean caverns under the hill until the pressure got high enough for the gas to seep up through the ground. This seepage wasn't much of a problem when the



hill was uninhabited. The prevailing winds in the area rarely directed the fumes toward Centennial. The worst that occurred was an occasional brush fire that burned with a higher than normal intensity, and showed a remarkable resistance to going out. The periodic razing of the hill meant that the only things that ever got a foothold growing on the slope were fast-growing grasses.

Today, asphalt and concrete have replaced the soft earth and verdant fields. The methane cannot escape so easily, and builds up underground. To relieve the pressure and prevent explosive outbursts, the city installed methane vent pipes. These tall, thin towers of steel, are sunk deep into the hill, and tower 200 feet over the nearest buildings that surround them. A network of support wires stretch down from the midpoint of the towers to the ground below, acting to steady the tall pipes. The top of each pipe is equipped with a burner, which controls the flow of venting methane in a steady stream of flame - most of the time. Methane, like most hydrocarbon compress easily into liquid form when under pressure. A buildup in the pipe occasionally compresses the gas into a liquid

form that then gets sprayed under pressure from the burner. When this happens, the steady flame at the top of the tower erupts into a billowing cloud of flaming liquid methane droplets. Most of the time the droplets burn out in the air or seconds after they touch the ground. But sometimes, they burn long enough to actually start small spot fires across the top of some of the nearby buildings. This has the effect of burning off some of the shanties that get built on the top of the buildings. Sometimes people die in the fires as well.

At the base of each tower is the main valve house - the location of the main shut-off valve for each pipe. Once each week, each burner is shut down and cleaned by maintenance workers. This constitutes dangerous work, but the job situation being what it is, there are always fresh recruits. They scale the tower via a ladder that extends the entire length of the pipe. At the halfway point, a narrow catwalk encircles the pipe. This is the location of the first of two navigational warning lights as well as a secondary shutoff valve. The very top of the pipe has another catwalk encircling the burner unit itself and another navigation light.

There are twelve methane vent towers spaced out across the face of the Hill. At night, the flames from the towers provides a constant flickering glow illuminating any part of The Projects that isn't served by the street lamps.

NEIGHBORHOOD: THE PLANT

Electric power in New Centennial City is provided via the New Centennial Nuclear Power Reactor facility, a small nuclear-reactor-located on the shore of the channel that leads to the harbor. The facility is state-of-the-art, having been brought on line in 2007. Eco-warriors, self-proclaimed vigilantes of nature, started taking on any source of contamination they could find. Their methods were harsh; their judgement was swift and terrible. Quiet protests became things of the past. This new generation of environmentalists expressed their dissatisfaction with vandalism and explosives rather than sit-ins and sanctions. The Trading Council decided to take a proactive approach, and implement a clean power plant. The reactor has operated without fail for five years, and most people take its existence for granted. Unfortunately, any backup power sources that the city had available, involved the burning of some sort of fossil fuel. Fortunately, the city already had an abundant supply of a naturally occurring gas available.

With all of the methane being produced beneath the hill of New Centennial City, it would be a shame to not exploit it to some degree. The methane pipes currently provide the venting necessary to keep the hill (and The Projects with it), from going up in an impressive ball of flame. Right now, the methane is simply burned off. A proposal has been placed before the Trade Council, to construct a power plant atop the hill that will be fueled by the venting methane. To test the feasibility of the plan, Vent Tower #4 has been modified. The secondary vent of the tower is closed to the point where the methane begins to compress in the shaft of the tower. As the pressure builds, the liquid is sprayed into the upper half of the pipe and ignited. The high-pressure flame spurt drives a turbine at the top of the tower, which provides electrical power. At least that's the theory. The construction phase of the project has been completed, but testing has been put on hold until after the new-year.

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NEIGHBORHOOD: THE CAVERNS

Away from the level shore along the water, the ground rises sharply up into a rolling hillside. The hillside is dotted with dozens of holes that lead down to a network of caves. The caverns were cut into the hillside millennia ago when the water was much higher. In the early days of Centennial, the caverns were considered dangerous, and were used as a landfill. For decades, the trash and waste of Centennial's growing population was packed into these openings. Eventually, all of the visible entrances were plugged, and were soon overgrown with scrub and grass. The hillside became a pristine expanse overlooking the town below. When New Centennial City began its growth, the idyllic hillside was slated as the perfect location for the city's corporate haven. The rich and well to do would live here in beautiful glass towers looking down on the working class citizens below. The construction of the dreamland began, but construction didn't last very long. The decaying heaps of refuse, packed into the caverns were out of sight, but not to be forgotten. The byproducts of the decaying trash issued forth a foul-smelling odor. It soon became clear that the high-class community slated for the location was doomed.

Most entrances to the caverns have been plugged, one way or another. The landfill entrance is the only original opening that remains uncapped. This large cave is guarded by the waste disposal company, and sits behind a high chain-link fence topped with barbed wire. Vent Tower #6 is situated above this cave entrance, shunting the flow of gas away from the opening. Each methane vent pipes lead directly into the cavernous depths. But the steady flame capping the towers tends to discourage people from using that as an entrance. It is rumored that it is possible to enter the caverns from the sewer system - a rumor that is emphatically denied by anyone working in City Services. However, the decayed corpses of four local children found in the sewers perpetuate the rumor.

NEIGHBORHOOD: THE EXPANSION

Between the Yacht Club and the Citadel, a long strip of land has been filled with upper middle class condominiums and apartments. These buildings tend to be tall, bright and clean. There is a substantial waiting list for housing in any of these prestigious structures.

When the Citadel was constructed close to the harbor, the corporations quickly realized that they wanted to have a sizeable percentage of their workforce close to the workplace. Some staff could be housed in the apartments in the corporate towers themselves, but the number of apartments needed far outstripped the number available. Thus the Expansion was born.

The Expansion is filled with designer apartment complexes and condominiums. Most of them make extensive use of glass and stainless steel. Some critics of

The Expansion have described it as "the inside of some gigantic dishwasher." Most of the inhabitants don't seem to mind.

Having an apartment in The Expansion is second only in status to an apartment in the corporate towers themselves. For most employees in the corporation, a condo in The Expansion is the most they can ever hope for. A lot of the yuppies will do just about anything to secure their own place.

As a result, the neighborhoods tend to be incredibly introverted. There is very little sense of community spirit within The Expansion, as everyone is more interested in making sure that they can hang onto what they have and not get evicted by the corporations. Neighbors may never bother to talk to one another, for they are seen as rivals instead of potential friends.

The police force keeps a fairly tight vigil on The Expansion, so the overall crime rates here are a lot lower than in some other areas of the city. However, The Expansion does have some extraordinarily high levels of domestic violence and drug-related problems. Police psychologists put the levels down to the high levels of stress that the employees are under.

There are a number of exclusive shopping malls in The Expansion that provide the latest trends to the local inhabitants. Most of them are incredibly expensive and well beyond the budgets of a large percentage of New Centennial City's population. Most of the malls are run by the different corporations and provide the latest in fashions and gadgets to keep even the most jaded yuppie enthralled.

NEIGHBORHOOD: SMITH PARK

Every city needs public recreational facilities. In Sin City, one of the largest is Smith Park, a heavily forested rolling landscape of nature tucked between the Citadel, the Expansions, the Burbs, and the Projects.

In 1905, Leslie Smith, a leading Centennial industrialist visited New York and fell in love with the concept behind Central Park. She was convinced that Centennial needed something similar and invested \$500,000 of her money to get the park up and running. The park bears her name to this day.

The park stretches for about a mile, and like Central Park, there are no straight lines within the boundaries. All of the walkways and cycle paths take meandering routes through the landscape, with trees blocking the view of most of the park. It is very easy for a person walking through Smith Park to forget they are in the middle of a city with over 1 million inhabitants.

The park was carefully designed and laid out, to take maximum advantage of the features of the landscape. Several small creeks run through the park, coming together to form the small duck pond in the center of the park. Surrounding the pond is a wide-open grassy area that becomes, on the weekends, a gathering place for a

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large number of people who come to throw balls or simply to relax on the grass under the open sky.

Leading out from the pond are half a dozen walking trails that lead through all of the regions of the park. It takes about three hours to fully explore the entire place. Most paths wander through the trees in a seemingly random fashion. A whole series of rumors exist explaining the significance of the placement of the park's paths and other facilities, but there are no official documents to support these claims.

The park is at its busiest on the weekends, as a large percentage of the city's population comes to the park to exercise. Joggers, cyclists and skaters all appear in large numbers. Several clubs exist to cater for the various needs of the park's patrons.

But Smith Park also suffers from the same problems as Central Park in New York. The complicated layout means that it has become a hot bed for the criminal element. The police force attempts to keep the park under some semblance of control during the daylight hours, but once night falls, Smith Park becomes a breeding ground of drug dealing and muggings. It also has one of the highest rates of abductions and murders, many of which are never solved.

The Smith Park Consortium, a small non-profit organization that was founded by Leslie Smith when the park was designed, continues to manage the grounds today. It is entirely responsible for the care and maintenance of the facilities in the park. This has been a real boon for the city, as the upkeep of the park is left entirely to the Consortium and this frees the city from any moral or financial obligation to look after it. Despite the downturn in the general economy, the Consortium still gets donations from the park's patrons and gets regular dividends from a series of wise investments. How the Consortium manages to get such good investment advice is the subject of much speculation, but audits of their records has failed to find anything harmful.

NEIGHBORHOOD: THE 'BURBS

Referring to the suburban region of New Centennial City as a neighborhood is a little misleading. For one thing, there is more than one suburb spreading out away from the original boundary of Centennial. This is where the regular middle class citizens of Sin City call home.

Before the rapid expansion of the city, most of the population lived in low and medium density housing in these suburbs. For most of them, they were happy with having a small patch of land they could call their own.

However, with the population explosion, the lack of available land for housing started driving up land values, interest rates and property taxes. The combination of those factors drove up rental rates, and increased the monthly mortgage payments to the point that most people could no longer afford the payments, and were forced to sell.

Before long, whole streets were being bought up by property developers and were bulldozed to make room for tall apartment complexes. People who had owned their own homes and tended their own yards for years, were reduced to renting much smaller apartments. There are still a few individual houses remaining, although there are fewer and fewer of them as the years roll by. Most of the surviving homes are larger models which are capable of renting out apartments to help supplement the payments.

Compared to the luxury apartments in The Expansion, the accommodation in the 'Burbs is small and spartan. Most of the apartment complexes use the same basic design, and the fixtures are cheap and mass-produced. As a result, they tend to fall apart within the space of a few years and are quite often not repaired properly.

There are also several large shopping malls in the 'Burbs. Some analysts have calculated that there are three major shopping malls within a one-mile radius of any given point in the 'Burbs. They all seem to be surviving though. Perhaps it is because the suburbanites have a reasonable amount of disposable income, and feel better about their lives when they are disposing of it.

Most of the people who live in the 'Burbs are simple wage slaves for the corporations. They go to work in the mornings, come home in the evenings, watch television for a few hours, then go to bed so they can start the cycle anew the next morning. The majority does not have any ambition in life beyond making sure they have enough money to keep the food on the table and the children sent off to school. Their idea of excitement usually revolves around a day of exercise in Smith Park on the weekend, or a couple of drinks at some sleazy bar in The Strip.

Crime is reasonably widespread in the 'Burbs, but nowhere near as rampant as it is in The Projects. Burglary is the most common crime by a big margin, with armed robbery coming in a distant second.

NEW CENTENNIAL CITY LAW ENFORCEMENT

NCC POLICE

The police in Sin City are no longer the public servants they were in the early days of Centennial. Budget cuts following the greater depression forced the Centennial government to scale back many public services. Fully, half the police force was laid off due to lack of funds to cover their salaries. In protest, the police went on strike, trusting to their unions to carry them through the worst of it. Unfortunately, the unions were already stretched to the breaking point by similar situations in cities across the country, and were unable to support the striking officers. Many cops were forced to seek other sources of income. Private security pro-

vided some income for the ex-cop. Others turned to the other side of the law to make a living. The change in morals was yet another example of the deterioration of society.

Meanwhile, the crime rate in Centennial skyrocketed. There were few enough officers still on the city payroll to cover the center of The Square, much less the suddenly expanding outer reaches. The citizens protested, and demanded action.

The newly formed Trading Council found themselves with a different problem. The shortage of cops meant there were fewer patrols around the shipping facilities. This forced them to hire independent security guards to patrol their interests down on the docks. Ironically, the majority of the guards they hired were former police officers, still in search of gainful employment. As the Citadel grew and began its transition to the gleaming playground of the upper class, it became a tempting target for the expanding criminal element. More guards were hired to police the homes and offices of the well to do. The patrol area of the growing security force was soon expanded into the upper and middle class suburban areas to protect the employees of the megacorporations that called the Citadel home.

The regular Centennial Police Department was relieved to see the security force expanding. It allowed them to limit the regions of the growing city for which they were directly responsible. They focused on what regions they could support, and left the rest. This proved to be the downfall of the police department. By allowing the Trading Council's security force to take over policing the city, they essentially proved that a traditional police force was no longer necessary. The budget for the public police department was revoked.

Despite the fact that most of the security force consisted of former cops, taking over full law-enforcement in Centennial was a daunting task. Rather than replicate the structure of the now-defunct police department, the Council applied the business strategies with which they were most familiar to the organization of the new police. The city was divided up into sectors, each of which was presided over by a section head. The section heads answered directly to the Trading Council for everything that happened in their sector, and took direction from the Council on matters of policy.

Each sector was subdivided into divisions, covering physical areas of a few blocks at most. Division Managers headed up each of these sections and answered to their respective Section Head.

The structure continued to be subdivided down until it reached the level of individual assignments. Tasks were routed to a single individual, who became a specialist in that aspect of the job. Usually, the security officers worked in pairs, allowing for a certain redundancy in responsibilities. Advancement in the force meant keeping your nose clean, and performing the task assigned to you. If someone else per-

formed your task for you, the implication was that you would be judged unnecessary. It was hoped that this would create a feeling of responsibility for the officers at the lowest levels of the management food chain. In reality, they were so far removed from the decision-making process that all they came to understand was the small portion of the job for which they and their partners were directly responsible. This led to the individual officers becoming fiercely protective of their own little demesne, forever watchful against somebody taking over something that was supposed to be their responsibility. To make matters worse, the penalty for attempting and failing to perform an action outside your authority was fairly severe.

As a result, the New Centennial City Police Force as a whole became highly segregated. The beat-cops, fearful of appearing to make a decision outside their authority, simply made no decisions for themselves. Nothing was attempted without approval from the next level up the corporate ladder. And orders from on high were executed without question. There were far too many people out of work in Sin City to risk your job by violating policy.

This attitude has actually worked to the disadvantage of the police force as a whole (although the upper management does not realize it). So fearful are the officers of stepping outside their realm of authority, that they will make no attempt to do so. The concept of performing actions above-and-beyond the call of duty is unheard of in the modern police force, for fear of the repercussions of failure. It is not unheard of for a cop assigned to patrol The Citadel to stand by without acting while a crime is committed in Smith Park – even if it happens in plain view! By the same token, an officer on The Strip may break off pursuit of a criminal who makes it beyond his assigned sector boundary, especially if it appears unlikely that doing so will guarantee capture of the perpetrator. At best, they will radio ahead for an interception from the neighboring sector.

Some positions in the police force do have multi-sector jurisdiction. Detectives for instance, can act in any sector, as long as they can justify the activity as part of an official investigation (and as long as there are no orders to countermand that authority). Even this high up the ladder from the beat cop, detectives often find themselves faced with contradictory directives from their managers.

MEDICAL CARE FACILITIES

The population explosion in New Centennial has been felt most acutely by the health care industry. Prior to the boom, there were only two hospitals in the City. St. Ignatius had been founded in 1927 and had served Centennial for over 75 years before it was outgrown and was demolished to make room for the city's expansion. Centennial General Hospital was built in 1956 and has been expanded several times since then.

Health facilities in the city fall into four basic groups. High-class facilities run by the corporations for their employees, general hospitals for the bulk of the population, assisted-funding facilities for looking after the health of the people in The Projects, and underground clinics.

All of the major corporations run health facilities for their employees. The facilities are all well run, with a well-trained staff, and the very latest equipment. The services they provide revolve around diseases of the rich, geared towards serious health problems caused by high stress occupations – heart attacks, strokes, cancer and drug overdoses—as well as a higher than average amount of cosmetic surgery. In addition, each facility also staffs a number of psychiatrists and psychologists to help deal with the mental problems of the corporate employees, such as depression. Most of these facilities are located one or two floors of the corporate towers in the Citadel and are not open to members of the general public.

Since the demolition of St. Ignatius in 2002, Centennial General Hospital has carried the responsibility for the care of most of the city. Originally owned by the city, it was sold to the MedAdmin Corporation in 2001. While they have upgraded the facilities, they have been criticized for shortening the length of stay for most patients and discharging them before they have fully recovered.

Centennial General has been expanded several times, and is currently adding a new wing with an extra one thousand beds to cope with the increasing patient loads. The emergency ward is one of the busiest in the country and waits of up to 12 hours are not uncommon for non-life threatening conditions. The staff is constantly under a great deal of pressure and the turnover of doctors is well above the national average. Facilities at the hospital are reasonably modern, although they are not in the same class as the corporate facilities in the Citadel. To supplement the care they provide, Centennial General has established a half dozen Urgent Care facilities around the city. These facilities keep normal business hours only (7:00 am to 6:00 pm), but do help absorb some of the patients that would otherwise go to the hospital.

Each of the assisted housing facilities in The Projects has access to health care facilities, to help maintain the health of their charges. Each clinic is heavily armored to protect against break-ins. The staff members at these clinics are forced to work extremely hard and are used to dealing with everything from gunshot wounds and drug overdoses to sniffles and surgery. Treatment at these clinics is restricted to the registered tenants of the buildings in which they are housed. Patient IDs are checked against the computer records and anyone not listed is turned away, regardless of their condition. Some critics have cited examples of people dying from massive injuries just outside these assisted clinics. They mock the clinics by giving them the motto, "A friend in need is a friend with a deed."

Spokesmen for the clinics calmly explain that while the incidents are regrettable, it is not up to them to provide health care for the entire population.

Because of the overloading of the medical system in the city, several underground clinics have sprung up in the city. The facilities at these clinics are below standard and hygiene is sometimes a problem because of their location. Their very existence is kept relatively secret to keep them from being overwhelmed. Plus, some of the medication has been "borrowed" from local clinics and hospitals. Most of the staff at these facilities is volunteers who are working because they feel for the plight of the population and want to do something to make a difference.

GETTING AROUND SIN CITY

Like most crowded cities, the regular road system is insufficient to handle the amount of traffic that would be generated if every single person drove a car to work. New Centennial City solved the problem with transit buses to provide public transportation. At first, the buses were fueled with gasoline or diesel powered motors, but a combination of factors combined to force those in charge of the transit system to rethink their decision. First, as the global economy plummeted, war in the Middle East sparked enormous increases in the cost of crude oil. This increase soon caused the price of gasoline and diesel fuel to skyrocket, which increased operating costs of the transit network dramatically. The second factor was the (seemingly unrelated) dissolution of the Environmental Protection Agency. Without the EPA standing watch over corporate pollution standards, the lobbyists for the corporate concerns thought they had finally won their hard-fought battles to freely dump their waste products into whatever hole or body of water they saw fit. Many rivers and streams became unable to support plant and animal life. Ozone layer depletion accelerated. Air quality and water purity decreased significantly. Unwilling to watch their planet become a diseased, malnourished place, the eco-terrorists threatened to make New Centennial City a battleground.

Taking a cue from the city of San Francisco, New Centennial City voluntarily converted more than three-quarters of the transit fleet over to electric power. They erected a grid of electric wires suspended over the roadway of most of the major streets in the city. The electric buses have two long poles extending from the roof, with metal rollers at the end. The rollers were held up via spring tension against a pair of wires suspended over the roadway. The rollers provide power to the bus' electric motor. Because the poles are long and can swing side to side, the bus is able to maneuver through traffic like any other car, as long as the rollers stay in contact with the wire grid. This system is not infallible. Sometimes, a driver will

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stray too far from the grid, or a gust of wind will cause the grid to shift at just the wrong time. When the rollers slip off the wire, the bus stops. For this reason, each bus driver is provided with a long non-conductive rod, which the driver of the bus can use to reseat the roller onto the grid. Many people in Sin City complain that the electric buses smell like a model railroad, or a bumper car. This odor is far more noticeable in the summer months.

A relatively new addition to the public transportation network is the Elevated Bus (ELB). A concrete roadbed is assembled, and placed atop concrete pylons along a given route. The roadbed has a single electric rail running its length. A specially equipped bus, straddles the rail, and travels along the raised roadbed. The buses on the ELB are considerably cheaper than commuter trains. They are also unaffected by traffic tie-ups on the normal streets below. For the moment, the ELB operates in only a limited region of Sin City. The Middle Class expansion area adjacent to the docks is attached to The Citadel and this in turn extends to The Strip. So far, the city planning commission has been unable to get permission to run the ELB to the middle class suburbs on the far side of The Square. By city ordinance, nothing can be constructed in that area that might detract from the historical view of that section of town.

PERSONALITIES OF SIN CITY

Peter Reetz, is a writer for *Libertad*, an underground newspaper. Peter is renowned for his unsuccessful propaganda attacks against the corporation and his bids to gain a government office that have been thwarted year after year. In an attempt to reach those willing to listen, he interviewed various personalities and then went on to explain why his grass roots campaign would be right for them. Included in the following sections are only the personal journals of Peter's politically inspired ranting.

PERSONALITY: THE PROLE

Some nights you can read a book by the light of the burning methane. Makes for a damn smelly neighborhood let me tell you. But I guess that's what you get for living up here in The Projects. Those rich bastards down in the Citadel didn't want the high country when they found out it stinks. No, they left it for us – the poor, miserable, huddled masses who don't have anywhere else to go.

The Projects are home to the dregs of the gene pool. Everybody who's nobody lives up here. It doesn't matter who you were before, if you come to Sin City with

nothing, then chances are you're going to end up looking down on the rich, smelling garbage and wishing like hell you were down there with them.

I used to run a small general store in a quiet farming town. That was before the agri-corps came along and bought up all the land and brought in their robots to do all the work. Suddenly, everyone in the area found themselves out of work and had to head off to the city to live. The corporate workers got supplied everything they needed by their corporate masters. There was no reason for anyone to come to my shop and actually pay money for anything. So in the end, the exodus of my fellow farmers cost me my livelihood as well. I had to pack it up and move to a city. This one. New Centennial City. Sin City. Hell on Earth.

Life up in The Projects is hard. There's a lot of people up here who try real hard to scrape out some sort of existence, and there are some that aren't doing a real good job of it. Muggings and murder are commonplace up here. Most times, the cops don't even bother coming to investigate anymore. Budgetary constraints they call it, or some rubbish like that. I call it fear, plain and simple. They're afraid to come up here and rub elbows with the garbage.

A good chunk of the people who live up here in The Projects are ballotmen for one corporation or another. Whole blocks of people who owe their lives to their corporate masters. As much as I hate to admit it, I'm one of them. I have no love for the corps, believe me, but I had to eat. Unlike some of the people up here, I'm not prepared to live off refuse or rats that I catch in the sewers. I've heard rumors that there are even those who venture into the caverns beneath The Projects and hunt for rats down there. I don't know if they are true or not.

Being a ballotman isn't that bad. You get a couple of meals a day, even if they aren't really any good. You can at least live on it. The corps also provides clothing and shelter. Both are cold and leak when they get wet. But I shouldn't complain. There are plenty of people out in the streets of the projects that envy even us. What a world!

Gangs run the streets up here. Well, they like to think that they do. The corporate supply trucks make it through to the prole apartment blocks unmolested, but that may be because of the heavily armed escorts. Apart from that, the gangs like to extort tolls before they let you pass through their turf. They can get pretty rough about it as well. They haven't gone as far as actually killing someone for not paying a toll, but it may only be a matter of time.

I've been hearing rumors that some of the gangs are arming themselves for some sort of turf war. I don't know what its about or even where in The Projects it's going to happen. That's what worries me. The last thing I want is to catch a bullet simply because I happen to be walking down the wrong street at the wrong time.



Everything's run down up here. It's been years since a repair crew even bother looking in this general direction, let alone bothered coming up here to try and fix something. The buildings are falling down around us. Broken and burnt-out cars litter the streets. Sometimes, they even become homes to some people. People just dump their garbage wherever they can find a place for it, which usually is where they happen to be standing at the time. Nobody cares.

I think it's the methane towers that are the worst

thing. The damn things burn twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. The constant hissing of the burner you get used to. It's the occasional big bursts of flame that explode from the tops of the towers that're the problem. Sometimes you see little droplets of fire falling down on the surrounding neighborhoods. Bill down the corridor used to be a gas technician. He thinks it's because the methane somehow gets liquefied and then forced through the burner. All I know is that every now and again the burning rain starts little fires in and around the projects. It's just another sign from God that we don't really belong here.

Boredom is the hardest thing about being a ballotman. There's nothing constructive to do. Basically the only option you have is to sit in your room day after day and just watch the drivel they show on the cable television. I've tried finding some sort of hobby, but it's just too hard. Most hobbies cost money. And, well, you know how much I've got of that.

I've thought about going down into the city and trying to find some way of starting another business. All I'd like is something small, just so I have some sort of feeling that I am doing something worthwhile. But I don't think I can. This city's too fast for me. I wouldn't be able to keep up with the demand that running a store round here would have. So I guess I'm going to be a guest of the corp for years to come yet.

The Prole as an NPC

The Prole is a typical example of the many thousands of people in Sin City who have signed their vote away to a corporation in exchange for food, clothing and shelter. They make up a sizeable proportion of the population of The Projects. Most of them are simply scared, sorry individuals who want nothing more than to be left in peace.

Level: Novice

Initiative: 1

Skills: As per Novice NPCs.

PERSONALITY: THE SHOPKEEPER

If there's one thing that people are just about always going to need, it's bread. I guess that's why I'm still in business when a lot of other people have collapsed and gone under. Been here in The Square for, oh, must be 30 years now. Seen a lot of people come and go. Seen this city change also, and not necessarily for the better.

I opened my bakery back in the early eighties. That was when the city was just called "Centennial." It was a lot smaller back then too. It didn't have the same sense of hustle and bustle that it has now and people were a lot friendlier. Times were tough back then as well, but at least people had enough time to stop and have a conversation with you, not like today.

I don't like what this city has become. These days, if the corporations say jump, most people say "how high?" It's ridiculous. It's getting harder and harder for independent tradesmen like me to earn a living. I don't want to be a part of some fancy chain of stores. I like the way I run my business and I don't need some young idiot fresh out of college telling me which "paradigm" I need to be following this week to "keep the focus on the core business." I sell bread. It's as simple as that.

I'm lucky I got into The Square when I did. I get preferential treatment now because I'm a long-term tenant. They like to at least ask me what I think before making any major changes to The Square. A lot of the shopkeepers in the newer shopping centers a couple of miles away aren't so lucky.

The Square hasn't really changed much in the past 50 years. They occasionally give the old girl a facelift, just to keep her looking bright and cheerful, but there's been nothing new built here for quite a while now. In some respects that's good. People respect tradition and I'm proud that some folks around here see that the history in The Square is worth preserving. In other respects it's bad. The coun-

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cil has been overly protective of her and that has driven away some of the customers. There's not as much public transportation to the square as there is to some of the bigger malls. There's almost no parking to speak of. So people find it easier to go to the big plazas; the ones with all the parking and that the buses and the ELB go to.

Still, some people prefer shopping in The Square. I've got customers that keep coming back to my store. Heck, Tom Einsenburg has been coming here since the very first day I opened. He won't buy his bread anywhere else. I've been lucky like that. I guess it's because I still try to treat each person as an individual. I've got a good memory for faces and names. If someone comes back to my store, I can usually remember them and call them by name. Maybe it's that more than anything else that keeps bringing people back.

Not everyone who runs a shop in The Square has been so lucky. Rent is cheaper in the big malls, so a lot of stores moved out of the square. Hasn't always been a good idea for all of them. The malls have a lot more rigid rules about things like operating hours, and that has killed off a few old friends.

There's an atmosphere to shopping in The Square that sets it apart from the rest of the city. It's more relaxed, more personal. I guess that's why people like it. It reminds the older folks of what the city used to be like before the corporations took

it over. Then there's the folks who think it's "too old-fashioned" or some other such nonsense. We get that from the corporate up-and-comers. It's not fashionable for them to be seen around here, so they try to convince everyone to go someplace else to shop.

I don't really care. I've got another ten years of working left before I retire. I'm still looking for someone to hand this place over to, someone who'll take care of it and run it the way I have. I'm not just going to sell her to some corporation for pocket change. No, I want someone who'll



respect the customers and treat them like people. That's what folks want around here. If they want to have some snotty nosed teenager mumble at them, they'll go to the malls. People who come here are a different class of people and deserve to be treated as such.

I'll be sorry to go though. I like to look out across the park each day and see the pigeons around the fountain. I like getting my morning paper from Joe's Newsstand on the next block. I like being able to wander round the downtown and think that this was how shopping was meant to be. I don't need the holographic projectors and the surround sound systems to draw in the customers. Old-fashioned neon is all I need. It's what we used back in the eighties and it's still good now.

If you're sick of the impersonal service in the chain stores, then try shopping in The Square. You might get a really pleasant surprise.

The Shopkeeper as an NPC

The shopkeeper is one of the dying breeds of businessmen who have been in Sin City since the "old days." He is a staunch traditionalist who's happy working in The Square and doesn't want anything to do with the corporations and what they stand for.

Level: Novice

Initiative: 1

Skills: As per Novice NPCs, plus Bargain 3, Business 4, Luck 3 and Observation 4.

PERSONALITY: THE BARTENDER

When most people think of Sin City, they think of The Strip. Apart from the Citadel, it's what gets most of the attention in this town. If nothing else, it's the part that never shuts down. It's also a really good place to find some trouble.

I shouldn't complain about The Strip too much. If it weren't for this little pocket of nightlife, I'd be living in The Projects. I came to New Centennial City with my degree in English Lit, expecting to find work. I did, but it wasn't what I expected. Tending a bar is not what I had in mind.

The Strip tends to make you think in a certain way if you hang out here long enough. Because it's open all the time, people flock to it looking for some way to escape from the boredom of their everyday life. Some of the stories I get told would blow your mind.

All sorts of people come into this bar. I had a couple of young corporate guys in their designer jeans sitting at one end of the bar last night, and a couple of leather-clad biker chicks sitting at the other. You just never can tell who's going to be in here from one night to the next.



Because you meet all sorts of nutcases from time to time, you need to be prepared for anything. I got mugged not long after I started here, back when I was young and green. That's why I now have a black belt and a loaded 9mm in my purse. I haven't needed to worry about being mugged since. Don't get me wrong. I understand it can still happen. I just don't worry about it anymore.

Sometimes I think that once you get to thinking like one of the locals, you get left alone. I guess that's what happened to

me. I stopped thinking like an outsider and started acting like I belonged here. Now I blend into the crowd with the best of them.

Most of us who work The Strip tend to do it in shifts. Because the place never really shuts down, staff needs to be on hand all day, every day. It's weird to be looking after a bar at 4:30 am sometimes, mainly because it can be busier than it was at 9pm the night before. It all depends on who's around really.

I'm probably painting an overly bleak picture of the place. I shouldn't do that. We have our regulars who only come to this bar and most of them are pretty decent folks. Some of them have nowhere else to go; others come here to soak up the atmosphere and to unwind after a long day at the office. Jonesy's like that. He works downtown in one of the towers in the Citadel. Just about every night after work, he comes here and has a couple of stiff drinks before he bothers to even think about going home to his apartment in The Expansion and contemplate his next little corporate coup. It's all about little corporate political mind games up there. And there are hundreds just like him, who come here just to escape. Without The Strip, they'd probably end up killing themselves - or maybe each other - in despair. I guess in some respects, we all come here for that.

Mind you, The Strip can also be party central. The yuppies who spend their

weeks slaving away struggling up the corporate ladder all come here on the weekend to get plastered and pretend to forget the crap they have put themselves through in the past week. They're the ones with all of the money. They show up in their fancy cars, in their fancy clothes, showing off their cash. Most of them end up staying the night in one of the local sleazy motels with some two-bit hooker because they're too blind-drunk to remember their cubby number. Then, come Monday morning, they're back in the office wondering why their lives are so damn meaningless.

But where there's money, there are people who expend a lot of effort to get their hands on it. You can buy just about anything you can think of on The Strip. By night, this place is crawling with fences, drug-dealers, pimps, prostitutes, gangers, gun-runners and occasionally some even less reputable folks. I heard that there was even a couple of Reapers working the area a while back. The cops only found a few left-over parts in one of the old warehouses on the edge of the docks.

The cops try to keep things under control, but it's gotten too far out of hand for them to do anything. They try from time to time to bust the occasional drug ring, or to arrest some hooker, but most of the time; they're just forced to turn a blind eye to the things that go on around here. Maybe it's for the best. I mean, what would Sin City be like without the sin? That was a joke. I can see you're getting edgy. Look. Don't let it get to you. Take my advice. When you walk down The Strip, keep your wallet in a zippered pocket, don't look around, and never, ever, make eye contact. You do that, and you'll be okay.

Me, I guess I love this place. It's taken me some time, but if you hang out here long enough, it grows on you. You come to love all the idiosyncrasies and you even miss it when you go home to crash. Sometimes I even end up hanging out around here after I'm done working. It beats the crap out of watching television.

Once in a while, I think back on that degree in English Lit, and I wonder why I'm wiping up spilled bourbon and yucking it up with these poor slobs. But people confide in bartenders. I'm probably reaching more people this way, than I would write a book, or teaching a class. And who knows. Maybe some day I'll write a book about this experience. Right now, it's much too interesting around here to stop.

The Bartender as an NPC

The bartender is typical of a person who earns her living in The Strip. There are hundreds of bars in the area, most being open 24 hours a day. That means there's a fair bit of work available for the right people.

Level: Experienced

Initiative: 3

Skills: As per Experienced NPCs, plus Act/Bluff 2, Observation 4, Psychology 2, and Streetwise 5.

PERSONALITY: THE COP

Working the beat in New Centennial City isn't what it used to be. Cops in this city need to be more than just a presence. Sometimes I think that there just aren't enough of us to go around. Other times, I know it for certain.

I've heard some of the sergeant's talk about what it was like back before the turn of the century. They reckon that Centennial was a much nicer place then. They reckoned it was a good size, a size you could manage. It had a much lower crime rate in those days. Of course, that was back when the world made sense.

These days, if we manage to keep the place from being in a constant state of riot, then we have things under control. With so many people out of work, that isn't always possible. Long gone are the days when the cops tried to keep the crime rate in the city down. There's not a lot we can do to stop burglaries and petty crime. We have a hard enough time trying to keep the big stuff, like the murder rate, down. It doesn't look good for us if we have one of the highest rates of murder in the country; it looks as if we aren't doing our jobs. And that makes us look bad to the big bosses.

That's another thing that's changed from the old days. We used to be called civil servants. Now we're employees of The Trading Council. "To Serve and Protect," that's our motto. Serve the Council and protect their interests. But you didn't hear that from me.

The fact of the matter is that there simply aren't enough cops to handle a population of this size. And so we get stationed where the Council wants us to go. The Waterfront, The Citadel and The Square are top priority, followed by The Strip and The Expansions. We don't get sent into The Projects much anymore. There was a time when they tried to keep those poor bastards up there in line. Now, it would take a surplus of cops to have enough to send some patrols up the Hill. And there ain't no surplus. We've reached a sort of threshold level, I guess. If too many more cops join up, then some corporate muckety-muck might get the bright idea its time to cull the sheep up there. People aren't interested in joining the police force when they know that they are going to have to face real danger and then not get any sort of bonus pay for it.

I'm assigned to patrolling the docks. All of the corporations have some sort of storage facilities down here, in one form or another. They get rather paranoid about protecting their little empires. As long as their goods are safely tucked away inside their cozy little warehouses, the corporations are happy.

Theft is a pretty commonplace occurrence on the docks. People are getting desperate these days. With so many people without a steady form of income, they tend to not care about what they do to scratch out enough money to survive. They will steal anything that isn't nailed down. That's where we come in. We all have certain zones that we patrol. That's one way that being a cop today is so different than it was before we became a corporation: the sector divisions. The city has been divided up

into sectors. Each sector has a budget and a management team that can allocate manpower and resources as they see fit. Naturally, the places that the big-wigs up in the Citadel care about the most, get the biggest budgets. As a cop, our pay is determined by how successful we are at keeping our sector incident-free. There are all sorts of incentive to keep your little corner of the world in line – but absolutely none to go above-and-beyond the call of duty. That's something you don't hear about too much these days. If I end of chasing a perp



into the next guy's area, then that leaves my sector exposed. Anytime something happens, it means I spend time after my shift filling out paperwork for the management. If they find out I wasn't at my post, it wouldn't look too good. As much as I hate doing it, I've had to let some bastards get away. They weren't in my area anymore.

Another difference in being a cop these days is the equipment that goes along with the job. Once upon a time, cops didn't bother wearing bulletproof vests. Today, we don't even think about going out on the street unless we are wearing full body armor and helmets. The beat-cops do, anyway. For some reason, detectives still dress in plain clothes, and drive around in crappy cars. The best they get is a Kevlar vest. But protection of some kind is a must. The perps don't necessarily run at the sight of the cops anymore. Nowadays, they tend to make sure that they fire enough lead in our direction that we are too busy ducking to chase them. I've been shot three times myself and I've helped bury two partners.

Not all the cops in town get that kind of action. The ones that get stationed in The Citadel have things a lot easier. Their biggest challenge is staring down a drunken office worker with a heavy briefcase. Sometimes I wonder how some of them would handle an emergency alarm in a rickety old warehouse in the middle of the night. They'd probably complain because they couldn't find the light switch, and go grab a donut somewhere.

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There are times when I lie in my bed and wonder if it's worth it anymore. The money I make as a cop is only barely enough to live on – granted, it's a little bit more than it was before the Trade Council acquired us. Most of my salary goes to rent. The hours I work are lousy. The agony of getting shot certainly isn't high on the list of benefits for this job. But something deep down keeps me hanging in there. I guess I still believe in the fundamental goodness of the human spirit and want to help maintain some sense of trust in that. I know that it's probably an exercise in futility, but it still means something to me. There are still a some really decent people who live in this city who need people like me to at least provide something resembling civil order.

The Cop as an NPC

The cop is fairly indicative of the type of person working in Law Enforcement in New Centennial City. Most of them don't have any misconceptions about fighting crime. They're basically just there to stop the place sliding any further down into depression.

Level: Veteran

Initiative: 3

Skills: As per Veteran NPCs, plus Leadership 6, Interrogation 4, Observation 6, and Streetwise 6.

Normal Armament: Kevlar vest and helmet, a stun stick, a pistol and an SMG or a shotgun is standard. Other weapons are available if required.

PERSONALITY: THE CORPORATE EXECUTIVE

If there's one thing I've learned about this city, it's that if you want to get promoted, you have to play by the rules. If you don't give the system the time, energy and devotion that it wants, then you are going to be stuck at the bottom of the corporate ladder for the rest of your life.

The corporate game is all about image. You have to get yourself noticed by the right people. It's more than just saying the right things and getting the job done. If you really want to get into the upper echelons, then you have to wear the right clothes, live in the right areas, and spend time with the right people. But you can't look like you're a suck-up while you're doing it. That will get you dropped like a rotten apple quicker than anything will. It's a fine line and you have to learn to be able to read the reactions of the people you are with and adjust your manner accordingly.

That's what the Citadel is all about. It's pure image. The rest of the city may be sliding into the pit, but you don't think about that. Up here, you're separated from the poverty and filth. I worked damn hard to get an apartment in the Citadel. Those people in the projects just sit on their asses all-day, and collect a check. If

those people aren't prepared to do an honest day's work, then they don't deserve the rewards that come with it. As long as these towers are still in good condition, then I'm happy.

Most of the towers have some levels that are apartments for the employees and others that are the corporate office space. You have to be a member of the corporation's management to even think about getting a place up here. Even then the waiting list is longer than your arm. I was lucky. I might only be a section head, but I saved the corporation over \$10,000,000 when I prevented a tragic mistake of my predecessor from ever becoming public knowledge. Had it leaked, the corporation might have even gone under completely. I got rewarded for that. He "jumped" from the office window. Like I said, image is everything.

Life up here is about the best you can get in the city. You want for nothing. Maids come through and clean your apartment for you. You don't have to worry about home security; the corporation handles it all. You don't even have to do the grocery shopping if you don't want to. You can just fill out an order on the computer and the goods will be delivered to the apartment for you. The view out over the city is magnificent. Even the flame towers up the hill take on an eerily serene quality from the glass towers. What more could you ask for?

These apartments have computer control for just about everything. All of the lighting and heating is controlled by voice commands to the computer. There aren't even any switches anywhere. The glass on the windows can change tint if you want it to. The computer waters the plants and makes sure that there is a pot of coffee ready first thing in the morning. About the only thing it doesn't do it cook dinner. Most of us still have to do that ourselves. The senior vice-presidents have a personal chef.

I live downstairs from the vice-president of marketing. He's a decent enough guy; I've spoken to him a few times on the



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ride up to the office. But I'm still not high enough to get an invitation to one of his parties. Very extravagant bashes from what I hear. They only use the very best of anything, mostly imported from somewhere else. God only knows who's paying for this. Anyone who is anyone in the corporation gets an invitation. I haven't managed to get one yet. I suspect that I will need to be a level or two higher before my name even gets considered. One day I'll make it.

Most of the corporations have their offices on the upper levels of each of the towers. Most people have to come in from the surrounding suburbs, find a place to park and then head up. For us lucky ones, the commute to work is up a special elevator. You can't get more convenient than that.

The biggest advantage to having the apartment downstairs is that it only takes me five minutes to get home from the office if I have to work late at night. Which is just about every night. About the only time I get to see my apartment is when I leave it in the morning and I get home at night. Not that I'm complaining mind you. I've got ambitions. And if working sixty-hour weeks is what it takes to get invited to those parties, then that's what I'm going to put in.

Weekends are when I usually go down and blow off steam and take the ELB down to the strip. Even there you have to watch how you present yourself. Something as simple as partying is an exercise in projecting the proper image. It's all in where you go, and whom you go with.

The corporations demand hard work from their employees. They expect you to give everything you have and then some. There's no room for complacency or inefficiency. If you cost the corporation too much money, then you're out. Out of a job. Out of the towers. Believe me, you *don't* want that to happen. The fall from these heights is a very long one, indeed.

I'm happy with the arrangement that I have with the corporation. Sure, I might not get to see as much of my wife as I used to, but I'm not worried about her leaving me. She'd be a fool to give up this much status. She plays her role. I play mine, and along the way the company makes a profit.

That's what it really boils down to. If the corporation is making a profit, then so am I. You just have to keep your priorities straight.

The Corporate Executive as an NPC

The executive is a typical representative of the thousands of people struggling up the corporate ladder in Sin City. To them, image is everything. They work themselves into the ground, trying to find that little extra that will get them noticed more than their peers and take them to new heights.

Level: Novice

Initiative: 1

Skills: As per Novice NPCs, plus Act/Bluff 2, Business 5, Leadership 3, Luck 3 and Persuasion 4.

INTERLUDE: A BIRD'S EYE VIEW

In the darkness of the pre-dawn, she perches atop the silent turbine of methane Vent Tower #4. Wings tucked at her side, head erect, she scans the city below with black eyes. The other eleven vent pipes, spaced out across the expanse of the hill, burn with a guttering orange flame. Only the tower on which she sits is silent and dark. She squawks in surprise as a sudden burst of flame erupts from the tower to her left, raining a cloud of flaming drops down toward the huddled tenement buildings below. Unsettled by the billowing cloud, she spreads her wings and steps off the edge of the perch. The methane laced wind meets her as she drops toward the ground below, then slows as she cups the wind in her wings and adjusts her flight toward the last vestiges of the flaming cloud. A few tiny flames still burn on the rooftops surrounding the tower. One puddle of fire, having landed atop a makeshift structure that shares a corner of a nearby tenement roof begins to burn a little more forcefully. She swoops closer and adjusts her wings to glide in a lazy circle above the tiny bonfire. A man's voice, still groggy with sleep cries out in alarm. A moment later, he appears, half-dressed and wielding a torn wool blanket, he beats at the flames spreading across the cardboard roof of his home. He succeeds in smothering the flames, and returns, grumbling to the shelter of his makeshift hovel.

With a keening cry, she rides on an updraft to its apex, then glides down in a wide circle around the upper boundary of the projects. The sound of a laboring motor reaches her ears, and she adjusts her flight to pass over a small truck as it struggles to bear its load up the incline of the hill. The headlights of the truck, stab through the dark streets, revealing a chain-link mesh covering the truck's lights. As she glides by, two stories over the truck, she spies a pair of teenagers, dressed in dark clothes, hiding behind a dumpster along the side of the road. The engine skips for a moment as the driver shifts to a lower gear to finish his ascent. As the truck passes the alley, the two young men leap out of hiding and make a grab for the handles on the rear deck of the truck's loading ramp. The driver, apparently catching sight of the would-be attackers, swerves to the right, taking the handle out of reach of the first youth. The second one manages to grab hold and whoops in triumph as he pulls himself up onto the rear deck of the moving truck. The truck continues to climb the hill, swerving from side to side as it goes, trying to dislodge the unwanted passenger. Meanwhile the young man has pulled a tool off his belt, and is hammering away at the latch holding the loading door closed. The driver of the truck turns sharply down a side road, causing the boy to swing dangerously close to falling off the bumper, his arm pinwheeling wildly to maintain his balance. The truck picks up speed as it accelerates down the narrow service road that runs between two of the government housing tenements. From her vantagepoint above, she turns as well, watching the events below with a dispassionate eye. Suddenly

the brakes are applied with a sharp hiss of escaping air, laying twin patches of black rubber on the concrete behind. The driver slams the gearshift into reverse and cuts the wheel sharply, sending the truck careening into a narrow loading access ramp for the building on the left. The boy on the back cries out in surprise as the truck slides down the ramp. The brick walls on both sides, cleared by only a few inches, offer no chance of escape. The brakes are applied again and the boy's wail of alarm is cut short with a thud and the crunch of the rear bumper striking the loading dock. She pauses over the scene long enough to see workers from inside begin to unload a shipment of food for the tenement, then tucks her wings closer as she skims along the rooftop.

The sky to the East is beginning to lighten from deep, star encrusted black toward indigo when the first air horn sounds down on the docks. She turns toward the sound, then watches as select, dark windows all across the cityscape come suddenly alight with workers responding to the first call of the new workday. She glides down toward the harbor, passing over the swimming pool-topped condominiums of the Expansions as she flies. Out on the water, a large cargo ship, navigational lights aglow, slides through the deep dark water of the channel. On either side of the hulking craft, a pair of pilot boats escorts it toward a berth along the docking facility. She flaps her wings for a moment to slow her flight, catching the attention of an armor-clad policeman walking his patrol route along a fenced-in warehouse. He looks up toward the sound, but she has already moved on by the time he focuses on the point in the sky.

She slides through the air, skimming above the masts and smokestacks of the assembled ships in the harbor, and calls out to the seagulls nestled along the grassy places between the docks and the shore. She begins flapping again, turning her path toward the expansive bulk of Centennial Mall. From her view above the many skylights along its roof, she can see a janitor, finishing up his night's work by waxing the hardwood floor of the upper level of the enormous shopping mall. The lights of a coffee shop on the outskirts of the mall parking lot come to life as she passes by, followed closely by a series of car doors swinging open as sleep-weary commuters pause for a quick caffeine buzz. The donut shop across the ELB track has been open all night, and the door swings open to reveal a woman in a business suit carrying a sack of fresh baked goods. She pauses next to the turnstile leading up to the commuter platform, and tries juggling her briefcase and the donut sacks to dig the magnetic commuter pass out of her suit pocket. As the woman fumbles the card into the slot, she is unaware of the figure watching her from behind a parked panel van. The man steps toward her, but ducks back when a taxi comes suddenly around the corner, bathing the woman briefly in the glow of its headlights. She slides through the turnstile and begins climbing the stairs to the platform above.

With another flutter of wings, and a whistle of wind, the flying observer turns away from the scene and focuses her black eyes on the soaring spires of the Citadel, which is framed by the lightening azure sky beyond. She begins working her wings, climbing higher to clear the ring of skyscrapers that surround the tallest minaret. She circles in the air, riding a thermal upward until she is looking down through the skylight of the highest chamber of that tower. At the center of that room, a ring of video monitors surrounds a black ebony conference table. The only light in the room comes from the two screens that face each other across the table, each glowing with the image of a distant red-faced executive, engaging in a spirited debate.

Tucking her wings, she begins a fast descent toward the unexpected sounds of laughter and music. In the streets below, she passes many a weary reveler, wending their way home after a long night of recreational drinking and dancing. The flashing lights of a nightclub still glow invitingly, enticing another pair of drunken companions to stagger in through its doors. She sees now, that the streets here are not empty at all, but teeming with activity. The Strip exists in a state of perpetual revelry. The activity level remains constant, twenty-four hours a day - only the faces of the participants change from one shift to the next.

A woman with an ultra short skirt and fishnet-clad legs leans into the window of an idling car. A well-dressed man with a gray-streaked goatee stands atop a blue plastic milk crate, with a leather-bound book in one hand, and the righteous power of a moral cause in the other. Not twenty feet away from them, another man in dark sunglasses and a woolen cap kneels on the sidewalk, crooning seasonal songs in the hopes that the passing crowds might drop a few coins into the coffee can that sits in front of him. A dozen men and women, of all shapes and social origin pass this spot in the street, each with a separate destination drawing them past this common point.

The watcher overhead sees it all, then turns toward the sloping bowl formed by the rooftops around the square. The sky begins to glow with a red light at the horizon, extending up through the spectrum of oranges and yellows, toward the deeper indigo of the waning night sky. A delivery truck turns a cobblestone street corner, depositing a bale of newspapers outside a nearby newsstand as it passes. A rear shop door opens, and a man wearing an apron dumps a garbage can full of trash into a nearby receptacle. Across the alley, an older woman waves a greeting to him, then slides a key into the rear entry door of another nearby shop. Two streets over, a city bus rolls silently beneath a crisscross grid of wires, pausing to drop off a trio of early commuters. She spreads her wings, catching the first golden rays of the sunrise on her wingtips, then begins flapping purposefully. As she goes, the buildings grow taller, and the streets begin to team with the movement of commuters.

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The sun breaks over the horizon, bathing the city in a warm yellow light, and casting her shadow on the wall of a passing brick building. She calls out again, singing her praise to the sun for appearing once again. Then she abruptly turns to the right and swings past a large glowing clock tower, which sits, eclipsed in the shadow of a nearby building. She alights on the corner of an adjacent rooftop and folds her wings along her back.

Beneath her, the city awakens with the promise of a new day.

THE ADVENTURE

INTRODUCTION

When did it all start? I'm not exactly sure. I suppose the first time I saw one of the Calendites preaching about the end of the world was back in February. It didn't strike me as odd at the time. I mean, everyone's got to have something to believe in, don't they? What's wrong with believing the world is coming to an end? At least you have the satisfaction of knowing that it will eventually come true. Besides, if it's not going to end, then that means we keep going. The way things are; the way they've become, it's hard to feel bad about that. I guess that's why so many people started taking the Calendites message to heart. They started believing that the end of the world was just around the corner. The trouble is, when you're sure the world is about to end, you stop thinking about consequences... Scratch that... You stop worrying about consequences.

- From the diary of Franklin Harris

This adventure serves many functions. The first (and most important) is to help introduce you and your players to New Centennial City and its people. Sin City will be the backdrop for this and the next five adventures in this series. Its second function is to serve as a benchmark - to provide a point of comparison, not too far removed from today's modern world. As the adventures in the series unfold, the descent of Sin City into Darkness will progress apace. This will give us a unique opportunity to provide you with something that has never existed in *Dark Conspiracy* before: the chance to watch a dark plot evolve, and really explore some of the possibilities that *Dark Conspiracy* has to offer.

This first adventure is a study in extremes. The extremes that one will go to if they believe there will be no consequences to their actions. What would a person do if there will be no day of reckoning? And what would be required to stop such a person.

The adventure starts with a fully developed cityscape, with a multitude of day-to-day events both ordinary and not so ordinary. In the background, almost as an afterthought, a religious movement is introduced. A small cult consisting of preachers on street corners predicting the end of the world. At the same time, a series of events: a heist at the shipyards, a series of violent murders, an explosion in a museum exhibit and a mysterious message point the players at the Calendite cult. The players try to infiltrate the cult to learn its secrets, only to be caught up in the frenzy of impending doom. The end of the world is nigh! The old gods are returning!

BACKGROUND

"And now, with our human interest story of the evening, here's Karen Meyers.

"Thanks Bob. Pack your bags guys! The end of the world is coming. At least that's the message of Ethan Rayne, the chief advocate and head of the Calendites - a religious group who follow the teachings of the ancient Mayans. According to Rayne, the Mayans were so certain that the world would end on December 21, 2012 that they actually ended their calendar on that date. Which gives us just about a week."

"Weren't you planning on taking a cruise next month, Karen?"

"Yes Bob, we just got the tickets yesterday."

"I'll bet your feeling kind of silly right about now."

- An exchange between Karen Meyers and Bob Skelling
on the Channel 2 News

We live in a complex universe. For thousands of years, mankind has stood upon this tiny speck of a planet and observed the motion of the stars overhead. Through both wisdom and perseverance (and sometimes in spite of them), mankind has done a fairly good job of accurately describing the motion of the cosmos. Throughout the recorded history of our planet, we have seen evidence that humans have always looked to the heavens for answers and inspiration. They categorized, calculated, and in the end produced models of the movements of heavenly bodies that rival the accuracy of those made today with modern equipment. Many cultures that we consider "primitive" by today's standards were actually quite advanced in this regard. The Egyptians, Celts, Aztecs and Mayans are but a few civilizations that had incredible insight into the mysteries of the universe. They managed to construct enormous temples and structures that even with today's modern techniques would be a challenge to build. And within these structures, they left tomes of knowledge - books, carvings and drawings that lend us insight into their lives, beliefs and origins.

The Mayan culture was particularly advanced in the realm of astronomy. In the ruined cities they left behind, we see no structure that isn't significant in some regard to astronomical observation. Whether it is a column placed so as to cast a shadow in a particular direction on a particular day, or a well-placed hole drilled through an otherwise solid wall, everything in these ruins seems to have had a purpose. Covering almost every surface of these structures, incredibly detailed carvings that represent mathematical models. Over here we see the orbit of the planets around the sun, and over there, a calendar tracking the cycles of the sun and moon in their celestial dance with the heavens. The Mayan calendar is cyclical in nature,

and lasts 5125 years. Mayan lore contends that when each age ends, the next begins and the cycle begins anew. It is interesting to note that the first Mayan calendar appears to have been put into use, not at the beginning of one of the cycles, but somewhere in the middle – with a definite end pinpointed in the future.

There is a tendency for some people to take information, especially old information, and apply to it a certain reverence. They can't help but think that the cultures of the past were in some way wiser or more connected to nature than we. Perhaps that has something to do with why these people look upon the fact that the Mayans defined an end to their calendar with such interest.

On December 21, 2012, the plane of our tumbling solar system will come into alignment with the plane of our hurtling galaxy. Just prior to sunrise on the winter solstice, a person observing the sky would find the disk of the Milky Way perfectly centered on every horizon. Because of the shape of our galaxy, we will see on the eastern horizon, a gap in the galactic disk - a rift caused by an errant dust cloud obscuring our view of that edge of the spiral arm. This rift has been visible for thousands of years. The Mayans observed it, and tagged it with a number of ominous names: "The Dark Rift", "The Black Road" or "The Road to the Underworld". When the sun rises on the morning of the winter's solstice, it will appear to pass through that rift. The Mayans considered this event to be of significant import. According to their writings, once this event occurs, "The Great Sky Portal" will be opened, an event significant enough that the Mayan gods themselves would need to return and oversee the passage into the new age. Or so it is written...

Despite the obvious mythological overtones to the Mayan interpretation of the alignment, a number of people with more analytical minds have examined the pending phenomena as well. They point out that the only thing that they have observed as this alleged doomsday approaches, has been an increase in sunspot activity.

Not to be outdone, the lunatic fringe got into the act, pointing out the (well-known) link between sunspot activity and radio communication, namely that sunspots tend to disrupt satellite transmissions. They suggest that increases in sunspot activity (coincidentally predicted by the Mayan astronomers) could cause the magnetic field of the earth itself to reverse. Before anyone knew what hit them, self-proclaimed experts were appearing on every news program and talk show. They would sit there, expounding on how the impending reversal of the Earth's magnetic field (now an accepted reality) would cause every electric motor on the planet to spontaneously reverse operation - or at the very least, stop running. Electric power around the globe would be interrupted as electric generators spontaneously seized up. Airplanes would fall out of the sky as their control mecha-

nisms reversed operation - that is, pulling back on the stick would send the plane into a dive instead.

That last bit of speculation got the hackles of various members of the scientific community up. They took it upon themselves to debunk the whole field flipping theory. Unfortunately, they only managed to add fuel to the fire when one prominent member of said scientific community, stated that if our solar system (and our planet with it) passed to the other side of the galactic disk that the magnetic orientation of the earth might indeed flip. The argument raged back and forth with one side noting that while the solar system was aligning, it was not passing across the midline of the galactic disk, so the point was moot.

Another popular theory focused on the so-called Sky Portal from the Mayan prophecy. What was it? Was it a doorway to another place? Another time? Was it the gateway to the next age? Or something else entirely?

Others speculate that perhaps the convergence will do nothing at all. Perhaps the true danger comes not in what the convergence will do to mankind, but in what mankind will do to itself in response to it.

INVOLVING THE PLAYERS

The preacher stood outside the entrance of the Centennial Plaza Mall, spreading his message of woe. The crush of the holiday shopping crowds pushed past him, most of its members rewarding his sermon with the same disinterest they shared for the Salvation Army bell-ringer who stood opposite him. But there were a few beside myself who paused, despite the chill wind, to listen to his message.

"You think that because the end of the world was predicted long ago by a primitive culture, that there is no truth to it. Just because you don't believe, doesn't mean it isn't true! The Mayan calendar will end at the winter solstice on December 21, 2012. That is this month! Stop shopping for Christmas! It isn't coming this year."

- from the diary of Franklin Harris

Before we can begin the adventure in earnest, it is important to give the players a feeling of what New Centennial City is all about. The Referee should be familiar with all the information in the Supplement in the first part of this book. The more knowledgeable you are of the history and state of Sin City, the easier you will find it to convey that to your players.

Give them a copy of the city map, and let them read the description in the "Interlude: A Bird's Eye View" section to give your players a feeling for New Centennial City. This should be enough to give them a passing acquaintance with the lay of the land, and where things can be found relative to one another. If they are only visitors to the city, then that should be enough for a quick rundown of the state of things.

STARTING OUT

If you decide to start your campaign in New Centennial City, then you or your players need to decide where they fit into the world. Are they dock workers, small businessmen or perhaps unemployed? Do they live in the projects, or do they manage to own (or at least rent) a decent place to live? Do they work for the corporations? If so, is it an established corporation already on the Council, or do they represent a corporation trying to set up shop in Sin City?

Any of the historical or descriptive information provided in the first half of the book can be made available to the players. Anyone who already lives in New Centennial City would possess this common knowledge. A visitor will learn it little by little, but the information is out there to be had.

KEYNPCS

There are two NPCs who figure prominently in this adventure. They are Richard Fader and Michael Rollins, a pair of detectives in the NCC Police Department. It is vital for your players to be in some way acquainted with these men. If you cannot assign them as a law enforcement contact to one of your players, it may be necessary to have a small side adventure that introduces them to at least one of your players. Since Fader is a recent transferee to Sin City, perhaps the PC's had occasion to deal with him in the city they came from. If you can find no convenient way to explain the player's involvement with the detectives, then you will have to link the players to Shelly Wheeler, a woman who shows up very early in the adventure as a murder victim. Fader and Rollins will be assigned to the case.

In any case, the PC's must have established themselves either as people that the detectives would be willing to confide in, or people with a stake in learning the truth behind Shelly Wheeler's death.

This adventure takes place between Friday December 14th and Friday December 21st 2012, the week prior to the Winter Solstice.

THE END OF THE WORLD CULT

There was a lot of speculation in the popular scientific community. Something unusual was definitely going to happen on December 21. The disk of our solar system was about to align itself with the disk of the galaxy. Somehow, a bunch of primitive Mayan astronomers had accurately predicted this event thousands of years

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ago. Whether it was the end of the world or not was another matter altogether. My money is on the magnetic field flipping theory. The Calendites say that the details of the changes are unimportant. When the next age begins, the old gods of Maya will return and those who are prepared will be able to move on to the next world. Sounds good to me. This world has gotten a little chaotic for my tastes.

- from the diary of Franklin Harris

There are nearly four thousand individual members of the Calendite cult in New Centennial City. Of that number, somewhere between 1500 and 2000 people truly embrace the cult's beliefs. The remaining 2000-2500 people are just posers and wannabes attracted to the trendiness of the cult, or simply just liking the lock-et.

For the most part, the people drawn into the cult come from the lower social classes, primarily the people who live up in The projects. These are the people without much in the way of worldly possessions, so the idea that the world will change in some dramatic way appeals to them.

By far, the fewest members of the cult come from the upper echelons of the social strata. There are very few corporate board members or high-ranking company officers in the ranks of the Calendites. Oddly enough, this isn't the case for their family members. Life in the Citadel of Sin City is all about image and for good or ill, Ethan Rayne presents a very good image. He is handsome, well read, and a very convincing speaker. So, while the corporate executive is too busy to take an active part, the spouse or children of that executive can often be found attending the meetings, or even spreading the word.

The cult operates by word of mouth, employing street preachers to spread the word to the masses. The preachers generally work in groups of two or more, with one addressing the audience, while the other(s) scan the crowd for individuals who show interest in the message. Interested parties are singled out and invited to attend a presentation on the history behind the message. The evidence that is presented is very convincing, especially when taken out of context from its original source. Gatherings of the faithful members are usually held in someone's home for groups of ten or twelve. The topic of conversation generally involves updates on membership techniques and recommendations for how to prepare for the end. Since the next age is likely to be far different from the current one, it is widely believed that things of material value now, will not be the things of value after. As such, members are encouraged to dispose of as many of their worldly goods as possible. Monetary contributions to the cult are, of course, appreciated so as to allow the spreading of the word to proceed more efficiently. Once someone has reached this point in the process, they are awarded a golden locket. This ornate gold-tone

piece of jewelry is a recreation of an actual piece of Mayan jewelry. The locket serves as an indicator that the wearer is a true believer in the Calendite philosophy. They are also told that the locket is the key to the next world, and only those who have a locket will be able to pass over to the new age.

Due to the proximity of the slated date for the end of the world, the Calendites have been seeing a marked increase in interest. People who had been on the fence as to whether or not to believe, or for that matter, people who have only just heard the message for the first time are clamoring to at least check out the story - just in case.

CALENDITE PSYCHOLOGY

"Yeah, I believe in that end-of-the-world stuff. So what? Last week I was scrounging through dumpsters for my meals. Today, I'm still scrounging, but next week it will be a whole new ball game."

"At first I thought the whole Mayan gig was nothing but superstition. But I've done some reading on the subject. And you know? There's a whole lot of evidence to support this. I mean, there have been people who claimed the end of the world was coming before, but ... you can see it coming! Just look at the sky before sunrise! Every day, the sun gets closer and closer to that gap in the stars - just like the Mayans predicted. That's got to mean something!"

"Look. I don't know what to believe anymore. Maybe the world's going to end, and maybe it's not. I was mugged last month within a block of a damn police patrol and they didn't lift a finger to help! The way I look at it, if the world does end, and I'm one of the lucky ones who gets to leave this place, then maybe those sorry bastards will be left behind. And if they come with, then in the new age, we'll all start out on the same level - and I'm going to find a way to make them pay."

"Ethan Rayne? Yeah. I've heard the message. He's a nutball. Why would the world end this time around? Sure I've seen the stars. Whoo-boy. I'm scared. I'm only here because my girlfriend likes those lockets they wear - and tomorrow is her birthday."

- from a random sampling at a Calendite assembly

CALENDITE MEMBERS COME FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE.

Poor: The most numerous, and devoted members of the Calendite cult come from the lowest social classes of Sin City. Throughout recorded history, it has been easy to draw the poor and downtrodden into any cause that promises to provide a chance at a better life. The message appeals to them because they really are the people most in need of a better situation.

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Gullible: There's a sucker born every minute, and they're usually first in line for the cult recruiters. They fall into two general groups: those with enough disposable income to help fund the cult's activities and those without the funds, but the willingness to help recruit more members.

Lost: Some people don't know what to believe in anymore. They've watched everything they've believed in their whole lives disappear in the blink of an eye. They get so desperate for some sign of hope, that they'll accept anything to fill the void in their lives.

Status Seekers: Most rich people involved in the cult would fall into this group. Basically, they are involved because they believe that being seen supporting a popular person like Ethan Rayne will give them status among their peers. Generally, the status seeker doesn't truly believe in the teachings of the cult. But their presence is tolerated for their ability to contribute cash to the cause.

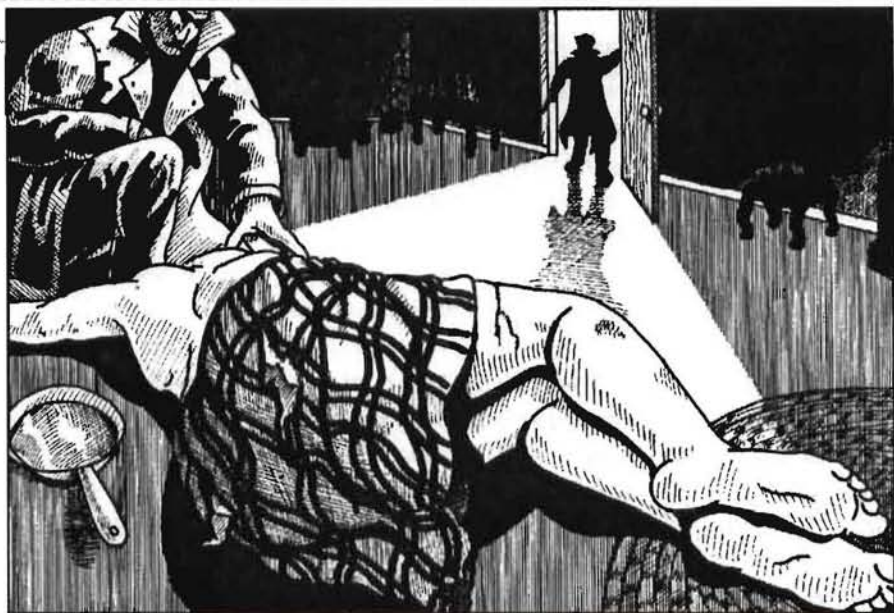
Wannabe: Those who fall into this group are generally the teenage children of middle class or well-to-do parents. These youths, trapped between their own desire to be seen as adults, and their parent's refusal to see them as anything but children are very vulnerable to strong belief systems, especially if those beliefs conflict with the viewpoint of their parents!

Fanatic: These are actually the most dangerous members of any cult. Nothing can sway them from their fanatical devotion to the teachings of the cult. Their faith gives them strength of conviction that the other groups will never possess.

THE DYNASTY CLUB

"Police are still baffled by last week's bizarre bludgeoning death of a suburban youth. Christopher Sable, a junior at West Park High, was found in his home by his parents late Friday night. So far no motive has been found for the crime, but viewers may remember the story last week regarding drug use on the West Park Tennis team. Christopher was a member of the team, and one of the players put on suspension. Police insist that there is no connection between this case, and the December 2nd killing of renowned dancer Belinda Chiffon, found beaten to death outside the Dynasty Club on the Strip. Anyone with information into either of these deaths is encouraged to contact the NCC police."

- Channel 2 Evening News, Tuesday Dec 11, 2012



It is a typical Friday night on The Strip. Corporate suits have descended from the glass towers of the Citadel to rub elbows with the commoners. The middle class thrill seekers from the 'Burbs have ventured forth to see the nightlife of Sin City in its full glory. The proles from The Projects have come down to breath in the stench of perfume, alcohol, sweat, and cigarettes - an approvment over the methane fumes to which they are accustomed up on the Hill.

The businesses on The Strip are in full party mode - not that they ever aren't. Ever since the body of Belinda Chiffon was discovered outside the Dynasty Club, it has been added to the regular patrol route of the NCC police. Twice each night, two armor-clad, scowling officers of the law enter the club, and make a point of staring down everyone who has the misfortune to cross their path.

One important thing to convey to the players is a sense that a lot of things are going on, making it difficult for them to focus on any one aspect. Here are some sample events that should be going on.

The club is more crowded than usual. The news of the murder here nearly two weeks ago has put the Dynasty Club into the public eye. Most of the people here tonight, remember hearing about the club recently, but few could tell you where or why. They just assume it was because the club is a happening place to be. The DJ is spinning heavy industrial dance music through the oversized speakers surrounding the two-story dance-floor. So many people are squeezed out onto the floor, that the glowing lights imbedded in the flooring are hidden from view. The perimeter of the dance floor is surrounded with a wide railing, which is lined with drink glass-

es from revelers both on the dance floor and off. At one end of the dance floor, a woman in a leather miniskirt fends off the advances of a drunken admirer. Not two feet away, a shapely waitress in a white one-piece leotard with a plunging neckline delivers a round of drinks to a table of rowdy businessmen. One of the men leans back in his chair, sharing a conversation with another young man with slick-back hair and a dozen gold chains around his neck. A hundred-dollar bill passes between them, followed by a small brown paper packet being passed back beneath the table. Four young women sit around a single high-top table, leaning forward and listening intently to the words of a middle-aged man with a clean-shaven face and a winning smile. At the table behind them, a couple staring thoughtfully into each others eyes are rudely interrupted by a third woman dressed in a housecoat, stepping up to the table and smashing a beer bottle across the back of his "good-for-nothing-lying-ass-cheatin" skull. The man cries out in pain cupping his hands together against the back of his head to hold in the flow of blood from the resulting scalp laceration. Two policemen strolling through the crowd in body armor pause and address the woman in the housecoat, pointing emphatically toward the exit. There a bouncer, holding a drunken man in a tattered pea-coat by the collar, pushes him roughly out through the revolving door. The drunk spins through the door and staggers several steps away before doubling over and vomiting on the sidewalk. A woman, sitting alone at the bar, lies with her head down on the smooth mahogany surface. The bartender, rag in hand, wipes down the spilled puddles of alcohol and cigarette ash from everywhere on the bar, except under the woman's head. He pauses a moment as if considering whether to push the her head aside when one of the waitresses, having made it back to the bar starts calling out another drink order. The front window of the club shatters into a thousand tiny fragments that rain down on the half-dozen men and women sitting with their chair backs to the window. A woman in a two-toned dress, white on the back and bright red from the waist up on the front stands up, backing away from the low table where her faceless companion is already slumping forward. The sharp report of a firecracker barely echoes above the frenzied beat of the music. The crowd on the dance floor moves to the beat like a sea of bobbing heads and swaying arms, lost in the music. One of the cops pulls out a pair of handcuffs, and presses them onto the wrists of the woman in the housecoat, who struggles like a woman possessed. His partner turns toward the front, watching a kneeling drunk vomit again on the sidewalk in front of the club, then turning his gaze to a shrieking woman whose face and hair match the color of her bright red blouse, he furrows his brow. A pitcher of amber liquid, perched atop a drink tray, held aloft against the pressing crowd by a waitress suddenly shatters and rains down upon the four people surrounding her. Once again, a firecracker (or was it a car backfiring?) sounds a report through the room.

A man in a shirt and tie, whirls angrily on the incompetent waitress, who just spilled a jet of warm red liquid down the back of his new white shirt. He is still yelling at her even as his knees give out and he drops out of sight into the crowd. The bartender, finally lifts the head of the sleeping woman at the bar, and is alarmed to find soft white foam flowing out from between the woman's blue lips. He steps backward, alarmed by the dead woman at his bar and fumbles for the phone. By now the woman in the half-red blouse has succeeded in getting the attention of the thirty people in her immediate vicinity. They all stare and watch as the man to her immediate left is spun violently to the right as if by an unseen hand. The man's scream of pain is drowned out by a third firecracker report (or was that a gunshot?). The second cop, trying to push toward the exit is overwhelmed by a sudden shift of the crowd's momentum deeper into the bar. His deep authoritative voice is drowned out by the growing screams of the crowd.

The club is under attack by a sniper, (Easy Observation.) The man, wearing a black ski mask and a navy blue jacket is perched atop a three-story souvenir shop across the street from the club. He is armed with an Armalite AR-27 Keyholer Sniper Rifle. He has just fired three shots of his 20-round clip, and has a second clip available.

Player characters being what they are, will probably make an attempt to stop the sniper. This action should be encouraged. If they seem reluctant, have a sniper shot hit one of them in the arm. Their involvement in this action is helpful to the developing plot, but is not necessary. So don't worry too much if they choose to hide under a table somewhere.

Should they chase down the sniper, access to the roof across the street can be had from either the fire escape in the back alley, or the inside stairs of the souvenir shop (the shop is closed for the day, and locked up). He is hidden behind the brick chimney of the building, and so should be considered under cover for purposes of gun combat. He is 50 meters away from the front of the club (his gun has an 85 meter range). If anyone gets close, the sniper will fire multiple shots at the pursuers and then take a running leap to the rooftop of the adjacent building. Each time the sniper leaps to another building, roll 1D20. On a roll of 20, he completely misses the jump, and falls to the hard ground below (resolve damage as per falling rules on page 198-199 of the Players Handbook). On a roll of 15-19, he fails to make the jump. He will be dangling from the adjacent roof, and will take one combat phase to regain his composure. On a roll of 10-14, he jumps successfully to the next rooftop, but will take two combat phases to cross that roof. Any other result, he makes the jump without incident and will only take one combat phase to cross that rooftop. Ten buildings away, the man has parked his Yamaha Apache motorcycle. At the tenth building, it will take him two combat phases to descend the fire escape, and another one to mount and start the cycle. It should be possible

for the PC's to catch up to him, and probably even take him out.

If taken alive, he will say that before he died, he just wanted to know what it was like to shoot a real person. If the sniper is killed, the only thing they will find is his wallet containing a license to fire the gun for target practice, and a leaflet entitled "*The End is Near*", a pamphlet that the Calendites recently sent out in a mass-mailing all across the city.

As far as the other people in the Dynasty Club are concerned, only the two policemen have any real chance of chasing down the sniper. Only one of the two will even attempt it. The cop who is in the process of cuffing the irate housewife will want to stick with his current task. The other one will run out into the street, and even fire a blind burst from his SMG up at the rooftop of the souvenir shop. He will hold his fire if the PC's get into the act. Note that no matter what, this cop will not leave sight of the Dynasty Club. To do so would be to abandon his area of responsibility, and he will not risk doing that.

If your players have not managed to find an excuse for knowing Fader or Rollins yet, you can have the detectives assigned to investigate this case, so they can see if it relates to the other case(s) they're working on. The two detectives will undoubtedly want to talk to the people who helped apprehend the lunatic sniper.

BRIEFING

He got another one tonight. My new partner and I are increasingly convinced that the same individual committed all five of these attacks. In each case, some sort of necklace was ripped from the victim's neck prior to the attack. Until now, the killer had stopped as soon as the victim was

THE SNIPER – PATRICK SMYTHE

Level: Experienced

Skills: As per Experienced NPC

Motivation: Jack of Diamonds, 9 of Clubs

Patrick was not a member of the Calendite cult, but he did attend one of the historical presentations. He found the evidence that was presented compelling enough to buy into the idea that the world just might be coming to an end.

This attack on the Dynasty Club is a sheer coincidence. Like many of the customers at the club this night, Patrick chose this place because he'd heard the name on the news. His sudden turn to violence is the result of a congenital chemical imbalance for which he had stopped taking his medication a week previous. His medical condition, coupled with the sudden overwhelming evidence of the end, combined to give him the idea to try a little target practice – something he'd always thought about, but never had the guts to try.



DETECTIVE
RICHARD FADER

STR 7 **INT** 8 **EMP** 4
AGL 5 **EDU** 8 **INIT** 2
CON 6 **CHR** 6

Age 34

Skills: Unarmed Melee 3, Small Arms (Rifle) 2, Small Arms (Pistol) 5, Lockpick 2, Stealth 2, Swimming 2, Observation 4, Psychology 1, Streetwise 2, Wheeled Vehicle 2, Willpower 2, Computer Operation 1, Business 1, Language (English) 10, Language (Spanish) 4, Interrogation 4, Leadership 2, Persuasion 2, Foreboding 3

Armament: S&W Model 29/16.5 (.44 Mag Revolver), Browning Autoriot (loaded with alternating rounds of buckshot and 12-gauge shells), Kevlar Jacket (AV:1)

dead. This last one was different. He appears to have kept hitting her. This would imply a higher level of rage against this fifth victim. We may have caught a break as well. We think we found the necklace. It's a locket - the same kind those Calendite cultists wear.

- from the detective report on the death of Shelly Wheeler

Detectives Richard Fader and Michael Rollins are the investigators assigned to the murders. Excited that they had finally found the link they needed to establish motive in the case, they dug a little deeper, and were able to confirm that all five victims were indeed members of the Calendite cult. This fact has not been released to the public. All five victims also had the same mark around their necks - caused by the gold chain of a Calendite locket being roughly pulled against their necks until the chain snapped. In each case, the killer removed the locket first, before attacking the victims. Although the victims were different heights, the angle of the attack is consistent with a right-handed attacker between five-foot-ten and six-foot-one in height. Due to the strength needed in the wielding of some of the weapons, they are assuming the killer is a man.

The two detectives began the formal investigation of Ethan Rayne and his followers on the evening of December 15th, 2012. On Sunday, December 16th, the day after the inquiries began, Rollins and Fader were ordered to leave Ethan Rayne and his people out of the investigation. By this time, the PC's should have managed to distinguish themselves in some fashion to Detectives Richard Fader and Michael Rollins. On Monday morning, December 17th, the players receive a phone call from Detective Fader. If the players know the detectives personally, he will call in a favor. If they have been brought to his attention by their involvement in the sniper incident at the

Dynasty Club, he will say how they've impressed him with their willingness to rise to a challenge. If they are acquainted with Shelly Wheeler, he will say that there has been a development in the investigation of her death that he needs to discuss with them.

The players will have no problem getting in to see Fader and Rollins. The desk sergeant will take their names, then announce the group to the detectives by phone, and send them back. The detective's office is ten feet square, with two high cell-like windows along the ceiling, two desks, two filing cabinets, two chairs and two detectives. Fader stands to greet the players when they walk in, while Rollins remains sitting back in his chair with his feet up on the desk. When the PC's ask what is going on, Rollins says "We're working", then makes a point of leaning forward and flipping a manila file folder shut on his desk.

Fader then proceeds to fill the players in on the latest break in the case. "I'm not sure how much you guys know about what's going on, but Shelly Wheeler was not the only victim in this case. As far as we know, she's actually the fifth person this guy killed. Every one of the victims was associated with that Calendite cult. They all had markings on their necks which came from the killer pulling off those gold locketts that they wear."

Rollins rearranges the five folders on his desktop, fanning them out like a pack of cards, and then adds. "We're sure it's the same guy doing all of the killings. He's between five-foot-ten and six-foot-one. He's pretty strong. He's also right handed. This last murder was different. The killer went berserk on her. He kept hitting her, even after she was dead. We're afraid he's losing it, and the deaths will continue to get more violent."

Background: Richard Fader always wanted to be a cop. He studied law in college, then joined the Chiwaukee police force as soon as he completed his undergraduate degree. Fader was recently transferred to New Centennial City and is still trying to get used to the way things operate in this town. Fader has close-cropped brown hair and walks with a limp. His left leg is a prosthetic limb, which he received just prior to relocating to Sin City. He lost his leg in a tragic accident while working on an independent investigation. The accident, which he refuses to speak about, left him in a foul mood. This seems to have had something to do with his dismissal from the police force, and his subsequent move here.

Motivations: King of Hearts, Five of Spades

The gruff exterior is only a façade. Inside he still instinctively cares for people, and can be brought around to more rational thought. Fader is an honest, hardworking cop. He detests the concept of letting the bad guys win. He also is an unreformed smoker. He always claims that he trying to quit, but

finds himself drawn back to the pack when a case gets particularly hairy. Fader has been smoking a lot lately. He respects his new partner because of the other man's experience with the inner workings of New Centennial City.



**DETECTIVE
MICHAEL ROLLINS**

STR 8 **INT** 7 **EMP** 1
AGL 6 **EDU** 6 **INIT** 3
CON 5 **CHR** 5

Age 33

Skills: Heavy Weapons 1, Unarmed Melee 3, Armed Melee 1, Small Arms (Rifle) 4, Small Arms (Pistol) 2, Thrown Weapons 1, Stealth 2, Climbing 2, Swimming 1, Navigation 1, Observation 4, Streetwise 1, Wheeled Vehicle 2, Willpower 1, Interrogation 3, Language (English) 10, Leadership 1

Fader reaches into the breast pocket of his shirt and pulls out a pack of cigarettes. He taps one out of the pack and lights it, drawing the smoke in deeply before continuing. "The locket means something to this guy. It's important enough for him to kill for it, even after he already has it. We're pretty sure he's a member of the cult. If that's the case, we're running out of time."

Rollins nods emphatically. "The End of the World. These people think it's coming Friday morning. That gives us less than four days to find the guy. And the best way to do that, is to get someone on the inside. Except..."

"...except, we can't pursue this angle anymore", Fader finishes for him. "Somebody upstairs closed down that part of the investigation. We got word yesterday that we are not to investigate Ethan Rayne or his people. We can't do it, and we can't send anyone in to do it for us."

At this point, Rollins stands up and puts on his jacket. "Say, Dick. Don't we have a briefing to get to?"

Fader grins. "Yes we do, partner. At any rate, we just thought you should know "we'll still be pursuing another angle. We've got an appointment to talk to Neil Curry, the curator of the Mayan Exhibit, tonight at 8 pm. Why don't you show up there and we can fill each other in on any new developments. Now if you'll excuse us, we have to go." He pauses, meaningfully. "Make sure you turn the light off when you guys leave." And with that, the two detectives walk out, shutting the door behind them.

The five folders on Rollins' desktop are the five case-files for the victims. They list all the details that the police managed to piece together about the killer and possible connections to the victims. Attached to the file is a notation about Shelly Wheeler's place of business. Apparently Fader and

Rollins have yet to interview her co-workers. Their hope is that Shelly Wheeler told people she worked with about her involvement in the cult.

Referee's Note: Shelly Wheeler did tell a co-worker that she met a group of Calendites at the New Centennial Mall and that the same group preaches at the mall all the time. As Referee, you need to decide how best to get this info to your players. If they seem stuck, you can reveal this now. Otherwise, let them dig it up themselves.

The folders themselves are keyed with an obvious magnetic strip, and have the warning "OFFICIAL POLICE FILE - DO NOT REMOVE FROM BUILDING" stenciled in large red letters. Each page of the report also has a bar-code strip imbedded in the paper. Anyone with any experience in law enforcement will know that attempting to remove them from the building will set off alarms at the exit. It is probably best to leave the files behind.

MURDERS

The victim is a female named Shelly Wheeler, twenty-five years of age. Cause of death: severe trauma to the head. The murder weapon was a large cast-iron skillet. The markings on the body indicate repeated blows with the skillet - the first with the flat of the pan to the right side of the face, probably knocked her senseless. The subsequent blows with the edge of the skillet caved in the right side of the skull, initially making positive identification of the body very difficult. The angle of the attack indicates that the subsequent blows were delivered from above while the victim lay prone on the floor. There is a wound on the back and part of the right side of the victim's neck, a shallow cut

Armament: S&W Model 36 (.38 special), Mossberg M500 (Shotgun), Kevlar Jacket (AV: 1)

Background: Michael Rollins joined the Marines right out of high school. He decided re-up to have a go at a military career and wound up spending the next eight years in Force Recon and later in the Military Police. He eventually grew tired of being passed up for promotion year after year, and opted out of the service. The military left him with a taste for an ordered life, and a drive to find recognition in whatever he chose to do. He was hired by the NCC Trading Council as an independent security guard just prior to the dissolution of the Centennial Police Department. When the Trading Council took over the enforcement of law in Sin City, Rollins was right there, ready to do his part. He was promoted to detective early last year, and recently lost a partner to a drug-dealer's bullet. His new partner shows promise, but needs to learn how things operate in a privately held organization.

Motivations: Ten of Spades,
Nine of Diamonds

Michael Rollins is very ambitious. He is dedicated to his job because he has been bucking for another promotion for quite some time.

Succeeding at solving this high-profile case could do that for him, but he has to make sure he doesn't step on any toes in the process. The word from on high to drop the case disturbs him, but orders are orders. His partner's suggestion that they involve the PC's is technically a violation of protocol, but Rollins is pretty sure he can pin it on Fader should it come to light.

that could have been made by a necklace of some kind being ripped from her neck. All attacks are consistent with a right-handed assailant. There was no sign of forced entry to the victim's apartment, suggesting that she knew her attacker.

- from the New Centennial City
medical examiner report

A killer is on the loose in Sin City. Of the twenty known deaths that have occurred in New Centennial City since December 2nd, five of them are believed to be the work of the same person. The following is a list of the five victims and some key pieces of information.

Victim #1: Sunday December 2, 2012. Belinda Chiffon, age 23. A well-known dancer who worked at the Dynasty Club on the Strip. She was found at 10:40pm in a side alley outside the club, where it is believed that she was taking a cigarette break between performances. Robbery appeared to be the motive, as a cut around her neck led investigators to conclude that a necklace had been torn from around her neck. She had apparently taken a blow to the left side of the head with a rock. The impact drove her head against the brick wall of the building. Cause of death has been attributed to severe concussion from twin blunt trauma. The story appeared on the evening news, naming the victim and mentioning the rock, but no mention was made of the alleged necklace. Forensics was unable to pull any fingerprints off the rock.

Victim #2: Wednesday December 5, 2012. Freddy Anderson, age 52. Nobody who knew him was very surprised when Freddy turned up dead in his back yard Wednesday evening. The best thing his neighbors had to say about him was that he was a nasty little man with a quick temper and grim demeanor. Nobody was very sorry to hear that he'd finally caught a shovel across the back of his skull,

either – particularly not his wife, Mildred. When Mildred turned out to have an iron-clad alibi, and the list of the other suspects with reasons to wish Freddy ill turned out to read like a phone book, the case was almost dropped. If not for the fact that the medical examiner happened to recognize the same markings on Freddy's neck that he had observed on Belinda three days earlier, the case probably would have been buried right alongside the unpleasant Mr. Anderson. As is standard operating procedure in matters of apparent serial killings, Freddy Anderson's death was never mentioned in the media, for fear it would tip off the killer. Four partial prints were found on the shovel handle, three of which appeared to match the victim. The fourth print was too badly smudged for positive ID.

Victim #3: Friday December 7, Christopher Sable, age 16. Chris' parents left the house at approximately 7:45 pm on the evening in question to take in a movie. They claim their son told them that he was having a study group over to the house that evening to try to keep up with the work he was missing after being suspended from school for alleged drug abuse. When they returned at 10:15 pm, they found their son, lying in a spreading puddle of blood on the living room floor. The bloody fireplace poker lay on the floor a foot away from his body. Judging from the blood patterns in the room, it took two blows from the poker to end Chris' high school career. A neighbor believes she heard someone scream once around 9:30, but thought it was a television program. The police tried unsuccessfully to cover up the third killing, but the victim's recent appearance on the news meant his family was still in the public eye. The police did manage to leave out the detail about the telltale wound on the boy's neck. The killer apparently wiped off the poker as well as the doorknob of the house through which he exited. Altogether, ten sets of fingerprints that did not belong to the victim's family were found in the house on some pop cans and glassware. No positive matches turned up in the criminal database on any of the prints.

Victim #4: Monday December 10, Alex Schue, age 31. He was a boisterous man with a booming voice, and a gift for making people feel stupid. Apparently he used his gift one time too many. Alex was one of the street preachers for the Calendite cult. His body was found in Smith Park next to the duck pond by a couple of joggers at approximately 6 am. The victim was punched in the face with a solid blow from a gloved hand that shattered his septum and drove his head against a concrete post. He apparently choked to death on his own blood. If not for the telltale mark around the neck, this killing might not have been categorized with the others. At this point in the investigation, the possibility of involvement with the Calendites was first considered. Quick checks on the first three victims revealed that Christopher Sable had become involved in the cult with a group of his friends, as a way of acting out against their parents. The other two victims may have been involved in the cult, but if they were, it was without the knowledge of the people closest to them.

Victim #5: Saturday December 15, Shelly Wheeler, age 25. A programmer/analyst for MedAdmin Corporation, her body was found in her own apartment. The circumstances surrounding her death were similar, but the differences were profoundly disturbing. Shelly had been beaten repeatedly with the edge of a heavy frying pan – far more times than were necessary to actually kill her. The police found a gold, blood-encrusted pendant at the scene. The pendant, a hinged locket with a hollow space inside, had flown free of the killer's hand and slid beneath the couch. The compartment in the locket was empty, and nothing else found at the scene appears to have been inside it. In-depth analysis by a police lab found traces of gelatin inside (like the kind used for pharmaceutical capsules). The locket is exactly the kind worn by the established members of the Calendite cult. All news of this fifth murder was also successfully kept out of the public eye.

SUSPECTS

"It is not impossible to find a needle in a haystack - just unlikely. You can increase your chances by going after a sufficiently large needle. The bigger the target, the easier it is to hit."

- Zena Marley, Early 21st Century Mercenary/Philosopher

Finding a killer in a place as big as New Centennial City is problematic at best. The clues that have been collected by the police so far only circumstantially implicate the Calendites. But circumstantial is good enough when it's all you have to go on. Good enough for an independent investigation, that is. That's where the players come in.

The Calendite locket is the key to the killer's identity. All five victims were members of the cult, and all five had the locket pulled from their necks prior to their deaths. Was theft of the locket or its contents the motivation for this action? The victims were all beaten to death, but each with a different object. This suggests that the killer used what was handy, and may not have met up with his victims with the intention of killing them. All but the last murder indicate that the killer has at least some control over his rage. The fact that he continued to beat the fifth victim long after she was dead could indicate that he is losing that small level of control. Future attacks could prove to be even more violent.

There are several obvious paths the players could take to learn more about the cult. They could attempt to question some of the cult members, some of the street preachers, or even seek out Ethan Rayne himself. They could also attempt to join the cult, in the hopes of learning more from the inside.



At this point, there is no reason in the world why Ethan Rayne would agree to speak to the players, nor would his bodyguards simply look the other way and allow such contact. So realistically speaking, that isn't a direction they should pursue just yet. Any attempts should be rebuked immediately.

Bear in mind that there are approximately four thousand people associated with the Calendite cult in Sin City alone. Narrowing that list down to a reasonable number of suspects is going to require either a lot of legwork (for which there is not enough time), or extreme luck. Fortunately, the players have one clue to go on that should narrow the search considerably. Shelly Wheeler told a co-worker that the Calendites who recruited her, preach at the New Centennial Mall on a regular basis.

THE MALL PREACHERS

It's really going to be a matter of finding likely suspects and working toward clearing or convicting them. The following three men are the most likely suspects of the lot: John Riggs, Jason Fischer, and Damien Garside.

All three of these men are Calendite street preachers. The three of them can often be found working the New Centennial Mall, and usually work together. While one of the three gives the presentation, the other two walk through the crowd trying to pinpoint the people who seem to be taking the message to heart. These people will be singled out for one-on-one discussion later, and offered an invitation to one of the organizational meetings.

INFILTRATION



JOHN RIGGS

STR 9 INT 4 EMP 1
AGL 5 EDU 3 INIT 3
CON 6 CHR 6

Age 35

Height: 6 ft 0 in

Right-Handed

Background: Riggs used to be a dockworker in Centennial Harbor. He's currently out of work and is depressed as hell about it. If asked, how he lost his job, he will explain that he is on medical leave for a back injury. This is not the case. He lost his job after he hit his supervisor over a relatively minor disagreement. This information will be very difficult to come by. There is no official record of the incident in Riggs' public employment file, as the company would

"I would never join a club that would have me as a member."

- Groucho Marx

When the players check out the New Centennial Mall, they will find a group of three Calendite street preachers, working in tandem to spread the Calendite message. This is crunch-time for the cultists. They have only a few days left before the solstice, and so many souls to still try to save.

Any of the cult members that the party tries to question at the mall will remember seeing the stories on the news about the dead dancer and student. But only one of the three street-preachers (our primary suspects) will specifically remember Shelly Wheeler. They will all express shock and sorrow at her death. Of the three, Jason Fischer will seem particularly bothered by it. This is because the thought of anyone dying before the alignment causes him to think about his fears regarding his two children being left behind. This helps him resolve that he must get his children away from their mother before the end comes - Thursday night at the latest. Of course he keeps this thought to himself.

It doesn't matter who they talk to, or what they say. The PC's will be told that there is going to be a debate on television between Ethan Rayne, the leader of the Calendites and Neil Curry, a noted archeologist and curator for the travelling Mayan exhibit. The debate will take place on the Jerri Jesse Rivera show, which is being taped at 5 pm this evening. The players will be told that visitors are welcome to attend the debate. This will kill two birds with one stone.

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The players will get a chance to have all their questions answered as well as fill the auditorium with more people - something that could help portray the Calendites in a more favorable light.

THE MUSEUM EXHIBIT

"Don't underestimate the willpower of a rock. Rocks keep secrets very well. The people of the past knew that. That's why they told their secrets to the rocks. If we could make them talk - to learn their secrets, we might have a chance at stopping this invasion. After all, it was stopped once before."

- Zena Marley, Early 21st
Century Mercenary/Philosopher

A collection of Mayan artifacts is on tour around the country. The exhibit has arrived in New Centennial City, oddly enough, two months ahead of schedule. An anonymous patron of the arts has paid a great deal of money to divert the exhibit to Sin City. Considering it was bound for Manhattan at the time, many believe it must have been a very rich patron indeed.

The curator of the exhibit, Neil Curry, is an archeologist of some renown who has dedicated his entire career to the study of Mayan mythology and culture. He has been chief archeologist for many of the newly discovered Mayan digs in Central America. In fact, a large part of the travelling exhibit consists of artifacts that have never before been seen by the public.

One of the more impressive pieces is an elaborate stone stela, a tall column covered in runes and writing. There are numerous display cases, full of everything from Mayan pottery, to pieces of jewelry. But the centerpiece of the exhibit is a

prefer to quietly cover the incident up. The only person who might speak about it would be the supervisor himself (who did put a report of the incident in his own file cabinet). He would say that he and Riggs got into a simple disagreement over how some cargo should be unloaded, and Riggs just went berserk and punched him in the jaw.



JASON FISCHER

STR 7 **INT** 5 **EMP** 2
AGL 7 **EDU** 4 **INIT** 2
CON 5 **CHR** 5

Age 43

Height: 5 ft 11 in

Right-Handed

Background: Fischer is currently a ballotman, living in The Projects. At one time, he was married with a family, but

after his business went belly-up and they were forced to move to New Centennial City things went from bad to worse. Their money supply dried up, and he was forced to move his family into the corporate sponsored housing projects. His wife Nora, unable to take being poor, left him for a minor corporate executive with a future. His children, Sean and Mélanie are both with their mother, and want nothing to do with their failure of a father, especially since the incident where he kicked the crap out of their stepfather. Now a restraining order keeps Jason away from his family. And the penalty for violating it is loss of his housing status in The Projects. Fischer found the Calendite message to be very appealing. The idea that he could move on to a new, better world was just what he needed to get his mind off his troubles. It is his intention to attempt to kidnap his kids the evening of December 20, so they can accompany him into the new age.



huge representation of the full Mayan calendar, complete to the last day - this Friday.

The artifacts are currently on display at the Centennial Historical Society, located on the eastern edge of the original town of Centennial. The exhibit is open to the public from 9 am to 4:30 pm daily.

If the characters question Curry about the killings, and the suspected link to the Calendites, he will try to be as helpful as possible. He will reveal that while human sacrifices were not unheard of in the Mayan culture, these were actually performed by some splinter groups much later who misinterpreted the concept of nourishing their gods. There is actually nothing in the true Mayan history that encourages sacrifice of this nature. Also, what sacrifices there were, were not killed via blunt trauma, but rather stabbed with ceremonial daggers.

Neil Curry is appalled at the Calendite cult exploiting the Mayan history. He does not believe that the end of this Mayan Great Cycle is going to be any different from any of the other ones. In fact, it is his intention to engage Ethan Rayne in a debate on the subject on a local talk show. If the talk-show hasn't occurred yet, when the players first meet Curry, he will invite them to attend the show as his guests.

THE TALK SHOW

"Ethan. If the Mayans were located in Central America, and all their ruins, temples and astronomical observation structures are down there, what are you doing here, in New Centennial City?"

"Well Jerri, it's simple. The ruins may be down in the Yucatan, but most of the artifacts that pertain to this phenomena are right here in New Centennial as part of Mr. Curry's exhibit. I didn't select this place and time."

- Ethan Rayne on the Jerri Jesse Rivera Show

The Jerri Jesse Rivera Show is the highest rated talk show in New Centennial City. On any given day, odds are that they will have no problem filling the studio with warm bodies. The announcement that Ethan Rayne is making an appearance on today's show has increased that number beyond the norm.

The set of the show is reminiscent of a glorified rock'n'roll show. Directly behind today's guest is a massive screen. This screen is used for background effects of satellite interviews. During this particular show, it allows viewers to see such sights as replicated Mayan rituals to a rotating



DAMIEN GARSIDE

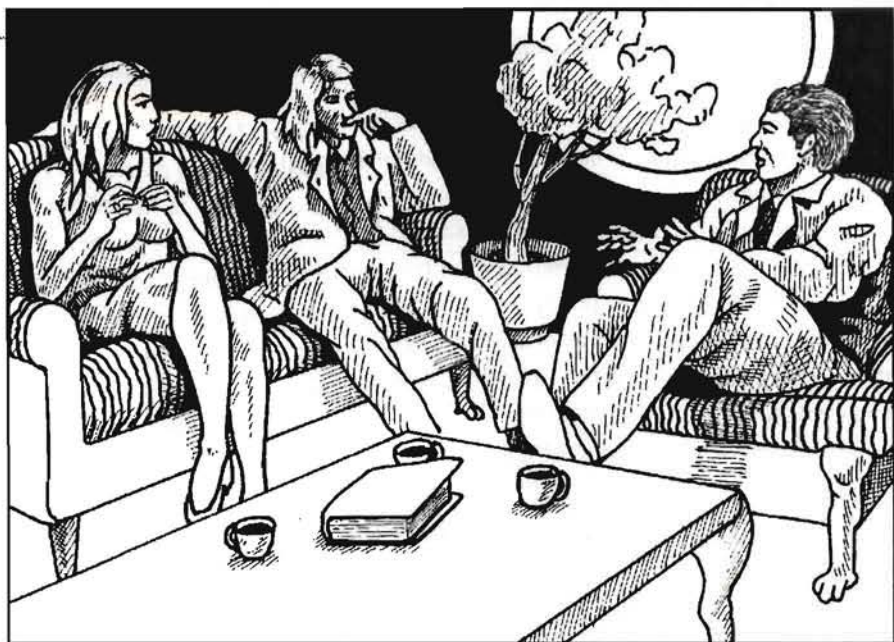
STR 5 **INT** 7 **EMP** 2
AGL 7 **EDU** 6 **INIT** 2
CON 4 **CHR** 5

Age 37

Height: 6 ft 1 in

Ambidextrous

Background: He is middle class. He actually donated all of his worldly possessions to Ethan upon joining the Calendites. He studied Mayan history as a kid - in fact, he did his high-school term paper on the subject. He actually came to the conclusion that the end of the Mayan calendar would herald the end of the world before the author of the book he was reading even revealed that as his own pet theory. He had been a loner all his life, never married - never wanted



to. When Ethan came along with his Calendite message, Damien was impressed. Of the three suspects, Garside is the most fanatical. He already believed the world was ending. Ethan Rayne and his followers merely validated that belief. He is one of the strong advocates of the concept of giving all your money to Ethan, citing his own story as an example.

galaxy. The Jerri Jesse Rivera Show relies greatly on the background screen to divert attention from their at times substance lacking shows. In contrast to the gigantic screen in the background, the actual stage is quite minimal. Jerri Jesse Rivera takes his usual spot in the middle of the stage, while the invited guests filter in on either side. The audience comprises the bulk of the studio. The audience seats are wired similarly to health equipment machines. The heart rate of the audience is constantly monitored to know what topics are the most interesting. Also, it gives them an idea of when to zero in on a particular audience member.

The arrival of Ethan Rayne is accompanied by cheers of support from both the crowd of people who managed to get seats (the PC's should be among them), and the even larger cloud of supporters milling around outside the studio under the darkening evening sky. A very attractive woman clings to his side and is basically playing the role of arm candy. She stares longingly at

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Ethan, and at no point does she ever say or do anything that would detract from the image of perfect devoted companion.

Also appearing on the show is Neil Curry, the curator of the Mayan Exhibit at the Centennial Historical Society. The two scholars have a very vocal debate. Rayne is pushing his message of the end coming - still trying to recruit new supporters. Curry on the other hand is pointing out that this is just one interpretation of the evidence - and not the most compelling one either. He insists that the apparent passage of the sun through the rift is nothing more remarkable than any other sunrise.

The debate continues, getting increasingly heated.

WATCHER

On the roof of the television studio, staring down through a conveniently placed skylight, a shadowy figure waits. The figure, at first glance appears to be a very thin man. But anyone watching for any length of time will begin to sense there is something wrong about the shape. The head is too narrow, and appears to be elongated. On the creature's back, pair of extra limbs, spindly and covered in a tattered membrane stretch out, and then fold back against the creature's side. Anyone observing the taping of the talk show has a chance of spotting the figure through the skylight. It is an (impossible observation task), and will only result in them seeing an indistinct form. If anyone gets the idea to head topside to intercept the watcher, the following event will begin as soon as they try to leave the studio.

THE CURATOR - NEIL CURRY

Level: Novice

Skills: As per Novice NPC but a level of 6 in Instruction and 7 in Mayan (Language).

Motivation: King of Hearts, 7 of Spades

Height: 6 ft 2 in

Right-Handed

Curry has been studying Mayan mythology for the better part of the last fifteen years. He was instrumental in encouraging the Central American government to allow the exhibit of artifacts to go on a world tour (much like the King Tut exhibit did in the 70's). He is the world's foremost authority on this ancient culture.

THE SHOOTER - ARMIN WELLES

Level: Veteran

Skills: As per Veteran NPC

Motivation: Jack of Clubs, 2 of Clubs

Armin managed to sneak onto the set of the Jerri Jesse Rivera show almost a full day earlier. He has been hiding in a broom closet most of the night, and eluding security guards all day. If he is killed,

nobody will ever know who his intended target was: Ethan Rayne, Neil Curry or Jerri Jesse Rivera. If the shooter is wounded and taken into police custody, he will be taken to a nearby hospital and held under police guard.

If anyone does get a chance to question Armin, he will reveal that the target of his attack was Rivera herself. Armin Welles was an unsuspecting "guest" on the show several weeks earlier. His ex-wife had arranged to inform him of their impending divorce by having him invited to appear as a guest on the show. He wasn't aware of the title "Impotence Ruined my Marriage" until after the show had begun. Even if Welles is killed, there is a chance one of the stagehands will recognize him from his appearance on the show.

Armin is NOT a member of the Calendite cult.

SHOOTER

The taping of the show continues with the Mayan debate between Curry and Rayne. Suddenly, a commotion at the back of the auditorium draws the audience's attention. A man in army fatigues kicks open the door of the auditorium and rushes down the aisle toward the stage, screaming, "Enough of your lies!" at the top of his lungs. He plants himself halfway down the stairs (approximately 20 meters from the stage) and opens up with an Ingram M10.45 submachinegun, spraying the stage with bullets.

There are several ways this could be worked into the adventure. The players may have learned of the show from Neil Curry himself. Another possibility occurs if the players have already attempted to make contact with some of the cult members. They may have been given an invitation to attend the taping of the show. Not only would this provide the characters with a chance to hear Ethan's message, but would also work toward showing support for the cult, as that many more members of the audience would appear to support his ideas. If the players are indeed present at the taping, they will probably take it upon themselves to try to stop the shooter. Please note that security would not have allowed anyone with a weapon into the auditorium, so unless they took great care to smuggle weapons in, the players would be unarmed. If they are not present, then Rayne's two bodyguards will return fire with their Desert Eagle .44 magnum auto-pistols while Ethan Rayne and Anna Shepard flee backstage. Keep in mind that the shooter knows his weapon well enough that he started firing just inside of short range for the Ingram. This puts the bodyguards at a slight disadvantage with their shorter ranged pistols.

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No matter what the outcome of Armin's attack, Ethan Rayne and his girlfriend Anna Shepard will both escape unharmed (Rayne is wearing a bulletproof vest under his suit coat). Just prior to the shooting, Neil Curry's pager will go off, causing him to bend down to retrieve the device from his briefcase under his chair. This action more than anything else explains why he survives. Note: It is okay for Curry to be wounded, but not to be killed. Since Jerri is the target for the attack, resolve whether or not she is hit normally.

It is Armin's plan to fire a 10-round burst with the submachinegun, then flee toward the left-hand stage door. From there, he will take a ladder toward the rooftop. His plan is to save the remaining bullets to discourage pursuit, switching it to semi-automatic if necessary, to preserve them.

If he makes it to the rooftop, he will come face to face with the figure that has been watching through the skylight. Anyone pursuing Welles will hear two shrieks occur simultaneously - one is human, the other not. Reaching the roof, they will find Armin Welles lying dead on the gravel rooftop with his neck broken. There will be no sign of who or what may have killed him.

FLASH FIRE

The white limousine came to a stop in front of Ethan Rayne's apartment. The two bodyguards stepped out first, followed closely by Rayne. The trio began walking toward the entrance of the apartment while the driver of the car opened the rear door for Anna Shepard. Anna is obviously very angry, and tries running after Ethan in her long gown and heels. Then, seeing that she isn't making any headway, kicks the shoes off her feet and starts running after him. "You bastard! You were going to leave me on stage with that psycho!"

The man stops and turns around. The two men flanking him stand aside and begin scanning the surrounding area. Ethan is furious. "Don't use that tone with me. That's the most obvious attempt they've made yet."

The woman steps toward him and grips the edges of his suit. She tears the suit open, sending buttons popping off across the sidewalk. Under the suit, a Kevlar vest is clearly visible. "Those bullets were real. You had this! I'm wearing an evening gown, you self-absorbed freak!"

Ethan lashes out, slapping her across the face with the back of his left hand. She staggers from the blow. "You seem to forget that without me, there is no Calendite movement. I'm the key. Me. You hang on my arm and make me look good, and that's it. If you can't remember that, you are of no use to me." He gestures to the guards as he turns. They fall into step just behind him as he continues across the parking structure toward his apartment.

Anna slumps against the wall and begins sobbing. She stands there for a minute or two and then limps over to retrieve her shoes. She puts them back on, then hugs her arms across her chest, to ward off the cold and begins the long walk back to her apartment.

- minutes after the aborted taping of the Jerri Jesse Rivera Show

During the taping and the subsequent mayhem of the Jerri Jesse Rivera show, the fire alarms at the Centennial Historical Society, were spontaneously triggered. Museum security contacted the fire department and reported that an explosion had occurred in the exhibit hall. When Neil Curry's pager went off during the taping of the talk show, it was museum security calling to inform him of the catastrophe. If the players are already acquainted with Curry (perhaps they met him earlier at the exhibit), he will remember them and tell them what has happened. He will even be willing to let them come along if they express an interest. If the players don't know Curry, they still have the suggestion from Fader and Rollins to meet them at the Historical Society while the detectives question the curator.

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY

When the party arrives, the place is a shambles. Curry is rushing around, trying to pick things up. As soon as the PC's walk in, he begins directing people in getting the displays back in order. He needs to perform an inventory, and make sure nothing is missing. They begin the task of standing display cases back up, and laying out the ancient artifacts.

Apparently the explosion caused an overload of some kind in the building's power grid. The guards report that right after hearing the explosion, the electricity went out. In the darkness, they could hear an electric buzzing sound, as if there was an electrical short somewhere. Then, before the guards could fumble through their desks looking for flashlights, they heard a crash and a sound of rending metal which seemed to make the entire building shudder. A minute later, the buzzing stopped, and lights came back on.

The police will conclude that some sort of explosive was in or near the central display case in the exhibit hall. The glass of the case has burst outward in all directions, and the metal frame of the case was bent outward by the force of the explosion. There are flash-burn marks on the floor and surrounding cases for a ten-foot radius around the central case. In addition to that, the skylight over the display has reinforced bars over the glass, that were bent outward by the force of the blast.

Any player with Demolitions can make a check (Average) to see if they realize the problem with that statement. The ten-foot blast radius shouldn't have had enough force to bend metal bars on a twelve-foot ceiling. If they go to the roof and examine the skylight, they will find three things.

First, not only is the glass of the six-foot diameter skylight shattered outward, but the 1-inch bars that cover the skylight are bent outward as well. For most of the bars, the weld that attached the bars to the window frame gave way on one side or the other. For the rest, the bars actually snapped in the middle and bent upward from both sides. There is no way an explosion that could have done this kind of damage would have left the walls of the building intact!

The second thing they find, if they examine the bent bars very closely, is that slivers of a shiny silver metal have been deposited on the jagged edges of the window bars. The metal seems to share the properties of titanium; it is lightweight and seems remarkably sturdy.

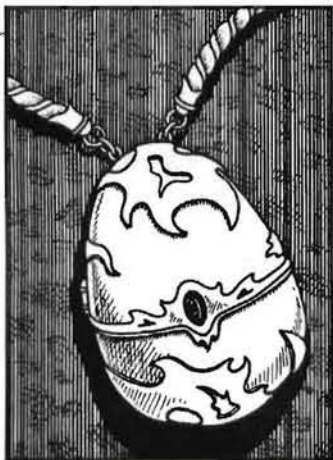
The third thing is found by searching among the debris of the shattered window. A small textured ovoid, constructed of the same lightweight silver metal is lying among the broken glass on the roof. When picked up, the object seems to vibrate at a high frequency.

If they show the object to Neil Curry, he will say that the object is not a part of his exhibit. As he examines it, his eyes will open wide, and he will begin staring at a line of runes along one side of the thing. "These markings are written in Mayan script!" As he turns the object excitedly in his hands, his thumb comes into contact with a small depression on the object. His eyes glaze over, his pupils dilate and he stares blankly for ten seconds. He will begin to mumble, "Confusion. Damage. Seek nexus. All ends soon."

Then he staggers and shakes his head to clear it. He looks in shock at the device in his hand and then throws it away, as if he is terrified of it. Anyone else who picks up the artifact will find that it is no longer vibrating. Touching the indentation produces no effect (and will not for another two hours).

Neil Curry will refuse to touch the artifact again. He insists that it is not his, and he wants no part of it. He will, in fact, encourage the players to take it with them...just so he wouldn't have to deal with it anymore. If they are persistent in questioning him, or someone in the party is an empath and can make a successful empathic link, the following information can be gained: Someone or something arrived here tonight. This is not where he expected to arrive. He is confused, and searching for something he calls "The Nexus." The device stopped transmitting before he learned more than that.

THE VISITOR



THE ARTIFACT

The artifact that the players have found is an empathic amplifier: a one-way alien translator/communicator. When the depression in the ovoid surface of the artifact is pressed, it will allow the person holding it to hear the conscious thoughts of a member of the alien race that constructed it. This particular device is keyed to a specific alien, one who is in New Centennial City right now.

The power cell in the device was damaged when it fell from the alien floater while crashing through the skylight bars at the museum. It will only receive and translate the alien thoughts for a few seconds at a time, before it goes into a regeneration mode. Depending on the

"Folks up on the hill got an interesting addition to the standard flame spurts and methane rain last night - a mysterious light in the sky. Several people reported seeing a brightly lit object flying erratically across The Square, and up the hill into The Projects. Police switchboard's lit up with reports of people sighting the object, many of whom claimed it had touched down somewhere nearby. Authorities investigating the manner have turned up no trace, and chalked it up to a prank."

"In an unrelated story, a spokesman for the New Centennial Nuclear Power Reactor facility are unable to explain a series of brownouts that plagued many NPR customers last night. The outages were brief, and blamed on a technician failing to reset the system after a routine maintenance cycle. NPR officials say the responsible party has been appropriately disciplined."

- an excerpt from the Channel 2 morning news cast, Tuesday December 18th

Themakin arrived in a flash of light and a brief moment of pain. The floating disk upon which it sat took the brunt of the damage as the glass case surrounding the summoning stone was shattered. Expecting the open-air mall outside the Temple of Kukulkan, and finding itself instead in the center of a metal and stone structure surrounded by spinning lights and shrieking alarms took it by surprise. Some of the artifacts were here, in this room. But Themakin could sense that others were already aware of its presence, and were coming to investigate.

The floater glided around the room, dropping down toward anything that looked like a passage-

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way to the outside, but none were large enough to allow passage of the vehicle - save one. Bracing for impact, Themakin increased output the null-gravity drive and the floater rose toward the six-foot diameter skylight capping the room. The shielding material expended itself in the impact with the grid of iron bars lining the window. The floater tipped wildly to one side as it became entangled with some of the braces. A case of equipment broke free of its moorings and crashed to the floor of the floater, disgorging its contents, which began rolling and sliding toward the down-tipped side. An explosion of sparks from the control mechanism began as soon as the floater cleared the rooftop. All was not well. Themakin was forced to increase the lateral speed of the floater as vertical compensation was lost. The vehicle became a projectile, following a parabolic path over a twinkling cityscape of glass, stone and steel towers. A high dark hill rose in its path and leapt suddenly into the sky, rudely snatching the damaged craft from the air. The floater came down in a small parking lot near the base of the hill. Themakin was thrown free and rendered unconscious in the crash. When Themakin returned to consciousness, it was being carried through a wide dark tunnel that reeked of decay. Tall, winged creatures with beaked faces carried it along. Judging from the metallic scraping sound that followed them, it appeared the floater was being dragged along as well. The creatures had a natural empathic ability, and moved Themakin and its belongings into a small cave deep within the hill. Then they left it alone.

Themakin is a humanoid ET whose race last visited earth in the time of the Mayans. Finding the natives to have a surprisingly advanced understanding of astronomy, they made contact.

length of transmission, the artifact can recharge in anywhere from one to six hours. When fully charged, it will vibrate at a high frequency. Thus, if left sitting on a hard surface, it will begin to buzz and move on the table surface when it is ready for another transmission.

Through no fault of their own, they soon found themselves a part of the Mayan mythic structure - becoming manifestations of the Mayan deities. For a hundred years or more, Themakin's race, the *Arr-Tolk* studied and worked with the Mayan scientists. During their work together, it became clear that there was a point coming in the future history of this planet that would be of crucial import. All calculations pointed to a date that corresponded with the alignment of the local solar system with the galactic disk. Further study indicated that another such event had occurred in the distant past, and all indications were that they corresponded to a cycle, which lasted 5125.36 years. The cycle had repeated at least three times in the past. For whatever reason, the aliens wanted to monitor the celestial event as it occurred. To facilitate this, they left two devices in the keeping of the Mayan high priests. The first was the summoning stone, a highly advanced dimension walk device capable of receiving a single passenger from vast distances in real space. The second device, known as the Nexus, is capable of channeling great amounts of dimensional energy. It was the hope of the alien scientists that if nothing else, the device would allow them to study the celestial event in a somewhat controlled manner. As the time of the alignment approached, Themakin's people needed to choose the one scientist who would travel to Earth and study the phenomenon firsthand. Lots were drawn, and the next thing Themakin knew, it was strapped into a floater and accelerating down the dimensional activation corridor.

Now, as far as it can tell, the civilization upon which all their plans rested had fallen, and another had taken its place. One that did not have the connection with the universe that the Mayans had shared. Based on the building, in which the summoning stone had rested, even if the Nexus still existed, it might be nowhere near this place. Without the Nexus, Themakin would be able to observe the alignment - but would have no power to affect change in the events as they transpired.

To make matters worse, Themakin's communications device appeared to have been lost in the escape from the building. Without it, there would be no communications with its people. There would be no return home. Assuming it even managed to survive the events of the next few days, that is.

Themakin became aware the moment that the party picked up the communications device. It sent the first human who picked up the device a barrage of questions and inquiries about its situation and the device it sought. As Themakin had feared, these people had forgotten the old ways. As much as this human believed he knew about the Mayan people, he lacked the most basic points of knowledge that the aliens had sought to retain in the humans. Then the device grew silent. Apparently damaged in the crash, it was incapable of operating for longer than a few seconds. Themakin grew despondent.

VISION QUEST

The alien will attempt to learn everything it can about the state of the situation prior to the alignment. Assuming for the moment that the holders of the communications device would be of no use to it, Themakin ventured forth to the world above, and attempted to learn what it could on its own. It learned of Ethan Rayne and the Calendites. For a moment, hope was restored. There may just be someone out there who knew enough of the old ways to avert disaster.

Themakin used the talk show as the chance to approach Ethan. Hidden in the shadows, it took stock of the situation, and concentrated on finding a way to approach Ethan Rayne. Ethan had insisted on a private dressing room. This provided the perfect opportunity for Themakin to approach the world's savior. It approached Ethan fifteen minutes before the show. For the first time in his life Ethan was flabbergasted. He was unable to communicate a sound. Themakin gave a brief description of his arrival, the ensuing crash, and began to speak about the Nexus. For his part, Ethan was amazed that he actually had one of the Mayan prophets standing before him. He saw the creature as only one thing; a threat to his plan.

The meeting did not go well. Ethan Rayne was not the high priest of Maya that he purported himself to be. Not only did he lack the knowledge necessary to locate the Nexus, but he lacked the desire! The man was a complete fraud. He cared for none but himself. And to make matters worse, he had perverted the message about the end of the cycle to a disastrous degree. Themakin was horrified to learn that Ethan expected his flock of believers to die on the morning of the alignment.

Ethan began to regain his senses. He pressed the electronic device he always carried with him to signal his bodyguards to come in. He joked, "An man important as me has to have some enemies." The bodyguards apprehended the disenchanted alien. Word would soon leak that Ethan spoke with a Mayan God. With nowhere else to turn, Themakin has resigned itself to the fact that the only recourse it has is to wait for the communications device to become active again, and attempt communications with the party. Each of these visions is listed here, since the last sections of the adventure may not always occur in the same order presented here, but the visions almost always must occur in this order. The visions can be used to gently nudge the players in the right direction should they start to run astray.

Remember that there must be a time lag between transmissions. The malfunctioning power cell in the communications device will not allow anything more than brief communications.

Second Vision

In the darkened room, you sit, unable to struggle to untie your bonds. The man in white stands towering over your chair, regarding your presence with interest. The words you hear are alien, but the feelings are plain. "What the hell am I supposed to do with you? This isn't the way it's supposed to go." He stands quietly for a full minute, then suddenly begins chuckling to himself. "Of course! Yes! Maybe this could work out after all. You'll do nicely. Very nicely indeed."

Referee's Note: This vision cannot be delivered until after the events in "Flash Fire."

Third Vision

The image of a beautiful blonde woman dressed in black. She is trying to open a crate in a warehouse. The wall behind her is emblazoned with a large number 16. As the lid of the crate flips open, two men approach from behind her in the shadows.

Referee's Note: This vision is delivered just prior to the events in "The Heist." The person receiving the image can make a difficult Observation roll. If they succeed, they will recognize the woman in the image as Anna Shepard, Ethan Rayne's girlfriend from the Jerri Jesse Rivera show.

Fourth Vision

The image of a woman sitting at a bar on The Strip. She is fingering a golden locket around her neck. She pops it open and looks at the tiny black capsule inside. She tosses back another shot of liquor and signals the bartender for another. The pill is so small. Her head is swimming from the alcohol. She pops the pill in her mouth and downs it with the next shot of whiskey. The bartender is too busy to notice her eyes open in terror and realization. A white froth starts bubbling out through her nose and mouth, and she collapses across the bar.

Referee's Note: This vision is delivered during the events in "Eve of Destruction." The point of this image, although not made very well is to show the distinction between taking the pill with alcohol and without. Either way, it kills. The death with alcohol is more violent.

Fifth Vision

While Ethan is occupied with his presentation in The Square, Themakin makes good his escape from Ethan's house. During the attempt, the alien is badly injured. The details of the injuries are left to the discretion of the Referee. Suffice to say that it is hurt to a serious wound level. It barely manages to escape to the caverns before succumbing to blood loss. There it will remain in a weakened condition until the finale.

Referee's Note: This vision is delivered during the events in "The Dark World."

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Sixth Vision

Images of someone climbing a methane vent pipe in the dusk of morning. There are other figures climbing behind him. The only thing that might serve to distinguish this vent from the other eleven, is that no flames are burning from the top of the tower.

Referee's Note: This vision is delivered during the events in "God's Flight," and is obviously an image of methane Vent Pipe #4 - the one that has been converted over to serve as a power generator.

Final Vision

The injured alien is barely conscious at this point. It manages to send one final image to the bearer of the communication device. Themakin projects the image of its hiding place in the caverns below.

Referee's Note: This vision will lead in to "Finale." and reveals Themakin's hiding place to the players. Themakin has finally decided it trusts the players enough to meet with them. Plus, it is badly hurt, and fears it will die without help.

INTERVIEW WITH ETHAN RAYNE

"I once had the opportunity to overhear a conversation about the Calendite movement... specifically, these two men were talking about me.

'I heard he's one of those red-faced guys who screams about redemption and beats the sheep for money,' the one guy says.

"I don't think my face gets that red."

- Ethan Rayne on the Jerri Jesse Rivera Show

Sooner or later, somebody's going to feel compelled to talk to Ethan Rayne. Whether it is just to verify facts with the man, the situation demands that he be questioned regarding recent events. If for no other reason, than to determine whether he is just some con man out to make a buck at the expense of others.

Ethan lives in a penthouse apartment, a half-mile from the center of The Square in old Centennial. His white Daimler-Chrysler limousine is parked in the covered driveway of the building. It is manned at all times by a driver and one of two bodyguards who accompany him at all times. The doorman will not allow entrance to the building without approval from someone in the penthouse.

If the players called attention to themselves during the talk-show shooting incident, and managed to make contact with Rayne and Anna as they fled back-



ETHAN RAYNE

STR 5 INT 7 EMP 4
AGL 6 EDU 5 INIT 2
CON 5 CHR 9

Age 42

Height 6 ft 0 in

Left-Handed

Skills: Small Arms (Pistol) 4, Electronics 1, Forgery 2, Stealth 3, Swimming 2, Psychology 4, Streetwise 1, Archeology 3, Act/Bluff 4, Leadership 1, Language (English) 10, Language (Spanish) 4, Language (Mayan) 1, Persuasion 3, Human Empathy 2, Project Emotion 2

Background: Ethan Rayne, a tall enigmatic man with steel-gray eyes and a commanding presence leads the Calendites in New Centennial

stage, he will agree to see the players. Otherwise, he will refuse to meet with them.

If confronted prior to the events that occur in "The Heist," Ethan will say nothing to incriminate himself, or give the players any indication that he is anything other than a caring shepherd of his followers. He truly seems to believe that the world as we know it is coming to an end. He will implore the players to consider the Calendite message. He will then receive a phone call, and ask to be excused. His exit will be backed up by his security guards that will then announce that the meeting is at an end.

If the interview takes place after the events in "The Heist," he will express shock at having been betrayed by his companion, Anna Shepard. He will say "It is unfortunate. Anna had a difficult past. One in which her life was plagued by drugs. Perhaps she felt the stolen camera would bring a good price to feed her habit."

If the party questions his use of the word camera, he will say, "The invoice was incorrect. The crate contained a holographic video camera."

If asked why he needs such a device, he will say, "It will be used during the assembly on the morning of the solstice to transmit our final message to the world."

Once the events of the "Eve of Destruction" begin, it will not be possible for the players to see Ethan Rayne in private.

THE HEIST

Anna read the warehouse number off the claim ticket one more time before slipping the tag back into the rear pocket of her black jeans. She paused in the shadow of warehouse 17 and held her breath while an armor-clad cop sauntered past her hiding place. When he was out of sight

for twenty heartbeats she stepped quickly across the sodium-vapor lit gap to warehouse 16 and eased back into the shadow along the door. She pulled the lockpick from the inside of her glove and crouched down to jimmy the lock.

With a satisfying clink, she slid the last tumbler out of the way and turned the doorknob. From inside the warehouse, she heard the high-pitched whine of the alarm console on the inside of the door. She reached into her back pocket, pulled a small plastic key-card out, and swiped it along the side of the keypad. The alarm light turned from a flashing red to a steady green.

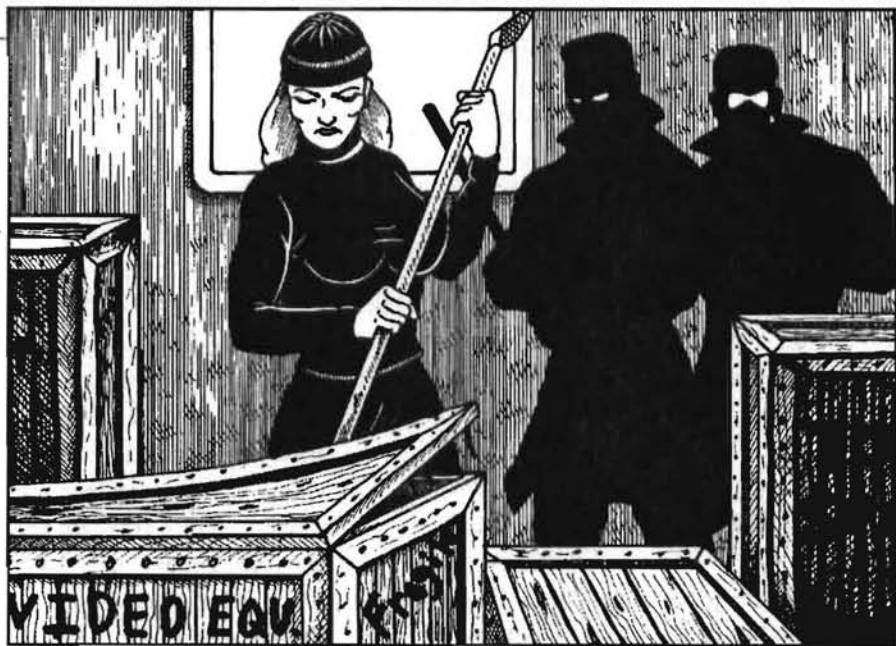
The path to the loading dock was dimly lit, and it took her several minutes to feel her way to the appropriate bay number she had memorized. Only here, did she risk lighting up the penlight she had brought along. The tiny beam of light played around the shipping containers and barrels that were stacked all over the bay. At last she found what she sought. "To: Ethan Rayne, 310 Main PH, New Centennial City... From: Holographics Imaging, Ltd."

She slid the edge of a pry-bar under the wooden lid and tapped it with the rubber mallet she had brought along for the occasion. One side of the lid broke free of the crate and she leaned into it to try to bend the lid back. A bead of perspiration ran down her cheek. Each time she wrenched on the pry-bar, the lid moved a little bit more, accompanied by the shriek of pulling nails. The shrieking nails and the clatter of the crate lid on the concrete floor as it flipped open completely masked the sounds of footsteps approaching from behind. She never saw either of them..."

- a few hours after the talk show

City. A head of thick black hair with graying temples crowns his lean six-foot frame. His clean-shaven face shows the beginnings of age lines. People seem to instinctively trust Ethan. Which is a pretty amazing thing, considering that trust is totally misplaced.

Ethan is the consummate con man. He no more believes the world is coming to an end than he believes it is flat. His college degree was earned in anthropology from the University of Iowa. During that time, he had his first exposure to Mayan civilization, attending at least one archeological expedition to Central America. His interest in the past was not enough to keep him interested in pursuing a career, so he spent a while drifting from job to job after college. Several years working as an insurance salesman and a radio talk-show host, combined with a natural Empathic talent, helped him develop his rapport with people. When the Greater Depression came and Ethan's bank account began to dwindle, he started looking for some way to draw in some cash. His years working with people told him that



there are several constants in the human psyche. One is a fear of the unknown (with death being the greatest unknown of all). And the other is a powerful need for hope (especially when things aren't going well).

Combining these two elements with some information he'd picked up in college, he came up with the idea of resurrecting some of the old Mayan beliefs and injecting them into the mainstream. By exploiting the timing of some of the celestial events predicted by the Mayans, he came up with a plausible tale of the end of the world, complete with a way for the huddled,

As the players investigate the cult and the events that have transpired in Sin City, they will eventually zero in on the three street preachers, John Riggs, Jason Fischer and Damien Garside. Checking into Riggs' history will reveal that until very recently, he worked on the docks as a longshoreman. Inquiries about John Riggs will be dismissed over the phone. The players will have to go to the docks themselves. Riggs was laid off, pending psychiatric evaluation, after he hit his supervisor over a relatively minor disagreement. If the players go during the day, they will be able to interview the supervisor directly. The company is keeping the incident under wraps. There have been no police reports filed. There is a record of the attack in Riggs' personnel file, but these records are closed to public scrutiny. The supervisor, a wiry balding man named Alan Fraley will not admit to the incident while he is at work. He could be persuaded to talk over drinks after hours. Alan will reveal that John Riggs has

a hair-trigger temper and he truly fears that some day, Riggs might actually hurt someone.

If the players visit the docks first thing in the morning, they will arrive shortly after the police have been summoned to the scene.

If they visit the docks at night, they will be attracted to the sound of a single gunshot. They will arrive on the scene in time to see a speedboat accelerating away from the dock, with two men on board. The darkness of the night will prevent anyone from making out the name or numbers of the boat.

ANOTHER DEATH

A woman's body has been found on the docks, outside the Starr Line shipping warehouse. The woman is dressed in a black body-suit, black leather gloves and a black wool stocking cap pulled down over her long blond hair. Nearby, there is a crowbar and She has been shot in the head at close range. Also, she bears the telltale mark of some sort of chain having been ripped from around her neck. Careful observation by someone on the scene (or by the medical examiner upon his investigation) will reveal the most damage from the chain being ripped from her neck is on the opposite side as the other five victims - implying her attacker was left-handed.

Whoever it was who found the body (PC's or security) appears to have interrupted a theft of some kind. If the PC's interrupt the attack, the crate will still contain its cargo. Otherwise, the crate has been opened and its contents are missing. In either case, the ship's manifest will reveal that the crate contains a single high-tech video projector addressed to Ethan Rayne - the evangelical leader of the Calendite cult.

fearful masses to move on to a new world. It was ridiculously easy. The Mayan mythos was perfect for his purposes with all that stuff about aligning planes and dark rifts. He didn't even have to modify the particulars much. Just a few well-placed leaps in logic, some carefully selected followers, a new suit, and Ethan Rayne was soon working the talk-show circuit evangelizing the new Calendite cult. He preached about the coming end of the age, and how material goods would be of no use in the next life. It wasn't long before the checks started rolling in from some particularly vulnerable folks who truly wanted to believe they had a future. With their generous contributions, Ethan took the show on the road.



To make matters even more complex, the dead woman is in fact Anna Shepard. The girl who was seen accompanying Ethan on the Jerri Jesse Rivera show! This should lead the players to the conclusion that something is definitely weird with the Calendite cult. Why would the leader of the cult's own girlfriend by trying to steal from him?

EVE OF DESTRUCTION

Today is the last day – the eve of the end of the world. Some of the other Calendites are getting together to party tonight on The Strip. The assembly with Ethan Rayne convenes at 6:00 am in The Square. I'm not sure why, but I'm really excited about the alignment. I've heard that there are other Calendite orders in the other major cities as well. I keep reaching inside my shirt and grasping the pendant – to make sure it's still there. The contents of that pendant are my ticket to the next life. This is going to be one heck of a night.

- from the diary of Franklin Harris



As the sun sets on Sin City on the eve of the winter solstice, things in Sin City get visibly worse than usual. Basically, you have a cult of 4000 individuals who all believe that the world is ending on the morrow. Unsure of what exactly they'll be faced with after the alignment, most people have opted for partying until they collapse, or at least until the dawn of the new age - whichever comes first.

The revelers on The Strip are the worst. By adding a bunch of devil-may-care cultists to the mix of normally rowdy crowds, a climate of anything that can go wrong, will go wrong exists. The other areas of the city have problems of their own as well. Play up the events as they occur around the players. In the background, the sound of gunshots, sirens and screams can be heard filling the night air with the sounds of mayhem.

All of the following are possible things that could be going on at any given moment. The streets of New Centennial City are not safe places to be this night.

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People who are normally very controlled and conservative are letting their hair down and getting rowdy.

- Getting Drunk.
- Seek sexual liaisons.
- Rappelling or parachuting off one of the tall buildings.
- Hassling the cops.
- Beating up people you don't like very much.
- Arson.
- Committing Robbery.
- People going on spending sprees and maxing out their credit cards.
- Rioting.
- Looting.
- Joyriding.

THE KIDNAPPING

Remember that this is the night that Jason Fischer intends to kidnap his kids. The players could very easily find themselves caught up in that case...especially if they haven't found the killer yet.

Jason will appear at the home of his ex-wife around 10:30 pm. He has a gun, and is willing to use it. In fact, given the chance, he will shoot the man who is now married to his ex-wife, just as a matter of course. It is entirely personal. He will try to get the kids to come with him, and give his ex-wife one chance to come with. If she shows anything except unyielding support for him, he will most likely shoot her as well. The children are afraid of Jason, but follow him out of fear for their lives.

If the party hasn't figured out who was doing the killings, the fact that Jason appears to be losing control of his emotions might point them at him for the moment. In that case, have John Riggs and/or Damien Garside start helping the players. This cooperation between NPC and PC will make the likelihood of the real killer revealing himself, all the more likely.

THE KILLER REVEALED

*"This is the way the world ends,
This is the way the world ends,
This is the way the world ends.
Not with a bang, but a whimper."*

- Children's Rhyme

IT HAPPENED ONE NIGHT

John Riggs took a special interest in Shelly Wheeler during the Calendite recruitment process. Every once in a while, he comes across a new recruit who just seems to accept and embrace the Calendite message with all their heart. When that happens, Riggs feels an enormous sense of fulfillment. In these cases, he will personally present the recruit with their locket. Something that Ethan Rayne normally does. When John saw Shelly, he saw someone who truly believed in the message; someone who truly deserved to be with him in the next age. And Shelly said all the right things, too. The locket John Riggs gave to Shelly Wheeler, originally belonged to Belinda Chiffon. John had cleaned it up and repaired the chain. When she opened the velvet box containing her new locket, her eyes glowed with excitement. She thanked him profusely, and told him she needed to get home.

After she had the locket, Shelly's whole attitude toward John and the Calendites changed. It was almost as if

The killer is John Riggs. He is one of the street preachers, and is fanatically devoted to the cause. As such, he firmly believes that the world is about to end, and a new age is about to begin. It is his belief, that Ethan Rayne is correct about the Mayan gods returning on the solstice. He believes they are returning to transport the faithful to the next world, and only the faithful will make the journey. The locket is the key to the next life. Inside is a capsule that Ethan says will make the passage easier. John is pretty sure the capsule is some sort of poison, but chalks it up to being a means to an end... a dead end to be exact.

Riggs is killing other members of the cult who he doesn't feel are worthy to join him in the next age. Basically, it's a misguided way of weeding out the membership.

He takes the locket because he feels that it's the key they need to move on to the next age. He kills them to prevent them from just getting another one. The murders are all performed with whatever is available at the time. They aren't premeditated. He just is sitting there talking to the person one second, then trying to cave in their skull the next.

The point at which this comes to light will differ in every game. While the players are going through the recruitment process, they will earn the trust of the Calendites. If at any point, one of the PC's performs an act, or displays an attitude that Riggs would find offensive, or undesirable, he will consider killing the PC, especially if they already have a locket! If one or more of the PC's present themselves as a particularly strong believer, Riggs may even give them one of the lockets from the other victims.

Riggs is more than capable of defending himself in a fight. He is also quite capable of dealing considerable damage, especially if he gets a chance to strike first. The referee is encouraged to give Riggs a full PC complement of hit points, rather than the standard 40pts assigned to NPCs. His

devout beliefs make him a bit more oblivious to pain. If he is found out and trapped, he may recount the death of Shelly Wheeler to the players before shooting his way out of trouble. One thing you can keep in mind. Riggs will undoubtedly lose his temper if one of the players should reveal him or herself to be unworthy in Riggs' eyes. He will attempt to take the locket and then kill the offender. Riggs is fanatical and crazy, but he is not stupid. He will flee if he is caught in the act. If Riggs should escape the PC's at this point, he will go into hiding in The Projects. If that happens, it is very unlikely that the players will be able to find him among the many thousands of people packed into the tenements. The players may well feel that they have lost their chance at bringing him in. This is not the case. Events will transpire on the morning of the convergence that will guarantee that they see John Riggs again. He could easily become one of the instruments of Ethan Rayne's undoing.

ASSEMBLY

We stood together... shoulder to shoulder... a group of men and women who had nothing more to live for... nothing more to lose. We'd given it all away, one way or another. And now we stood together, listening to Ethan's words, as he called out to the heavens. The thick gray clouds slid swiftly across the night sky. I could hear the voices of the faithful around me, whispering their concerns and fears. Searching for a sign - searching for a new beginning. Nobody knew what to expect. To tell you the truth, we didn't have a clue what we were waiting for. That was Ethan's job. He stood upon the scaffold, two stories above our heads and commanded the sky to clear. Listening to the power in his voice, I almost believed the sky would heed his words.

- from the diary of Franklin Harris

she had only been putting on an act in order to get a locket of her very own. And now that she had the locket, she didn't care about anything else. Riggs was angry and hurt. He went to her apartment, hoping she would have an explanation for her change of heart that he could accept. Shelly invited him inside, and tried to explain that she was very grateful for the gift of the locket, but that she didn't really want to have anything to do with the cult anymore. She told him that she was having trouble buying into the Mayan calendar thing, and would just as soon forget the whole thing.

Riggs was beside himself with fury in an instant. He ripped the locket from her undeserving neck, and she lunged after it, screaming that it was hers, and he should be more careful in the future. Without thinking, he grabbed the frying pan from its hook on the wall and slammed the pan across the side of her head, to try to stop her blasphemous words. She fell to the ground. But unlike the other times, lashing out at Shelly didn't alleviate the pain he felt. With the others, they had proven themselves

unworthy, and that had angered him, but the attack stopped the pain. This was different. Hitting her had not dismissed the rage. If anything, he was even angrier! He had trusted her! She had betrayed him! He hit her again and again and again and still the pain continued. In his blind fury, he lost his grip on the locket. Tears streamed down his face, blurring his vision. He staggered backward out of the apartment and ran sobbing into the night.



At 6:00am on the morning of December 21, 2012, the members of the Calendite cult met at the center of The Square. Ethan has spared no expense with regard to this final moment, the culmination of his entire plan. A large stage has been set up right in front of the Centennial Courthouse. The platform atop the scaffold is approximately fifteen feet off the ground.

It is a testament to how far gone Ethan Rayne truly is that he even shows up for this event. Most con men would have realized that the time to cut and run had long-since past. But Ethan has been planning this event for months. And nothing, not even a Mayan god appearing out of the ether, was going to stop him from seeing this thing through.

The crowd of followers who have joined their leader at the time and place of his choosing are assembled before him. Four-Thousand strong, they fill the park like a sea of humanity. And every one of those people has a golden locket around their neck. Each locket contains a small black pill. Every member of the cult has been instructed that when they see the spaceship arrive, they must pop that pill in their mouths and bite down hard on it.

His gaze scans the gray-clouded sky overhead, looking for any break in the pattern. There is none. He smiles at the implications and allows his gaze to fall on the rooftop of the Town Hall at the opposite end of The Square. He can just barely make out the technician crouching on the rooftop with the video projector.

As the minutes toward sunrise tick off, one by one, the crowd will start getting restless. Despite the fact that this is the moment that the cultists have been preparing for months for, they are not coping very well with the possibility that it may just come true.

He raises his arms toward the crowd, and a cheer goes up across the multitude.

THE END OF THE WORLD

A thrill of excitement spread across the crowd like a wave. A pair of lights appeared in the bank of clouds overhead. The twin orbs of illumination spun around a common center, marking a circular path in the sky. Beams of light seemed to suddenly stream out of the clouds, spraying toward the ground on all sides in a luminous fountain. The disk appeared next, one second it was nothing more than a pattern of lights shining through the clouds, and the next moment, a clearly defined saucer rimmed in spinning red and blue lights. The speakers of the PA system began to resonate with a low sympathetic hum, which grew deeper and louder with each passing second. The flying saucer - the chariot of the gods - began its descent toward the waiting crowd. Tears filled my eyes. My chest swelled with pride. Around me, I heard a hundred tiny metallic clasps on a hundred pendants spring open. I had forgotten about the pill! The only way to board the ship was to leave our physical body behind. The woman at my right took the tiny black capsule out of the pendant and placed it into her mouth. The tall man to my left was doing the same. My fingers groped frantically at my own pendant, trying to pull it free from within my shirt. I heard the woman and man both moan softly as they bit into the pill, a sound that was repeated by many of the faithful multitude around me. My fingers were numb from the cold night air, and I tried in vain to work the clasp on the pendant. I could feel the tiny black capsule rattling around inside the body of the pendant, but my fingers wouldn't obey my command to press the tiny switch...

- from the diary of Franklin Harris

As if on cue, as the exact moment of sunrise arrived, despite the fact that the sky is completely overcast, a low hum begins emanating from the PA system in The Square. At the same time, a circle of lights becomes visible on the surface of the cloudbank overhead. A thrill of excitement passes through the crowd as all eyes in The Square turn skyward.

When the image of the saucer first appears, projected on the cloudbank, it is very convincing. There are three image projectors spaced out around The Square. One is on top of the Town Hall. The other two are better concealed on the rooftops of two stores just off The Square. The three projectors form a perfect equilateral triangle, with each of their images aimed at a single point over the center of the Square.

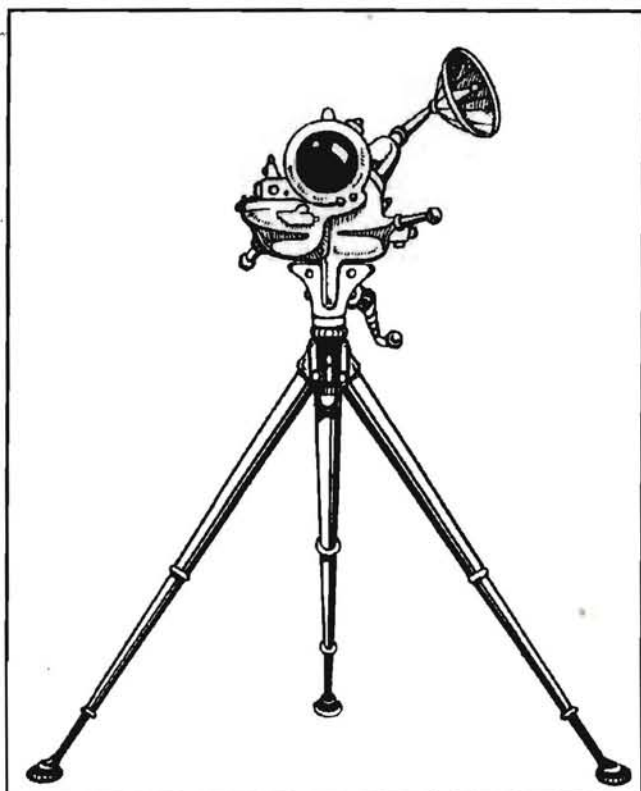
Ethan stands upon the scaffold at the head of The Square along with his two standard security guards. Most of the Calendites have the presence of mind to open the lockets at this point.

If the players investigated the heist, they know that Ethan Rayne was shipped a high-tech imaging projector. That device is actually visible atop the roof of the Town Hall. The players will be able to spot it (Formidable Observation). If the players do not spot it they might notice that some newspeople have cameras and are recording the event. The cameras may get the players thinking about the projector from the heist. They have several options. They could attempt to warn people in the crowd that the image is a fake. There are some people who would undoubtedly believe them. But by the same token, there are just as many who would ignore them completely. The only way to convince the crowd that the ship is a fake is to expose the illusion. The technician operating the projector is armed with a Browning HP-35 automatic pistol, skills as per Experienced NPC. There is one other person on the roof with him, just inside the access door to the roof. The guard is wearing a Kevlar vest (AV:1), and is armed with a 10mm Colt M1911A1 equipped with a silencer and laser sight, Skills as per Veteran NPC. He will be able to fire from a concealed position down a long staircase from behind a cinder block and steel fire-door frame (AV:9)

Once the guard and technician are overcome, it is a simple matter to shut off the projector on the Town Hall roof...

...the saucer continued to descend, toward the waiting crowd. The woman to my right fell to her knees, sobbing in adulation. The man on my left pitched forward and vomited on the grass. The lights from the saucer danced across my face, red and blue, faster and faster. My eyes started to sting, that's when I realized I didn't want to blink. I didn't want to remove my eyes from the vision before me - even for an instant. I put the capsule on my tongue and drew it into my mouth. The dry gelatin of the black capsule stuck to my tongue, giving it a flavor like plastic. I tried to gather enough spit to wet the capsule down, so I could reposition it between my teeth. That's when I saw the flicker...

- from the diary of Franklin Harris



The players shut off the projector on the town hall roof, and the image of the flying saucer flickers briefly. Unfortunately, the image does not disappear. What the players don't know, is that there are three projectors necessary to produce a realistic 3-d image. Shutting down one of the projectors degrades the quality of the image, making it appear less solid - more transparent. But it does not destroy it. From the vantage point atop the Town Hall, the players should be able to make out the emplacements of the other two projectors (they are defended with the exact same arrangement of guard and technician, only the second and third emplacements will be expecting the attack. Due to the architecture of The Square, only the players on top of the town hall are able to see the other projectors.

From the vantage point atop the Town Hall, the players also have a clear 100-yard shot of Ethan Rayne, should any of them have that kind of range weapon handy. Bear in mind, that they'll only get one shot before Rayne's bodyguards will spring into motion to intercept bullets and remove him as a viable target. Recall that Rayne routinely wears a Kevlar vest under his suit. From this point forward, it is open season on Ethan. Don't be afraid to let the PC's have a crack at him. Bear in mind, he's crafty, and isn't likely to present himself as an easy target again.

THE DARK WORLD

The saucer appeared to wink out of existence for a moment. Now you see it, now you don't. Then it reappeared in exactly the same spot. My teeth paused on the gelatin capsule. It happened again. A wave of darkness swam across the surface of the disk, like the shadow cast by a child's hand on a wall. The woman choked out another sob. I glanced down at her, and was horrified to see a bubbling froth flowing from between her lips. The man heaved and vomited again. The capsule yielded slightly between my teeth as the heat and moisture of my saliva began to penetrate it. There was some sort of commotion up toward the base of Ethan's scaffold. Most of the crowd was lying on the ground, writhing in pain. A few were standing there, like me, staring at the flickering image of the saucer. Only now noticing that the texture of the clouds shone through in the surface of the glowing disk.

- from the diary of Franklin Harris

There are many levels of belief when it comes to matters of faith. Some people accept what fate hands them with absolute certainty that whatever will be will be. Others feel that faith is fine as far as it goes, but sometimes fate needs a little insurance.

Recall there was a raging debate between scientists and their opponents as to what would transpire when the alignment took place. Those from a little farther out on the lunatic fringe were insisting that the magnetic field of the Earth would be affected by such a celestial event, and when that happened, electric motors all over the world would either suddenly reverse, or cease operation altogether.

Some people want so badly for something to be true that they are willing to risk anything to see it through to the end. Ethan Rayne would have done well to avoid such people in his recruiting plan. With nothing but the best of intentions, several members of the Calendite cult got together, and decided that it would help their cause if there was some sort of easily identifiable event that corresponded with the fulfillment of the Mayan prophecies.

George Boyle was one of the first people that Rayne met in Sin City. George is a take-charge kind of guy. He works at the New Centennial Nuclear Power Reactor facility, and is one of the true believers of Ethan Rayne's teachings. George grew tired of the daily debates on the news feeds and decided to teach the scientists a little humility on the way out. To be perfectly honest, it was only a small computer virus - a program George left running on his workstation when he left at the end of the second shift Thursday night. The program triggered an automatic login to his office mate's workstation, which in turn triggered an automatic

login to the print server down the hall, which triggered an automatic login back to George's workstation. George figured that it would take about four hours for the continuous login loop to drain the system resources down to nothing. When the failsafe systems in the reactor noticed the lack of attention from the server, they attempted to log a system report by logging in to George's machine, which in turn triggered yet another loop of resource munching.

The operating system on the file server seized up at 6:10 am on December 21, 2012 - a few minutes after Ethan Rayne's light show was getting underway in The Square. The file server crashed, causing the failsafe systems to initiate a reactor core shutdown... just in case.

At 6:11 am, a wave of darkness washed across Sin City, radiating outward from the power plant facility. And fully reaching the outer fringes of the city limits by 6:12. The buildings that had emergency generators remained lit. Those that did not, were plunged into utter darkness in a matter of seconds.

It is difficult to explain all the different reactions that people had to the sudden power outage. Down in The Square, the faithful multitudes, those who had not already popped the tiny black poison capsule into their mouths, watched as the transparent image of the flying saucer winked completely out of existence. Even the low clouds disappeared from view, as the ambient light shining from the city went out with it.

There were members of the crowd that looked upon the power outage as confirmation that their worst fears had at last come true - the Earth's magnetic field had flipped over, rendering all electrical devices useless. The sudden disappearance of the saucer had a more devastating effect - the aliens had arrived, and somehow found them unworthy of saving. Some people were so completely overwhelmed by the sense of loss that came with that realization, that they popped the pill in their mouths anyway. The greatest tragedy came for the people, who watched the saucer wink out of existence even as their heart seized up in their chests. But there were some people in the crowd - a surprisingly large number - who did not take the pill. They stood there, and watched Ethan Rayne put on his act. They watched the saucer with a remote sense of wonder. Then watched as the illusion was shattered and the man on the scaffold realized - along with the rest of the crowd - that the ride was over. Many of these people looked at the writhing bodies and the twitching dead who were scattered across The Square, and felt the first gut-wrenching realization that something horrible had been visited upon them. And the instrument of that visitation was standing atop a two-story scaffold less than a hundred yards away.

Outside The Square, reactions to the outage were mixed as well. In truth, most inhabitants of the Citadel never even noticed there was a problem. The office tow-

ers were equipped with generators. The gleaming gem of New Centennial City still glowed with an uncaring light. There were some people however, who had been on the fence between acceptance and disbelief on the end-of-the-world concept from the beginning. For them, the power outage served as absolute proof that they had made a spectacularly wrong decision. There were a number of these individuals who felt compelled to end their lives at that moment. Sadly, some succeeded.

GOD'S FLIGHT

"When the alien spaceship disappeared once and for all from the sky, taking the electricity with it, I didn't know what to think. The bitter taste of the capsule was sharp on my tongue, but I had no saliva left to do anything with the poison. But I was suddenly very certain that I had made a terrible mistake. I spat the capsule out and began rubbing my tongue on the dirty sleeve of my shirt. The members of the Calendite cult who still stood, suddenly burst into motion, charging the scaffold upon which Ethan Rayne stood. In the darkness, we were no longer sure if he was still up there, but I don't think it mattered anymore. We ran across The Square, trying not to trample our own dead comrades in the process. The sickness and anger in the pit of my stomach gelled into an incoherent rage. I don't believe I've ever hated anyone in my life as much as I hated Ethan at that point. I don't think I've ever been more disappointed in myself, either."

- from the diary of Franklin Harris

If by some miracle, John Riggs still lives at this point, it is pretty obvious where he will strike next. His entire motivation for every killing was to weed out the unworthy members of the cult. Ethan Rayne has just been exposed beyond any shadow of a doubt to be a traitor to the very cause he created. Ethan couldn't have proven himself more unworthy of the trust the Calendites had placed in him, if he had tattooed a giant red 'U' to his forehead. If Riggs still lives, he'll make a bee-line for Ethan. Perhaps even completing the job the PC's haven't yet finished. (If Riggs has already been taken out, then you could substitute Damien Garside or Jason Fischer for this role.)

If one of the players or NPC's should succeed in killing Ethan Rayne, the threat he represents is far from over. For one thing, we still have the power outage to consider. At this point nobody knows why the power has gone out. It is likely that a large number of people, just waking up, are realizing that the events of the last week, which they've somehow managed to dismiss, are real. There are more direct

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problems as well. While buildings in the Citadel, and the hospitals are equipped with backup generators, the tenements in The Projects are not. Every one of those stark brick structures, a veritable hive of humanity containing hundreds of cells has been plunged into darkness. No ventilation systems. No elevators.

As the crowd turned on him, Ethan realized that he had made a terrible blunder in staying around this long. Everything had fallen apart. Somehow the details of his plans had been leaking out. He had thought that Anna might have been the source of the leak. So when he had his goons take her out during her clumsy attempt at destroying the replacement projector, he thought he had plugged it. As he searches his mind for answers he hears another bit of bad news, one of his bodyguards that remained at the house just radioed in that Themakin appears to have escaped. Suddenly, everything became very clear to Ethan. The alien! Themakin had arrived the day of the talk show. The day of the fire alarm at the exhibit. The day everything had started to go wrong. The alien was to blame for all of this.

If someone kills Ethan while still at the assembly, then before he actually dies, he will issue an order to his henchmen to kill the alien, Themakin. Ethan has deduced that an alien on a strange planet would attempt to flee as soon as possible. Themakin had stated to Ethan that his floater was located in the caverns by the tower without the fire. He will tell his henchmen to try there first. Otherwise, he will flee The Square at the earliest opportunity, and go to do the job personally. He enters his limousine and tells the bewildered driver to take him to Vent #4.

The easiest entrance to the caverns is the only inactive methane vent, Vent Tower #4, which has been converted to power generation and shut down until after the new year. The quickest way to get to the methane tower would be to enlist the aid of the detectives, Rollins and Fader. Despite its shabby appearance, their car has a big-block pursuit engine and the requisite flashing lights and sirens that will allow a straight, high-speed shot up the hill to the #4 Vent maintenance facility. They will arrive there less than a minute behind the fleeing assassin.

How this situation is handled is up to the Referee. This part of the story is supposed to involve high adventure - literally. A villain with a head start is scaling the methane vent tower, and intends to climb down inside of it to kill the party's informant. Apart from the obvious fear of falling from the tower, there is also the issue of the methane to consider. It isn't the best idea to fire a gun in a chamber full of explosive gas. Ample warning has been given to the players by now that they should realize that danger.

One possible way to deal with the assassin could be to activate the generator in the tower. This involves opening the primary and secondary valves (at the base and midpoint of the tower). Then powering up the untested turbine which is mounted just above the secondary valve. Activating the tower will serve two purposes. First

of all, it could serve to incinerate the bad guy. Second, it will restore power to a good portion of the city. The generator is already hooked into the power grid. The tower has just never been tested before. A fully operational methane turbine is a sight to behold. This is definitely not the normal guttering orange flame evident in the other towers. The methane is allowed to build up pressure lower in the pipe, and then sprayed upward toward the turbine, where it is ignited. The contained blast of methane spins the turbine and generates electricity. There is an interesting side-effect of the rapidly spinning gases. Instead of a steady flame, the exhaust from the pipe looks like a swirling pillar of fire, climbing into the overcast dawn sky. A very impressive sight indeed.

FINALE

I had smelled the methane leaching from the ground on the Hill before, but never had I been this close to the source. The access crawlway under the control room for the venting valves led down to a jagged, rocky cavern. The walls dripped with a black, liquid sewage that reeked of decaying trash. Movement through the tunnels without a breathing apparatus was difficult. Fortunately, the detectives were able to produce some breathing masks from the trunk of their car. Giant rats inhabited these tunnels, as did something larger which appeared to have an elongated head tipped with a sharp beak. Our progress was occasionally slowed by these encounters, but we pressed on and found ourselves in the alien's tiny hiding place.

- on the trail of Themakin

The finale of the adventure will take place in the caverns beneath The Projects. By now the players should realize who their mysterious informant may actually be, and will seek it out.



The tunnels are inhabited by (see Dark Races section in this book), Rats (page 420 in the Referee's Guide) and Giant Roaches (pages 421 in Referee's Guide). Use the rats and the roaches to keep the players on their toes. The idea is to increase the anxiety levels of the players as they progress through the tunnels. Play up the dark, confining tunnels lined with walls of oozing garbage piles. Have the beasts jump out of warrens in the walls and take the party by surprise. The methane in the tunnels is a real danger, but probably not as you would expect. Methane is a gas that displaces breathable oxygen in confined spaces. Everyone in the caverns will need to have oxygen masks in order to proceed. The odds of actually igniting a pocket of gas in the tunnels is greatly reduced due to the lower oxygen content. A pocket of gas will be ignited by gunfire on a roll of 12+ on 1D20. The resulting ball of flame will burn for two combat phases, doing 1D6 damage to each hit location per phase. When the fire burns itself out, it will also have used up all free oxygen in the vicinity. Reduce the chances of further ignition in that region to 18+ on 1D20 for the next two turns. Then increase the chance by one point per turn until it returns to the original level.

Once the players are on edge, you can let them catch sight of a Watcher. The winged creatures will back off and allow the players to pass, so long as they make no aggressive move toward any of the Watchers. They are quite capable of causing great damage with their large beaked faces. It won't take long to find the encampment of the lone alien. A smashed and inoperable Floater leans against the cave wall nearby. A small portable ventilator of alien design sits on the floor next to the alien. It is pumping out enough breathable air to keep the methane in the room down to non-combustible levels. The alien lies on the ground, eyes squeezed shut and moaning softly. When the players enter the room, it jerks to consciousness and attempts to lean against the wall. The alien is badly wounded, perhaps even mortally so. If the players came into the caverns on their own, they will be joined shortly by the two detectives, Rollins and Fader. The two policemen came along to clean up any loose ends. Apprehending Ethan Rayne or John Riggs if they are still alive. Otherwise, they stand back and observe the party interaction with the alien.

The creature is obviously in a lot of pain. The cavern is filled with the distant roar of flame vents, punctuated by the occasional explosion of pressurized gases. The only other sound, apart from the ventilator and the shuffling feet of the party, is the labored breathing of the wounded alien which lies on the ground, barely conscious.

The alien communications device begins to vibrate once again, signaling that another message is coming through. The bearer of the device will be able to hear the following. Whether the PC passes that information on to the other players is beyond your control.



"The age has ended - as was predicted long ago. The age of innocence is over. The descent into shadow is complete."

The alien is quite obviously fighting great pain to continue.

"You should know. Events have been set in motion that are beyond your control. Corruption and decay spread like a cancer..."

The alien's speech is cut short as a sharp report rings out in the enclosed space. Detective Michael Rollins stands across the chamber from the alien, a smoking Mossberg shotgun cradled in his arms. Obviously upset by this action, Fader rushes forward and takes the alien into his arms. Thick, dark blood spreads across the creature's chest. Its eyes are squeezed shut. The alien's message continues to play. The death of the alien is now a foregone conclusion as its life force slips away.

"Thus the new age begins as a struggle in the darkness."

Themakin opens its eyes and struggles to sit up, but lacks the strength or will to accomplish the task. For the first time, the creature employs normal speech to communicate. The last words, which pass its lips, accompanied by a runnel of black blood are:

"You have my pity."

Once it dies, the alien's body will start to wither away, growing thinner and less substantial until it disappears entirely.

If questioned as to his reason for killing the alien, Rollins will claim that he was just following orders. If asked who the order came from, he will simply reply, "A good cop doesn't question the source of his orders. He only needs to make sure that the orders are carried out. Promptly and without question."

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Fader is just as shocked by this revelation as the players. It is clear that he has no knowledge of the orders to which Rollins refers.

Rollins will then turn his weapon on the party, and motion for them to leave the chamber. "I suggest you all leave now, before I decide there's any more tidying up to do."

How the players react to Rollins' statement is impossible to predict. So here is where we will end the official narrative of this adventure. The help that the players have given in solving the Calendite murders and revealing Ethan Rayne's treachery has earned them the right (in Rollins' eyes) to leave unharmed. Whether they choose to go quietly or not is up to them.



DARK RACES

ARR-TOLK (HUMANOID E.T.)

Strength:	4
Agility:	5
Constitution:	8
Intelligence:	12
Education:	15
Charisma:	4
Empathy:	8
Initiative:	2
Movement:	2/7/12/20
Skill/Dam:	7/3
Hits:	20/40
# Appearing:	1

**The Mythology:**

First seen in carvings of ancient Central American cities, these creatures have been the subject of myth and speculation for decades. They appear human in the carvings, but also appear to be operating circular vehicles, in which they sit, with flames shooting out of the rear. Many take these images as proof that the Mayans and other native cultures of Central America had contact with extraterrestrial life thousands of years ago. Others go so far as to claim that these beings are the true gods of the Mayan people.

The Reality:

The Arr-Tolk as they call themselves, could be considered a fifth alien race to add to those provided in the basic Referee's Guide. Whereas the other alien races in the game are currently malevolent, this race has not had direct or indirect contact with the Dark. Themakin, the first of its kind to visit our dimension in several thousand years, arrived in New Centennial City less than a week ago. One thing should be made clear. This race of ET's has not succumbed to Dark Influence at this time. They could even be considered an ally for Humanity.

Physical Description:

Arr-Tolk are on the whole a little taller than humans. They grow no hair anywhere on their bodies, and their skin has a purple hue to it. Their language is indecipherable to humans without a translating device. The Arr-Tolk do not appear to have decipherable genders. The race as a whole is referred to by the gender-neutral form "it."

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WATCHER

Strength:	9
Agility:	12
Constitution:	11
Intelligence:	5
Education:	1
Charisma:	2
Empathy:	6
Initiative:	4
Movement:	15/25/40*
Skill/Dam:	7/1D6+4
Hits:	28/56**
# Appearing:	1



*This is flying speed. On foot, Watchers travel at human rates.

**Watchers have 1 point of natural armor on head and chest locations.

The Mythology:

The natives of the region carved statues of these creatures and left them keeping watch over their burial grounds. When the original settlers of Centennial asked about them, the natives explained that during the dark of night, creatures such as these would come and dig up the corpses and take them away. The only way to prevent this from happening was to leave the statues watching over the burial site. The creatures were territorial and would not come near a place that was watched by another of the same race.

Once the building of the city took place, the designers took the carvings of the watchers and duplicated them, placing them on the corners of each of the major buildings in the city. Many visitors to New Centennial City comment that the gargoyles found on Sin City buildings have a unique flavor due to the influences of the native carvings.

The Reality:

As the years have gone by, the creatures that the original carvings were based on have slowly replaced the statues. The few people who are even aware of this, argue violently over how it came about. Some think the creatures carried off the statues and took their places, while others think that these creatures have always been there, that there never were any statues.

The Watchers are a predominately nocturnal race, primarily because it is easier for them to move about undetected in the dark. During the day, they perch like statues on the ledges of the buildings around New Centennial City, or they take

refuge in the depths of the caverns under the hill. At night, they leave their roosts and fly around the city, landing frequently to watch the goings on of the humans. At any given time, night or day, there are usually a dozen or more Watchers keeping an eye on things.

It is not known why the Watchers have their intense interest in humankind. They have been seen peering in skylights in the city, carefully observing events within. All that is known is that if something is happening, chances are a watcher is nearby. Native legends speak of their ability to read the future and come to the places where crucial branches in time would take place. Renowned mystic, Irene Kapolowski, reported feeling an empathic presence in the city, one that seemed to be searching for something, using empathic its ability like a radar system.

Very few people have actually seen a live watcher. Watchers have the innate use of Psychic Invisibility (see page 157 of the Players' Handbook) and use it to shield themselves from the eyes of the population of Sin City whenever they are moving around. However, if something captures their complete attention, they quite often become at least partial visible. Certainly no one has seen one close up and have lived to tell the tale. The Watchers, if startled, tend to react violently and then flee into the sky. Another aspect of their ability to go unseen is their natural ability to sit absolutely still. By tensing their muscles, they can seem as hard and unyielding as the stone their hide mimics.

Physical Description:

The Watchers are a large race, standing 2.5 meters tall. Their heads have been estimated to be over 1.5 meters in length, mainly due to the heavy beak like mouth. Long arms with claw like hands extend from the shoulders and come almost to the creature's knees. Each foot is also prehensile, similar to that of an ape.

Two long wings, each made of a leathery membrane stretched between long thin bones, extend from the rear of the creature's shoulders. When the Watcher is still, these fold down along its back so they appear to be almost invisible. When fully extended, they can reach in excess of 6 meters from wingtip to wingtip.

The skin of the Watchers appears to be dry and leathery, but is in fact soft and extremely pliable. It is gray in color, and is covered with an extremely coarse layer of short fur. Far from soft, the fur feels like rough stone. When one of these creatures die, they become rigid. One man who claim to have killed a watcher, pointed to the body lying broken on the street. He was arrested for defacing one of the gargoye statues of Sin City.

CONTINUING TO USE NEW CENTENNIAL CITY IN YOUR CAMPAIGN

Questions that the players have yet to find answers to:

- Who gave Rollins his orders?
- What are the Watchers? What are they doing in New Centennial City?
- Who is the mysterious benefactor who led Ethan Rayne to New Centennial City by diverting the Mayan Exhibit?
- What is the Nexus? Where is it, and can the device still be used to undo some of the damage apparently caused by the alignment?

Side plots to keep you busy until the next part of the Sin City saga becomes available:

- Restoring power to the reactor. The eco-warriors are bound to be resistant to seeing the reactor go back online.
- The largest of the luxury craft in the harbor is *The Centennial Star*, the private party barge of the Trading Council. At least once a month, *The Centennial Star* heads out to sea for an evening of drunken merriment. It is considered the highest honor to receive an invitation to board the 120-foot three-story ship. The players could be hired to try to sneak aboard the yacht and find some information.
- The gangers in The Projects are just now beginning to venture into the suburban areas below, testing the waters to gauge the response of the authorities. For the moment, their fear of the New Centennial City police with their heavy armament is keeping the gangs in check. But that fear is starting to fade. People have been hearing rumors that some of the gangs are arming themselves for some sort of turf war. Nobody knows when or even where in The Projects it's going to happen.
- Rumors have it that there are a number of strange disappearances in Smith Park. Due to the consortium paid by a mysterious source, the police do not investigate thoroughly. Perhaps the party could find out exactly what is going on in this New Centennial City landmark.

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