

Forgotten Lives



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MISPLACED CHILDHOOD

by Scott McDaniel

"Mom?" Matt Freeman slowly stood up from the table. The music and atmosphere in Sad Mary's swirled around them, paying no heed.

"Uh, what?" said the woman that Matt addressed. She was moderately tall, dressed in provocative clothes, and had bleached blond hair. She slowly started to back away from the table.

Matt continued to stare. The woman who stood before him was his mother. She had just approached his table and asked if he would be interested in any "extra-curricular" activities. How could she be here? On this island? Matt closed his eyes for a moment, but she was still there when he opened them, looking confused and uncertain. Sure, she was in different clothes. She wore enough make-up to irritate a laboratory of rabbits. But it was definitely her.

Finally, Matt managed to force words from his mouth, "What . . . What are you doing here?" It was all he could think of. Slowly, the image sank into his brain. She was young. She certainly didn't look in her mid-fifties. In fact, she couldn't be older than thirty. But that did not change the fact that it was Sarah Freeman standing in front of him.

"Look, do I know you? I don't think I know you. Um, just forget it, OK?" She continued to back up, looking to the left and the right for escape routes. Matt stepped around the table to follow her.

"No! Wait," Matt said. "How can you be here? Who are you? Don't you recognize me?" His questions began to fall over each other. How could his own mother not know who he was? How could she be his mother? He paused, and asked himself that last question again. How could this woman standing in front of him be his mother?

He had no idea, because Sarah Freeman had died in a car crash in 1992, at the age of fifty-three.

The Situation

The scene above, or one very similar to it, begins this scenario about a lost and confused young man. Matt Freeman thinks that he is a typical twenty-five year old who is working as a waiter at Sequins while saving enough money to go to school. He is, in fact, only seven months old. He

is a prototype of a new species that the Pharaohs have designed to replace the current, unruly stock of mutant human.

Over the last few years, quisling oppenheimers developed a new species of human; one that is more susceptible to control than the mutant humans. Once they iron out the bugs in the new model, the Pharaohs plan to eliminate the current humans and begin again with the new and improved variety. Such an agenda could, of course, fill an entire series. This scenario concentrates on the experiences of one of their first prototypes of the new species: Matt Freeman.

The quisling scientists built him as an adult just over seven months ago. After initial laboratory tests, they decided to release him into the real world so that they could study his behavior in a less controlled setting. The scientists invented the persona of Matt Freeman and implanted memories and a personality into their prototype's brain. To make the memories seem real, they decided to film the salient portions of his recollections to use as a basis for the implants. Quisling operatives hired local actors from around the Edge to play his family members, telling them that it was a made-for-TV movie called *Misplaced Childhood*. The actors never saw the movie on the tube so they assumed that it had been shelved and went on with their lives.

In the meantime, the quisling scientists arranged for Matt to have a job as a waiter at Sequins (see the "At Your Service" chapter entry in OTE). The environment gave them the opportunity to observe how well he took orders and served others, and it also allowed them to set up different artificial situations to see how their subject would respond. Matt has been a waiter at Sequins for almost three months. The night before this scenario begins, another server asked Matt to cover his shift for him. Of course, Matt agreed.

To make up for the extra time, Matt's manager gave him the next day off. After his regular racquetball session, one of his partners asked Matt if he wanted to go to Sad Mary's. Having never been, he agreed. While there, a waitress/prostitute named Monica Lisbon propositioned Matt and his



racquetball partner. Monica, however, was the actress who played Sarah Freeman in *“Misplaced Childhood,”* which is why Matt recognized her as his mother.

As the scenario unfolds, Matt’s world begins to peel away layers at a time. The PCs can affect the story in a variety of ways (see “On Ramps,” below). Before long, however, Matt’s sanity completely deserts him. As soon as the quisling agents who monitor him realize that their experiment has gone awry, they close in to take Matt and clean up any messes.

On Ramps

The PCs can approach this scenario from a variety of viewpoints. They may all be working together, or you may have some of them compete to figure out what is going on and what to do with Matt. Here are several options for involving the PCs in the scenario:

- If the PCs are altruistic or naturally curious, Monica Lisbon takes shelter behind them and asks them to protect her from this raving

lunatic who claims that she is his mother. While some types of PCs might just trash Matt and then walk away, other types might want to investigate his claims further. Of course, if they do beat him up and then walk away, the quislings would want to know why, and the PCs better have a good answer.

- Monica’s “manager” hires the PCs to figure out what’s going on with this crazy who keeps stalking one of his girls. Make Monica’s manager seem shady and slimy, but not totally beyond redemption.
- The PCs are quisling agents assigned to monitor Matt and bring him in if “anything unusual” happens. If you use this setup, you may still want to use the other quisling agents in the scenario, perhaps as a competing quisling faction.
- The PCs already know Matt (because you have expertly and subtly slipped him into previous scenarios), and he comes to them asking for help.
- Beefy security guards in the Terminal surround the PCs and accuse them of trying to sneak

through Customs (never mind the fact that they just finished the interview). The guards take the PCs to Deborah Grierson, who asks them to investigate Matt, who has no immigration records. She explains that budget cutbacks have forced her to use tourists caught trying to sneak through Customs to research some of the more mundane cases.

- The conspiracy of your choice believes that Matt is an informant for Thuan Tram (the quisling in charge of monitoring Matt, see p. 12), and they hire or assign the PCs to investigate the relationship between Matt and Thuan.

Characters

Here are the characters that make up the core of the scenario. If the PCs become interested in somebody not listed here, consider whether that person might reasonably know anything about Matt and his nature. For instance, if the PCs decide to spend a lot of energy interviewing Matt's co-workers at Sequins, you could decide that one of the waiters there saw Matt go catatonic once. Or, perhaps a quisling informant overhears the PCs asking questions, and suddenly people seem to be following them everywhere. Don't make it too easy, but don't leave the players stranded.

Matthew Freeman

Confused Prototype

Matt Freeman remembers growing up in a cozy little town called Chestnut Hill, Missouri. He had a Mom and a Dad and an obnoxious little brother that he called “Spud.” He remembers having a great time at his 12th birthday party in 1983, so he must be 25 now. In the scrapbook packed away in his apartment, he has a few of his old report cards from Chestnut Hill High School (he mostly made Bs, with the occasional A and C).

Matt's world turned upside down when his parents were killed in a car accident four years ago. His brother went off to live with grandparents, but Matt came to Al Amarja to try to go to school. Now, he works as a waiter at Sequins, trying to save up enough money to go to classes at D'Aubainne University. To tell the truth, Matt is not sure why he picked Al Amarja as opposed to, say, Siberia. He has never really thought about it.

The problem with all this, as the players may discover, is that none of it is real. Quisling oppenheimers created Matt, his memories, and his personality in a secret laboratory somewhere in the Edge. They created him to be a creature of habit, one who does not ask a lot of irritating questions (such as “What do I want to do with my life?”). Matt just happily goes along, waiting tables and going through his prefabricated little routine. It is a precise routine, and it includes the following (feel free to embellish, however):

- **Every day except Monday** — Report to work at Sequins at 11:00 am and get off work at 9:00 pm.
- **Monday** — Take care of grocery shopping, pay bills, and clean the apartment.
- **Tuesday and Thursday** — Work out or play racquetball at the Pegasus Health Club in Broken Wings from 9:00 am to 10:30 am.
- **Wednesday and Saturday** — Get a haircut at Thuan Tram's Barber Shop in Broken Wings Barrio from 8:00 am to 10:30 am.
- **Friday** — Do laundry and ironing in the morning.
- **Sunday** — Go to morning services and confession at the Temple of the Divine Experience (Matt is Catholic).

Matt does not like to deviate from this schedule, though minor changes do not upset him. He is particularly adamant, however, about never missing a haircut and never missing a confession.

Matt's personality is like an impressionist painting. From far away, or upon cursory inspection, the painting looks like an ordinary scene. As you get closer, however, the picture begins to grow more fuzzy until you are left with small, discrete blobs of color. Likewise, Matt's memories and personal quirks are more a collection of discrete attributes than a complete personality. During the first part of the scenario, play Matt as a likable, if ordinary, young man who is thrown into bizarre circumstances. As the players get to know him, however, show some of the gaps in his world view and his life. For instance, Matt has no career plans, has never seriously thought about religion, has never had a girlfriend, and does not know many small details about life in general (“Chevrolet? What's that? Is it French?”). The closest thing he has to friends are the people he plays racquetball with.

After testing him for several months in the laboratory, the quisling scientists set him up with a job

as a waiter at Sequins. It gave them the chance to see just how well he followed orders. They could also set up special situations to see how he might handle them. To make sure they would not lose their experiment, they installed two safety measures in him. First, Matt has a tracking device in his forearm that allows quisling agents to follow him wherever he goes (ah, the wonders of that satellite navigation network). Second, Matt goes catatonic if a keyword is delivered to him psychically. That is, Matt stops whatever he is doing and just stands or sits there. He may be moved, guided around, or made to sit, but he is not mentally aware. He does not wake up until the keyword is delivered once again.

Quisling agents also perform a thorough check-up on him twice per week. Thuan Tram, Matt's barber, delivers the keyword at each session and performs a thorough physical examination. He checks the tracking device, Matt's overall health, and administers any special treatments if ordered to do so. He then cuts Matt's hair and delivers the keyword again. All Matt remembers is a vaguely pleasant haircut. In fact, if Matt is forced to go catatonic at some other time, he remembers getting a haircut whenever he wakes up. The only way for PCs to discover the psychic keyword is for them to be psychically aware themselves and "overhear" it. Make the keyword as entertaining as you wish.

Although his memories say otherwise, Matt is only seven months old. He is naïve, and he does not have the emotional foundations required to handle weirdness in the extreme. Even with the PCs on his side, Matt's chances of coming through this scenario in good physical and mental health are small. As soon as he becomes disturbed enough to begin missing items in his weekly routine, the quisling agents realize that something is wrong and soon close in to retrieve their malfunctioning prototype. If the PCs somehow help him elude his pursuers, they then must decide what to do with him, because Matt is thoroughly incapable of making serious decisions about himself.

Appears to be an American man, 173 cm, short brown hair and non-descript features. Matt is about the right weight for his height and is in excellent physical condition. He wears a tuxedo when working at Sequins and jeans and t-shirts other times. He has no navel. Apparent age is 25 years, actual age is 7 months.

Languages: English, Al Amarjan patois.

Location: Sequins (when at work); 83D Blade Lane, Four Points Barrio.

Hit Points: 25 (Tougher than the average human)

Traits

Waiter, 3 dice — Matt picked up the serving business quickly because of his natural inclination to follow orders and suggestions. He is friendly, courteous, and prompt, and is on good speaking terms with many of the regulars at Sequins. (Wears a tuxedo when at work)

Suggestible, 1 die — The quislings designed Matt to be easy to control. He instinctively follows orders and suggestions, going along with whatever the players propose. Without direction, he waffles around but eventually makes a decision as to an immediate course of action. When attempting to disobey an order, Matt must roll his 1 die against any appropriate trait for the other person. If the person ordering him around is a quisling, Matt suffers a penalty die as well. (Often says, "Hey, that's a good idea!")

Monica Lisbon

Aspiring Actress

Although she is unwilling to admit this to herself yet, Monica's dreams of making it big as an actress are slowly crumbling to dust. She's been in a few plays and done a few movies, but that break never seems to come along. To make ends meet she works as a waitress and prostitute at Sad Mary's. The real shame is that Monica is actually quite good — she just wasn't bright enough to recognize her real opportunities before they went by.

About a year ago she won a part in what seemed to be a low budget, made for AXTC movie called *Misplaced Childhood*. She played Sarah Freeman, a typical American mom who stayed home and took care of her two sons while her husband provided for the family. It was a pure vanilla role that did not require any talent whatsoever, but Monica gave it her all, hoping that the movie would be her chance at success. Unfortunately, *Misplaced Childhood* never showed on TV, and Monica soon relegated the experience to the "could have been" list of great roles.

Of course, Monica remembers playing the role of Sarah Freeman clearly, but she never did get a handle on just what the movie was about. The

“Misplaced Childhood”

director seemed to be on some sort of artistic trip, and he decided to film the whole movie literally from the point of view of the oldest son (Monica doesn't think to relate this fact, however, unless asked specifically). As far as she could tell, there was no cohesive plot and very little action. Still, it was a chance and a paycheck, so she took the opportunity.

Al Amarjan woman, 153 cm, latently beautiful with bleached blond hair that hangs just past her shoulders. She is thin and well proportioned, and she tries to dress provocatively but often just misses the mark. 28 years old.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, English, some French.

Location: Sad Mary's; 172 Hades Lane, #26, Great Men Barrio.

Traits

Acting, 4 dice — Monica never had formal training, but her natural acting talent has led her to the threshold of success in the entertainment industry. If the players convince her to play Sarah Freeman again for Matt's benefit, she gets a bonus die to convince Matt that she is “real.” (Switches accents routinely in a conversation)

Slow on the uptake, flaw — Monica's talent and looks were not quite enough to make her a success because Monica never really had the brains to realize when she had an opportunity. Unlike some of the other actors, she has no clue that there was anything odd about *Misplaced Childhood* and talks freely to anyone who asks her questions.

What Monica Knows

- The fact that she played someone named Sarah Freeman.
- The names of the other actors and director involved with *Misplaced Childhood*.
- The name and location of Backdrop Productions, the studio that filmed *Misplaced Childhood*.

René LaFayette

Pube Actor

René is a bitter 14 year old who has endured a great deal of pain and is beginning the long climb to adulthood on his own. He grew up in Paris, the son of a painter and a waitress, neither of whom could afford to support a child of 12. During an art exhibition on the island, René's father arranged

to “lose” him on Al Amarja, where he knew that the kid legally qualified as an adult.

René hooked up with a bunch of other pubes and now lives above Grim Kiichi's hardware store at 2317 Varicose Lane. The main hangout of the Black Death Theater Troupe is on the floor above where he lives (see *The Last Province* magazine, issue 2), and he got the idea to audition for acting jobs after talking with them.

René got the part of Keith Freeman in *Misplaced Childhood*. He played the part as if Keith (Spud) was an obnoxious, but basically good at heart younger brother to Matt. He recognized that Jesus kept avoiding what should have been relevant questions, and quickly decided to just accept the money, do the part, and leave any suspicions he had at the door.

French boy, 149 cm, black hair and green eyes. René wears comfortable but cheap clothes whenever he is not auditioning for parts, and he keeps himself pretty well cleaned up in spite of his living conditions. He usually wears a pleasant expression, but is often melancholy and mistrustful on the inside. 14 years old.

Languages: French, serviceable English, Al Amarjan patois.

Location: 2317 Varicose Lane, #2, Flowers Barrio.

Traits

Acting, 3 dice — Some of the more tolerant members of the Black Death Theater Troupe help René with his acting, and he is a likely candidate to join the troupe when he gets old enough. (Casually refers to the Theater Troupe in conversation)

What René Knows

- Shaquonda Ellers, the studio manager, did not like Jesus and had unusually little to do with the production as a whole.

Jacob Falstaff

Nervous Actor

Jacob played the role of Arthur Freeman, Matt's father, in *Misplaced Childhood*. One evening, toward the end of shooting, Jacob overheard part of a phone conversation between Jesus de la Playa and a quisling superior. Jacob did not hear much that was useful, but he remembered coming away with the idea that he did not want to hear any more. While Jesus seemed artistic and

free on the sets, the calculating, businesslike tone of that phone conversation went completely against everything that Jacob had previously experienced. He believes that the producers behind the film have serious and dangerous plans, and he absolutely refuses to talk about any aspect of the *Misplaced Childhood* experience. If the PCs try to talk to Jacob, they should see a door slammed loudly in their face, and they should feel Jacob's fear.

American man, 169 cm, short light brown hair and a few acne scars from his teenage years. Jacob wears grey and black clothes, going for the gothic look. He fidgets and looks nervously about as he speaks with the PCs through the crack in his doorway. He tends toward skinny, but is not gaunt. He is 31 years old.

Languages: U.S. English, Al Amarjan patois, Spanish (from high school).

Location: 352B Bienvenidos St., Sunken Barrio.

Traits

Acting, 4 dice — When he is comfortable and well directed, Jacob is a marvelous actor. Although he has not joined any of the various troupes around

the island, he is beginning to make a name for himself as an independent actor. (Refers to Shakespeare as "The Bard")

What Jacob Knows

- Something was fishy about *Misplaced Childhood*, but he's not talking about it.

Jesus de la Playa

Flaky Movie Director

Jesus wants to be a good quisling. Really, he does. It just seems that his artistic sense occasionally runs against his employers' wishes. When that happens, Jesus usually picks artistic sense, though he covers it up very well.

Jesus directed *Misplaced Childhood*. He knew the nature and purpose of the film, and directed it so that the scenes could seamlessly fit as memories into the life that his colleagues were developing for this proto-human. He never saw the subject (he didn't need to, after all), but he would be quite fascinated to meet him. Jesus would love the opportunity to interview Matt, to see how effective an illusion his "movie" created. Jesus would never tell



Illustration by Nan Fredman

“Misplaced Childhood”

Matt what he really was, and his questions would be circumspect. Probably. Well, maybe.

Actually, Jesus would love to show Matt the hidden master tape that he stowed away (against his superiors’ orders, of course). He would love to discuss why he constructed this memory in this way and find out just how effective that technique was. Should they meet, Jesus views Matt as an incredible fusion of art and science, and he would not be able to resist the temptation to discuss his “artwork.” Jesus might be less open to questions from PCs themselves, but if approached in the right way, and with the right amounts of flattery, he would be willing to discuss certain aspects of the project. Of course, Jesus immediately reports any contacts with PCs to his quisling superiors (at least, all the relevant parts).

Jesus does not just dole out information to the PCs, however. He knows that he walks a dangerous line, and he carefully examines the motives of anybody who approaches him. He says that he worked on *Misplaced Childhood*, but that it left his hands after it went to the AXTC executives. (Checking with AXTC, however, reveals no record of them ever having received a movie named *Misplaced Childhood*.) Make the PCs work to get information out of him. Perhaps he contacts them later, after he has had a chance to check on the validity of their claims.

Spanish man, 159 cm, with long, flowing black hair, a long frizzy beard, and a dark complexion. Jesus wears wire rim, John Lennon glasses and dresses in the flowing garb of the Moors. The patterns are bright and vibrant, and his gestures are exaggerated and, above all, significant. Jesus speaks in deeply philosophical tones, except when discussing business with his quisling superiors. 39 years old.

Languages: Spanish, English, Arabic.

Location: 39 Vester Place, #2, Flowers Barrio.

Traits

Film Direction, 4 dice — Jesus makes artistic, avant-garde films as well as standard television commercials. When necessary, Jesus’ films show a restrained and subdued nature that belies his extravagant personality. Other times, he really cuts loose. (When conversations spin out of control, he yells “CUT!”)

Blinding Passion for His Art, flaw — Jesus’ dedication to art will probably be his death. He is not aware of the Pharaohs’ true nature, and they only

employ his services because they do not have to interact with him directly. The Pharaohs could not begin to understand Jesus’ passions, and he wants to share his work with those who could. If Jesus talks too much to the PCs, he might turn into a rather messy example.

What Jesus Knows

- Jesus can explain why *Misplaced Childhood* was produced.
- Jesus has a secret copy of the master tapes for *Misplaced Childhood*. While he would not willingly part with them for any price, nor for any torture, trickery might work.
- Jesus does NOT know any of the other quislings in this scenario.

Shaquonda Ellers

Suspicious Studio Manager

Shaquonda grew up on the streets of Los Angeles, and her way of escaping the cycles of violence and poverty was through the theater. After a few embarrassing performances, she quickly learned that her aptitude was in the technical aspects of producing shows. She became a professional roadie, touring with different theatrical companies. She first arrived on Al Amarja when traveling with a small troupe, and she soon found a job working for Backdrop Productions. Over the last ten years, she has turned Backdrop into her studio, and she now manages and owns it. She rents the studios out to whoever needs to film a production, and she makes a decent living at it.

Shaquonda is also a low level Neutralizer. She keeps her eyes and ears open, and she passes information on to her contacts. The PCs, of course, do not initially count as contacts, but if they seem reasonable and are polite, she may get back in touch with them with the information she does have.

She remembers *Misplaced Childhood* because Jesus got careless late one evening and left a copy of his orders (coded) lying around while he went out for a cigarette. She photocopied the orders, and has since been working on cracking the code. A completely decoded version of the front page of the document appears on p. 15, though you should only grant the players as much information as you need to suit the story. Shaquonda is repulsed by what she has found out, and feels that the more people know what happened the more difficult it

will be to get away with such deeds in the future.

Black woman, 165 cm, muscular and well dressed. Shaquonda is usually business like, and is at least nominally pleasant, even when she has reason to dislike somebody. 42 years old.

Languages: U.S. English, Al Amarjan patois.

Location: Backdrop Productions, 821 Aria Lane, Flowers Barrio.

Traits

Studio Manager — Shaquonda runs an efficient studio and keeps it profitable, though not outrageously so. She pays protection money to the Aries Gang and can call them for help if she needs to. (Businesslike manner)

What Shaquonda Knows

- *Misplaced Childhood* was never meant to be shown.
- *Misplaced Childhood*'s scenes were to form the basis of implanted memories (optional).
- Shaquonda has a copy of the partially (or completely) decoded document instructing Jesus on how to film *Misplaced Childhood*.

Father Dennis Grierson

Unpredictable Priest

Father Grierson first came to minister to Al Amarja's Catholic population 30 years ago. While some priests might have difficulty coping with the huge variety of religions and beliefs in the Edge, Father Grierson thrives on the challenge. He delves into theological debates with the same relish now as he did when in the seminary.

Grierson tends to be alternately gruff and good natured. For instance, if the PCs want to check his confessional for bugs, Grierson himself pulls out a fancy looking metal and radio wave detector and gives the confessional a thorough scan. He finds two listening devices, plucks them from beneath a board, and marches into his back chamber motioning the characters to follow. He opens a deep drawer that is more than two thirds full of various listening devices and drops them in. "These," he explains, "are just from the last month."

Grierson scans between each confession, and he believes he has a pretty good confidentiality rate. Grierson serves two purposes for this scenario. He can be a red herring, throwing the PCs off of the main trail, he can help Matt deal with his confusion, or both. Grierson studies psychology and

publishes papers in many academic journals. He is quite adept at all aspects of counseling, including hypnosis. As far as he is concerned, the names we attach to mental illnesses today are merely different faces of the demons that used to possess people in the middle ages. Whether the term "demon" is literal or figurative matters little to him, as such problems all come from the same source.

British man, 179 cm, solid but not fat.

Grierson's hair is still black, but his beard is a startling mixture of grey and black. He has a well worn face that scowls just as easily as it smiles. He is gentle one moment and passionate the next. 51 years old.

Languages: British English, Italian, Latin, Al Amarjan patois, Psychobabble.

Location: Temple of the Divine Experience, Sunken Barrio.

Traits

Catholic Priest, 4 dice — Father Grierson embraces all aspects of Catholicism, from the secular views prevalent in the west to the almost aboriginal views that thrive in many third world countries. He has performed an exorcism or two in his day, and he has used modern psychological theories to help him deal with his varied flock. (Wears priest's collar)

Psychology, 3 dice — Father Grierson is familiar with counseling theory and technique. He performs hypnosis and can administer personality tests and a number of other measures to help him understand people. (Snorts when people mention Freud)

What Father Grierson Knows

- Matt is a regular at Sunday Services.
- Matt is very receptive to advice and usually exhibits a positive attitude.
- Matt's confessions are among the most trivial (and boring) that Father Grierson hears. Of course, he won't discuss this with PCs, but it may color his choice of words and attitudes during any PC interaction.

Ryan O'Seaban

Unsuspecting Racquetball Partner

Ryan usually plays racquetball with Matt on Tuesdays and Thursdays. He works for a small software firm in Golden Barrio, but he often telecommutes from his apartment in Broken

“Misplaced Childhood”

Wings. He can, therefore, keep unusual hours. Ryan does not know Matt very well outside of racquetball, but thinks he is a likable sort. He knows that Matt usually goes off to work after playing, but when Matt had the day off, Ryan invited him to go to lunch at Sad Mary's. He quickly fades into the woodwork during the confrontation between Matt and Monica. In any event, he does not know anything about the situation.

Tarent

Trusted Quisling Thug

Tarent grew up an orphan in an understaffed and poor orphanage in Four Points Barrio. As he aged, he learned to get what he want on two different levels. Being bigger than many of the other boys at the orphanage, he took what he wanted through sheer force. At the same time, he carefully cultivated a nice, well-mannered image to get what he wanted from the staff at the orphanage. The most recent phase of his development has been a successful combination of both approaches. Tarent has the unusual ability to cheerfully pound the snot out of you and make you feel that he's done you a favor at the same time.

Tarent joined the quislings as a hired thug, but his amoral ability to use people has resulted in a steady climb to trusted thug. Tarent knows what Matt is, and he knows what could happen to him should Matt somehow get away or be unduly damaged. On the other hand, the quisling may develop a surprising empathy for Matt — Tarent knows what it's like not to have a family. He only cares about Matt if it suits your story.

Al Amarjan man, 158 cm, solid build and close-cropped strawberry blond hair. 24 years old, though he looks maybe 18 or 19.

Attack: 3 dice (X2 damage with brass knuckles)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (“Oh, did I get hurt back there?”)

Traits

Pounding, 3 dice — Brutal. Fast. Strong. Efficient. (Has never heard the word “subtle”)

Covert Ops, 3 dice — Tarent is still learning his trade, but he has gotten pretty good at following people and reporting on them without being noticed. If you need somebody to tail the PCs or

to be seen checking up on Matt, Tarent's your man. (Looks like a college kid)

Amoral, flaw — Tarent has not cared about anybody except himself for most of his life. If Matt should somehow break through this shell, Tarent becomes confused and unpredictable. He does precisely that action which makes the story the most interesting.

Svieta

Professional Bag Lady

Svieta is Tarent's current partner. She poses as a bag lady who makes the alleyways around Matt's apartment building her home. She keeps an eye on Matt's comings and goings, and has even established a vaguely conversational relationship with him. She prefers to let Tarent provide the muscle, though she can mix it up if she needs to. While Tarent follows Matt when he goes out, Svieta keeps Matt's apartment under observation so that the quislings know if anyone tries to snoop on him behind his back.

Russian woman, 160 cm and deceptively frail. She looks dirty and unkempt, and she speaks English very fast, with a thick Russian accent. 34 years old.

Languages: Russian, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (Puts pain out of her mind)

Traits

Covert Ops, 4 dice — Svieta's expertise on undercover operations comes from both study and experience. She can play a variety of roles and snoop with the best of them. (Does a convincing paranoid schizophrenic)

Thuan Tram

Quisling Coordinator

Thuan is the ranking quisling field operative involved with the Matt Freeman experiment. He oversees both Tarent and Svieta, and he also gives Matt a biweekly checkup. Thuan poses as a local hair stylist near Sequins in Broken Wings. When Matt goes in for a haircut, Thuan psychically delivers the keyword, rendering Matt catatonic. After a quick haircut, Thuan proceeds to run Matt through

a variety of tests, measuring biological conditions. He provides any maintenance necessary on the tracking device in Matt's forearm, administers any drugs specified by the quisling oppenheimers, and then wakes Matt back up.

A small room behind the stock room in the barber shop contains the equipment that Thuan uses to track Matt. He can pinpoint Matt's location to within a quarter mile anywhere in the Edge. A small, plain box in the stock room contains disks which have encrypted logs and records that detail Matt's condition and activities. Thuan knows how to decode the files, but will only reveal that information to save his own life. Any players trying to crack the encryption must roll a computer or other applicable skill against the 6 dice encryption process. Thuan also keeps a taser in the stock room. It is hidden, but within easy reach. He can call in any number of quisling backup agents, each with 3 dice combat abilities.

Thuan is a short, dumpy Vietnamese man with bad eyesight (there can be more than one person like that, you know), 145 cm tall and 42 years old.

He has short, black hair, thick glasses, and is usually dressed meticulously. When working, he wears a barber's smock. He is quite a good barber.

Languages: Vietnamese, Chinese, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Location: Thuan Tram's Barber Shop, 17 Broken Wings Plaza.

Attack: 3 dice (X5 damage with taser)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (Unwilling to fail)

Traits

Field Operations Manager — Thuan has been an efficient operations manager for the quislings for 12 years, and he's still alive. (Makes tough decisions quickly)

Psychic Awareness, 1 die* — Although he is no powerhouse, Thuan is psychically aware enough to deliver a keyword to Matt's mind. Thuan is also good at disguising his thoughts and intentions from those who might scan him. (His speech is occasionally out of sync with his mouth)



Illustration by Nan Fredman

Items

There are several physical clues that the players can find, although most of them may only confuse the PCs. The one “smoking gun” clue is a copy of Jesus’ orders while making *Misplaced Childhood*. Feel free to make up other clues on the fly.

In Matt’s Apartment

- Family photo on the wall from 1988. It includes Monica Lisbon as Sarah Freeman, Jacob Falstaff as Arthur Freeman, and René LaFayette as Keith Freeman. The picture also includes Matt. The actors remember staging the picture, with an empty space where Matt is.
- Matt’s scrapbook is in a storage chest underneath Matt’s bed. He may pull it out at some point as “proof” that he is not going crazy. It contains various “growing up” items, such as report cards (mostly “B”s), minor awards, articles from the Chestnut Hill Crier about his soccer team (Matt’s name is highlighted in yellow magic marker), school pictures, and the like. Of course, the quislings fabricated all of this “evidence.”

In Tram’s Barber Shop

- Disks with logs of Matt’s checkups. The disks are in a small, non-descript box in the stock room, and only Thuan knows the decryption key. He will only tell PCs the code if they threaten his life and he believes they are serious.
- Tracking equipment. The equipment that tracks Matt sits in a small room behind the stock room. The door is, of course, locked at all times and Thuan has the key. The equipment locates Matt with resolution of a quarter mile. Of course, the top quisling scientists have their own versions of this equipment in their labs, so simply destroying this tracker will not prevent the quislings from finding Matt.

At D’Aubainne Hospital

- Medical records. Matt once went to D’Aubainne Hospital for an examination on the

advice of one of Sequins’ patrons. He wanted to be sure that he was physically fit enough to work out and play racquetball. If the PCs are able to bribe somebody into letting them see the records, they might notice Matt’s unusual vital signs. While not wildly off, they indicate that he should have been quite sick rather than a picture of health.

At Backdrop Productions

- Completely or partially decoded orders for Jesus. Shaquonda filched Jesus’ directions from his quisling superiors while he took a smoke break, and she has been working on decoding them ever since. A decoded version of the document (which you can photocopy for your own use as a handout to players) is on p. 15. Shaquonda may decide to give the PCs a copy of the orders, but it is unlikely that they could search Backdrop and find the document on their own.

Events

This section gives you a timeline of events to help with story continuity, and then it provides suggestions for events to use during the scenario if things seem to be moving slowly. Or if you feel chaotic.

Timeline

- Approximately 1 year before the game time, quisling operatives completed filming on *Misplaced Childhood*, the “movie” that became the basis of Matt Freeman’s memories.
- Approximately 7 months before the game time, quisling oppenheimers built an adult prototype of the new human species that the Pharaohs plan to use to replace the current mutant humans.
- Approximately 3 months before game time, quisling operatives released their proto-human, Matt Freeman, to see how he would behave outside the laboratory. They arranged a job waiting tables at Sequins for him.
- The day before the scenario begins, Matt pulled a double shift to cover for another wait-

Player Handout

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TO: Agent 53-6-B
FROM: Central Command, Project Prototype

You are instructed to direct and produce a film consisting of key episodes in a person's life. Hire obscure actors to play a mother, father, and younger brother to the subject. Because these scenes are memories, all scenes must be shot from the subject's point of view.

Key Points

- (1) Subject is white male, approximate age 25 at end of movie.
- (2) Subject is Catholic.
- (3) Subject comes from a generic upper middle class lifestyle in the United States.
- (4) Subject's parents killed in a car accident in 1992. Younger brother sent to live with relatives. Subject came to AA to work and attend school.
- (5) Subject does not have any unusual hobbies.

er. Instead of working from 11:00 AM to 9:00 PM, he worked through the night as well. To compensate, his manager gave him the next day off.

- A few hours before the scenario begins, Ryan O'Seaban invited Matt to go with him to Sad Mary's. He had never been to Sad Mary's, so he said yes.
- The scenario begins with the initial confrontation between Matt and Monica Lisbon, who tried to seduce him. Unless the PCs are coming into the scenario from an unusual angle, you should probably have them be present for at least a part of the confrontation. Give them a chance to join the action.

Semi-Random Events

These events may or may not happen, at your discretion. They need not occur in any order.

- Matt develops a rash on his forearm, leading to the discovery of the tracking device.
- Matt sees Wilford Brimley in a commercial on television, and recognizes his grandfather ("Grandad always was telling me to eat my oat-

meal . . .").

- Matt tries to call some old friends in the U.S. only to discover that his hometown of Chestnut Hill, Missouri does not exist.
- The quisling agents detain one or more PCs to find out their interest in Matt. Perhaps they let a clue slip in the form of a question during the interrogation.
- A roughed up Monica calls the PCs for help, but then refuses to talk to them. Tarent has reached her in the meantime and threatened to return if she talks to the PCs again.
- Father Grierson offers to hypnotize Matt and regress him to his childhood to help puzzle out recent events. Here are several suggestions as to what such a procedure might produce:
 - ♣ If Father Grierson asks Matt to return to when he was 3 years old, Matt calls up the closest implanted memory to that (supposed) age. Make up memories, but have them be remarkably generic. Careful questioning reveals numerous blank spots where memories should be. If regressed to an age at which no memory exists, Matt only says one word: "nothing."

- ♣ If Father Grierson asks Matt to return to a particular year, he remembers either nothing or only has vague images of doctors hovering over him.
- ♣ If asked existential questions, such as “Who are you?” Matt responds with cryptic responses or less cryptic responses, depending on the story’s needs. For example, he might reply in a hollow monotone, “I am nobody and everybody. I am the first.” or he might recount the story of his creation (make this suitably dramatic).
- Matt becomes increasingly concerned about getting his haircut and grows agitated if kept from the appointment.
- Tarent defects and decides to try to help Matt by removing the tracking device and smuggling him out of the country.
- Thuan realizes that the experiment is going bad and orders Tarent and Svieta to bring Matt in. It just so happens that the PCs are there when this happens.

Resolution

After the initial confrontation between Matt and Monica, the story may head off in a variety of directions, depending on what the PCs do. A happy ending for Matt himself, however, is unlikely. To the quislings, he is a prized experiment, and they have all the resources of the Pharaohs behind them on this one. As added motivation, the quisling agents realize that returning to their superiors empty-handed means certain death.

If, in spite of all this, the PCs manage to remove Matt’s tracking device and keep the psychic keyword from rendering Matt catatonic, then they have to decide what to do with him. The quislings will not stop looking for him just because he leaves Al Amarja, and Matt does not yet have the ability to handle his own life. Is Sylvan Pines, or another institution the answer? Would plastic surgery help throw off the quislings? The PCs are not left with any easy answers, and what they decide to do should tell them something about themselves.

More likely, however, the quisling agents will close in and take Matt. Perhaps he just disappears, never to be heard from again. When the PCs return to his apartment, they find empty rooms. On the other hand, perhaps Thuan Tram renders

Matt unconscious, and then Tarent poses as a medical technician to “take him to the hospital.”

Throughout the course of the scenario, the players will probably discover some, but not all, of the clues that could tell them what Matt really is. They will probably not learn who is behind the experiment, and they may not even figure out that Matt is not a “real” person. This is fine. It will make them paranoid and provide you with several ready made plot-hooks. For instance, watch their reaction when, several months later, one of the PCs runs into a relative in the strangest of places . . .

Intersections

- *New Faces*: If the PCs have any connections in the Agara community, they might offer to take Matt in and teach him how to live. Alternatively, Roentgen may get wind of Matt and send some operatives after him as well.
- *Airwaves*: If the players ask AXTC if they have ever shown *Misplaced Childhood*, the employee they talk to might be a quisling operative, or she might just be familiar with some of Jesus’ other works. Of course, *Misplaced Childhood* never made it as far as AXTC, unless somebody smuggled them a pirated copy.
- *Welcome to Sylvan Pines*: If the PCs can disguise Matt’s identity sufficiently, Sylvan Pines may make an excellent haven for him. On the other hand, Dr. Klemp’s Isonural device may help fill in the gaps in Matt’s swiss-cheese personality.
- *Wildest Dreams*: Matt wakes up as a perfectly normal person who has just had the damndest trip from a hit of Nightmare. The real question is why the PCs experienced it as well.
- *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*: The Cut-Ups could provide another haven for Matt, though they would not really know what to do with him in the long term. If Matt learns to deal with what he’s discovered, he might even choose to join the Cut-Ups.
- “The Doppelgänger Plague” (in *The Myth of Self*): Instead of mimicking people directly, Realism Banal decides to do a little background research and mimic their close friends and relatives instead. Watch what happens when they mimic one of the PCs’ dead relatives.

IN THE SACQ

by Jeff Tidball

Getting hold of the formula for Selective Annihilation at Close Quarters is one of the big scores. “In the SACQ” does not offer your characters that opportunity, though it offers promises galore. As a holy grail, mere mention of any hard details on the SACQ formula sends shivers through opportunists across the island. It has been used to yank chains and spread disinformation in the past — that is what the characters will encounter in this scenario.

“In the SACQ” is a little different from much *Over the Edge* fare. While many scenarios stress bizarre fringe phenomena, strange new races, or ancient conspiracies, “In the SACQ” is a fast-paced scenario that emphasizes an action-oriented espionage theme. The characters must think and act quickly before their leads evaporate in their hands. They must deal with political intrigue both in the government and outside it. Think *Mission: Impossible* or James Bond.

“In the SACQ” assumes a certain level of expertise on the part of the players. Stakes are high for all, and none of the parties involved (at least none of the serious ones) are using raw burger as their pawns. It is assumed that the characters have done successful cloak work before and have a few contacts of their own.

As a final note, many of the parties involved in this scenario toss around large sums of money with little concern for their actual significance. If such large amounts will seriously unbalance your game, feel free to downsize what is spelled out here. But don’t underestimate the paranoia your characters will feel when truly obscene sums of cash are bandied about as if they were nothing more than beer money. Remember that you can always take it away later.

Background

About a year ago, an Al Amarjan senator named Sydney Weeks managed to deny a promotion to DBI Assistant Director Adriana Ruiz. It is part of his duties to oversee such promotions as a member of the senatorial coterie that supervises the

operations of the DBI. He did it for political reasons, managing to appoint one of his lackeys in her stead even though he was clearly less qualified than Ruiz. Ruiz was quite bitter. “In the SACQ” is the story of Adriana Ruiz’s revenge on Sydney Weeks. She plans to frame him for treason in order to see him executed in living color at the Plaza of Justice.

Ruiz knows that Weeks has illicit dealings — that sort of thing part and parcel to being a senator on Al Amarja. Understanding that he would betray Her Exaltedness (or at least work on behalf of her enemies) for the right price, she set up a situation where he believed that he could get hold of the formula for Dr. Nusbaum’s Selective Annihilation at Close Quarters (see the *Over the Edge* rulebook for a full description of SACQ and its attributes). As this formula is clearly a state secret with concrete implications for the personal security of the D’Aubainne family, Ruiz reasons that simply possessing the formula illegally will be enough to have him swinging in the gallows.

Ruiz resurrected an imaginary super-agent code named Agent i that the DBI used as an intelligence bogeyman in the sixties. A freelance cloak named Bee-Zhou hired by Ruiz contacted Weeks as Agent i. Bee-Zhou claimed that he had spent the last year working as a double agent within the DBI for an unnamed group whose power base lay off the island. His mission was to steal the secrets of Dr. Nusbaum, and he had been largely successful. He had turned most of those secrets over to his superiors when they double-crossed him and made an attempt on his life. He said that he clearly could not rely on the funding of the DBI to keep safe from his stalkers, but offered to provide Weeks with the formula for SACQ in return for enough money to keep him safe and hidden for the next decade or so. Weeks jumped at the opportunity, promising to meet with “Agent i” in Sicily, away from the watchful eye of Her Exaltedness’ agents.

As things turn out, Ruiz is not the only one interested in Sydney Weeks’ comings and goings. Priority, a Mover splinter group with inside connections and intelligence capacity in governmental circles, got hold of a tape of Weeks’ conversation with “Agent i.” Seeing an opportunity to get hold of

the formula themselves, they made a plan to eliminate Weeks. Planting a bomb on the plane that Weeks would be taking (so he would not appear to be the target), they prepared to meet with Agent i themselves to cut a deal. In the meantime, Bee-Zhou traveled to Sicily to play the role of Agent i there.

A mole in the Priority organization has tipped the Net off about the opportunity to acquire the formula for SACQ, and they want the player characters to do their dirty work. Unfortunately, the message has been slightly garbled in transmission — the player characters are led to believe that Weeks has the formula and is traveling to Sicily to sell it. Alternately, if the characters in your campaign already have a Patron or contacts in a similar conspiracy, you can substitute them for the Net very easily.

The story begins late in the afternoon on a Monday — about 4:30. Weeks is on his way to the Terminal to catch his flight. An anti-government riot is brewing in the Plaza of Science, where the characters have gone to check things out and perhaps have a little fun. They happen to pass by a pamphleteer, who is industriously passing out flyers as he heckles wealthy-looking passersby.

Briefing the Characters

The pamphleteer wears ragged clothes and is yelling out anti-government slogans, all the while passing out sheets calling for the election of a communist panel. As he moves near the characters, he hands one to a random character, but does not make eye contact. Before discarding it, the character notices handwriting on the back. Turning it over, she sees a scrawled note: “Sarah’s Teahouse— ASAP. Room 23.” Taped to the sheet below the scrawled letters is a small manila envelope containing two crisp one hundred dollar bills. If there is an alternate location in your campaign where the characters often meet with potential clients, feel free to use it instead. Information on Sarah’s Teahouse can be found in the *Over the Edge* rulebook in the “At Your Service” chapter.

When the characters arrive in Room 23 at Sarah’s, they discover that they have been preceded by a woman who introduces herself as Jessica. She

does not spend any time on small talk, and begins briefing the characters before they have even have a chance to sit down.

“You’ve been offered this opportunity because of your successes in the past. The job that I am about to offer you requires the utmost confidentiality and discretion. I cannot stress this enough.” At this point she begins removing stacks of money from her briefcase and placing them on the table in front of her. “This money is your payment for this briefing. If you reveal any of the information I give you, in whole or in part, you will be killed. I must know at this point if you accept or decline this offer, but your acceptance of this offer does not obligate you to accept the work that we will discuss. Feel free to talk among yourselves.”

As promised, the characters are given a few moments (during which Jessica will leave if asked) to decide if they will listen to the briefing. If they choose not to accept, she packs the money back into her briefcase and excuses herself politely. The characters never hear from her again. If they agree, she pushes the money (\$2,000 in all) across the table and begins.

“My organization has come into the knowledge that the formula for Selective Annihilation at Close Quarters is unusually accessible. To assure me that everyone is working from the same page, I will take a moment to familiarize you with Selective Annihilation, or SACQ, as it is known. First, however, I would like to inform you that we are working under a severe time constraint. If you will please follow me, we will proceed to my car.”

Jessica gets up from the table, leaves money for the waitress, and walks out of the room. She leads the characters to the attached garage, where she motions for them to enter a stretch limousine which is idling patiently. Once everyone has been seated and the chauffeur has the car underway, she cues a tape on the onboard television. It begins playing back what appears to be a black and white security tape. The recording camera looks over a large, ornate lobby area. It has a marble floor, two rows of columns, mirrored walls, and a bank of a dozen glass doors. Characters with appropriate backgrounds notice that this is the main lobby at Swaps. The lobby has only a few scattered people in it, but then a set of elevator doors open and a group of people come walking purposefully out of it, moving towards the main doors.

“Monique and Her bodyguard,” comments

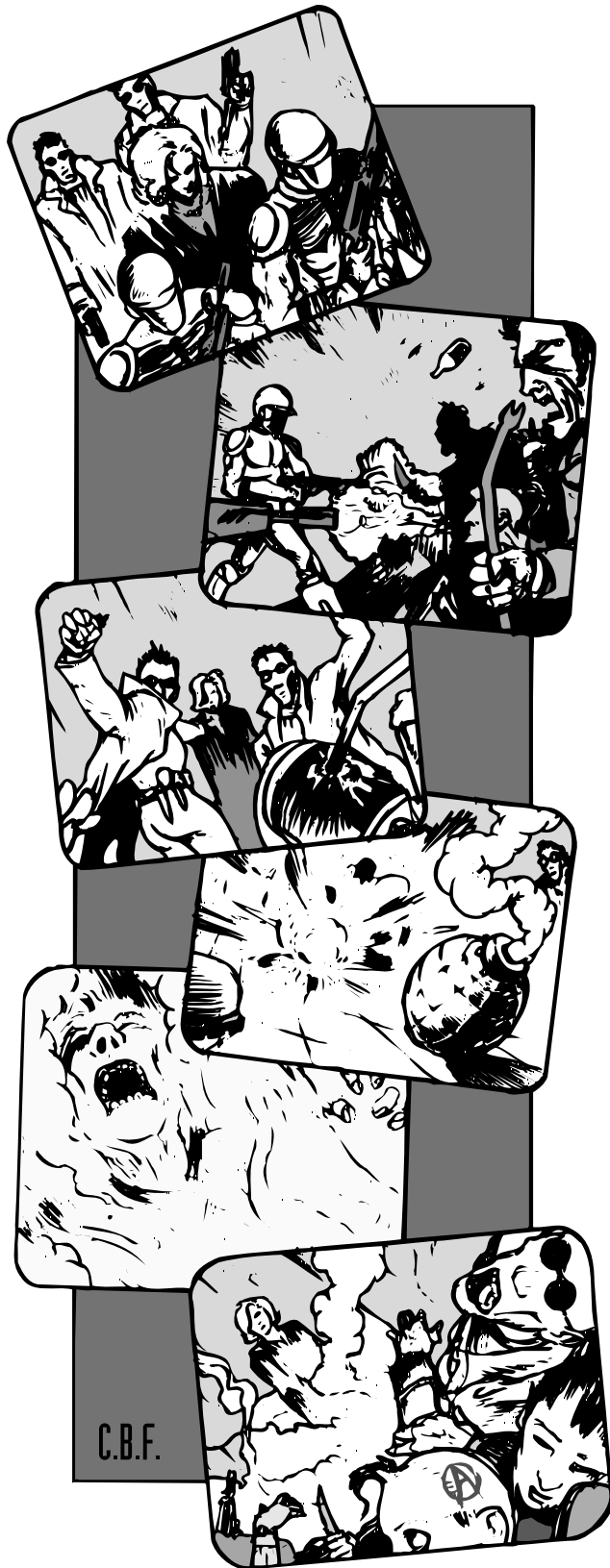


Illustration by C. Brent Ferguson

Jessica. Monique is accompanied by a Peace Force escort and two other individuals who are dressed in well-made but heavy duty trenchcoats. Both of these men carry unholstered pistols and look very serious. The group moves across the lobby until they are almost halfway to the doors. At that point, crazed-looking men and women begin to pile through the glass doors from the outside, shouting as they approach. The newcomers' clothes are askew, their hair mussed, and all exhibit bulging eyes and vacant looks that indicate they are under the influence of some sort of drug or fringe effect. All wield assorted hand weapons, ranging from lead pipes to knives to broken bottles. As they stream through the doors, the Peace Officers unhesitatingly open fire, spraying them with bullets. Many die or are incapacitated, but their sheer volume facilitates their advance on Her Exaltedness. The two bodyguards shove Monique back behind the wall of Peace Officers and also discharge their pistols for a few moments. The onslaught continues, and when it seems obvious that the attackers will overpower the group through numbers and tenacity, the two of them grab Monique and run for the elevators. Just then, another group of the wide-eyed fanatics stampede in from off camera, closing off their escape route. Without hesitation, the two bodyguards reach under their coats, retrieve small devices, and dash them against the ground. A cloud of gas shoots up from the impact, filling the lobby after only a few seconds. When the mist clears, everyone in the lobby is laying dead on the floor, save Monique. Jessica stops the tape on an uncanny freeze frame of Monique staring straight into the camera.

"What you have just witnessed," Jessica advises the characters, "is the operation of SACQ. It is a nerve agent that seems to affect everyone but Monique D'Aubainne. Not only that, but it appears to render itself harmless after a minute or so. I will leave it to your own imaginations as to exactly why the formula for such a compound might be useful.

"As I mentioned, we have come across information indicating that the formula for this gas is accessible. It has been stolen from Her Exaltedness, and one of its thieves is selling. You will retrieve the formula, but you will not pay for it. For this, you will earn the payment that we will agree on, as well as my extreme gratitude." She emphasizes this point by raising her eyebrows and looking directly at each of the characters in turn.

"The thief in question is Senator Sydney Weeks." She passes the characters a photograph of a pudgy man in a business suit. "Our information indicates that he has the formula and that he plans to take a plane to Sicily this evening where he will sell the formula. His plane leaves at 5:40; it is 'Martian Shuttle commuter flight number six. We are currently en route to the Terminal.'" At this point, the characters are distracted from the briefing by a crowd of students. The riot that the characters witnessed earlier has apparently migrated North, and is blocking the progress of the limousine. Students pound on the roof of the car. Jessica appears annoyed, but continues.

"We have no information on the nature of the deal that Weeks is planning to make. We don't know who he is to meet, where they will meet, or what the details are. I will do my best to answer any questions that you have now." Jessica answers any questions that the characters put to her to the best of her ability. Her information on SACQ is slightly inaccurate. She believes that only Monique is resistant to it, where actually Dr. Nusbaum and the entire D'Aubainne family are. She also believes that it remains potent for almost a minute, where in reality it is only effective for a few seconds. Her information on Weeks is inaccurate in that she thinks that he has the formula and is going to Sicily to sell it, whereas in reality he wants it and believes he is going to Sicily to purchase it. Jessica can give them basic background information on Weeks (that he is a Senator in the Al Amarjan government, his main residence is outside Freedom City, he maintains a penthouse in Broken Wings, he is unmarried and has no children, and appears to be in the good graces of Her Exaltedness) if they think to ask.

Presumably the characters will also be interested in finding out how much they will be paid for this operation. When questioned about this, Jessica replies simply, "How much do you require?" Unless the characters name some totally outrageous sum (over 1.5 million dollars or so), she agrees without hesitation. Her acceptance of the largest number the characters throw at her should make them very nervous.

When the characters have no further questions, she nods her approval and questions the driver over an intercom, inquiring about the delay. He responds that it does not appear that the riot is thinning out and that the car has not moved substantially for over five minutes. Frowning deeply,

Jessica turns to the player characters. "It seems that we are stuck here for the moment. Since the Senator's plane will be leaving very shortly I suggest that you fend for your own transportation from this point on." She quickly jots a phone number on a blank card, and hands it to one of the characters. "Reach me here when you have the formula."

Getting Started

The characters disembark about midway between Sunken Plaza and the Plaza of Science, near the Victory Highway. A riot is taking place around them, and enraged students armed with rocks and bricks are milling about, smashing things and chanting anti-government slogans. If the characters are itching for some action or you want to make things miserable for them, feel free to have them assaulted or abused as they emerge from the limousine. In no case should they ever become a target of the entire mob, however. You want to annoy them and give them a chance to shake some energy out of their systems, not to kill them or put them on the run.

After they extract themselves from their unhealthy surroundings, the characters have to find transport to the Terminal, some ten kilometers distant. All automotive traffic nearby seems to be stopped. They can make their way out of the area on foot with little major problem, where they can either hijack a car or grab a taxi. Alternatively, they notice one group of student rioters with scooters who don't look quite tough enough to defend them from the party. The scooters are small enough to be maneuvered through the crowd, but still give the characters some hope of making it to the Terminal on time.

The Crash

As the characters are making their way towards the Terminal, they can see planes taking off and landing close overhead. As they speed along, it seems clear that they will not make it in time to intercept Senator Weeks before his plane takes off. Sure enough, just a few minutes after 5:45, they see a bright green 'Martian Shuttle airplane take to the sky, presumably number six. As they curse their bad luck, they see it pass overhead, then watch as the cockpit explodes in a burst of orange flame. A

few seconds later, the wings also blow up, first the left and then the right, leaving the main fuselage and tail to arc through the air streaming wreckage behind them. As debris rains down around them, they see the main hulk hit the ground about four hundred meters distant and slide along the ground, eventually coming to a stop against an outcropping of rock.

Most likely, the characters will want to go check out the crash scene first thing. Travel off the road is a little difficult because the terrain is rocky, but should not pose too great a challenge. If nothing else, they can park their vehicle and proceed on foot.

In examining the remains of the plane, little is immediately obvious. The fuselage is still in one main piece. Nothing moves within it save the flickering flames that are busy engulfing corpses and their luggage alike. No one appears to have survived.

If the characters brave the wreckage to look for the corpse of Weeks, require perception checks on their part. The wreckage is twisted, and not all parts of the passenger compartment are accessible. Regardless of how well they roll, they cannot find the Senator. Since they don't know where his seat was, they cannot specifically check for him there.

After about two and a half minutes have passed, a Peace Force van approaches the scene, lights flashing. The five people inside the van are not Peace Officers at all. They are actually disguised agents of Priority who have come to make sure that Weeks did not survive. If your characters are perceptive, they might notice that the agents carry no firearms, perhaps tipping them off that all is not as it seems.

If the characters remain in sight, they are ordered away from the wreckage. The officers quickly move as a group to the wreckage. They search around for a moment, squishing themselves into the wrecked compartment as best they can considering the fire. They talk amongst one another for a moment, then run off to their van, which they board and drive away. The van proceeds to the Blue Weasel warehouse in Great Men, which serves as their headquarters.

Following the van is not hard should the characters choose that course of action. It has all the inherent stealth of any Peace Force vehicle. Following it and not being seen requires a shadowing or stealth roll. If the characters are spotted, the

agents do their best to shake off their pursuers. When they feel that they have done so, the van heads for the warehouse.

It is possible that the characters will attempt to confront the Priority agents — such a course of action would potentially provide the characters with a lot of information. You will have to play such an instance by ear. Though they will have a tough time if they choose a combative route with the agents, they might be able to use other methods of getting information out to them. Certainly none of the Priority agents will offer useful information out of the blue. The stats for the agents, along with what they know and the full scoop on Priority can be found on pp. 32-33.

Only a few short moments pass after the van leaves when a midnight blue jeep with “The Terminal” stenciled in white block letters across the hood bounces over the rocky ground from the direction of the Terminal. Four men in midnight blue coveralls ride in it, and they pull up near the wreckage. If any characters are visible, one of these men comes over to them, introduces himself as Frank, and begins questioning them about what they saw. The others begin looking about the area with dismay evident on their faces.

In minutes, more and more Terminal staff arrive, with another load of Peace Officers not far behind. Ten minutes after the crash, the media and gawkers begin to show up. A Peace Line is erected, and from that point on it will be almost impossible for the characters to get physically near to the crash itself. After twenty minutes, a semi truck pulls up. A half-dozen men begin unloading reclining chairs, setting them up on a ridge that overlooks the crash site. One of them erects a sign that says: “Watch the Gore in Comfort! 50¢ a minute!”

The characters can remain as long as they want. They have the opportunity to make a quick buck if they choose, by telling reporters what they saw as eyewitnesses to the crash. They can question the Terminal staff present, but none of them have anything terribly revealing to say. As far as they know, the plane took off as normal and there no difficulties or security problems with it at all. They mostly just shake their heads and mutter to themselves about how He will not be pleased.

As it gets on toward 6:30, a press release is circulated on the scene. Any characters present can easily get hold of a copy (this press release is available as a character handout on page 36). It lists

twenty-two passengers, all of whom are classified as DOA. Sydney Weeks is not on the list.

At the Terminal

The characters may want to stop at the Terminal, perhaps to make sure that it was flight six that crashed, to get more information on whether Weeks was on the flight, or for some other reason. For a general overview of life at the Terminal, read over the D'Aubainne International Airport entry in the *Over the Edge* rulebook.

Getting a Terminal guide will be easier than usual. Since a horde of media people have just arrived on the scene, most guide services are offering “commuter crash specials.” One industrious guide service has even set up caravans to Public Relations that leave every ten minutes.

In order to get basic information on the crash, the characters will need to locate the Public Relations offices on the seventh floor. This is difficult enough in itself, though possible. Hiring a guide is always the best bet. Once they get there, they will either be told that a press release will be released soon (if they arrive before 6:30) or be handed a press release (if they arrive after 6:30). The press release is provided as a player handout at the end of this adventure. If they press for more answers, they will be instructed that there is no one who can help them at the moment, and that the only statement that the Terminal is prepared to make is found in the press release. If they persist, they will be asked to stop back tomorrow. If they get exceptionally abusive, they will be detained by Terminal Security.

If the characters are trying to get a list of who was on the plane, they will not need to go higher than the second floor. At the ‘Martian Shuttle ticket windows, chaos reigns. ‘Martian staff race about, trying to figure out what has happened and whether they will be blamed. In the confusion, it is relatively easy for the characters to get a boarding list, as anyone they question will be more interested in being left alone than in thinking about the repercussions of giving out information that might be considered privileged. It turns out that Senator Weeks did indeed have reservations for the flight, but according to their records never checked in and never boarded the plane.

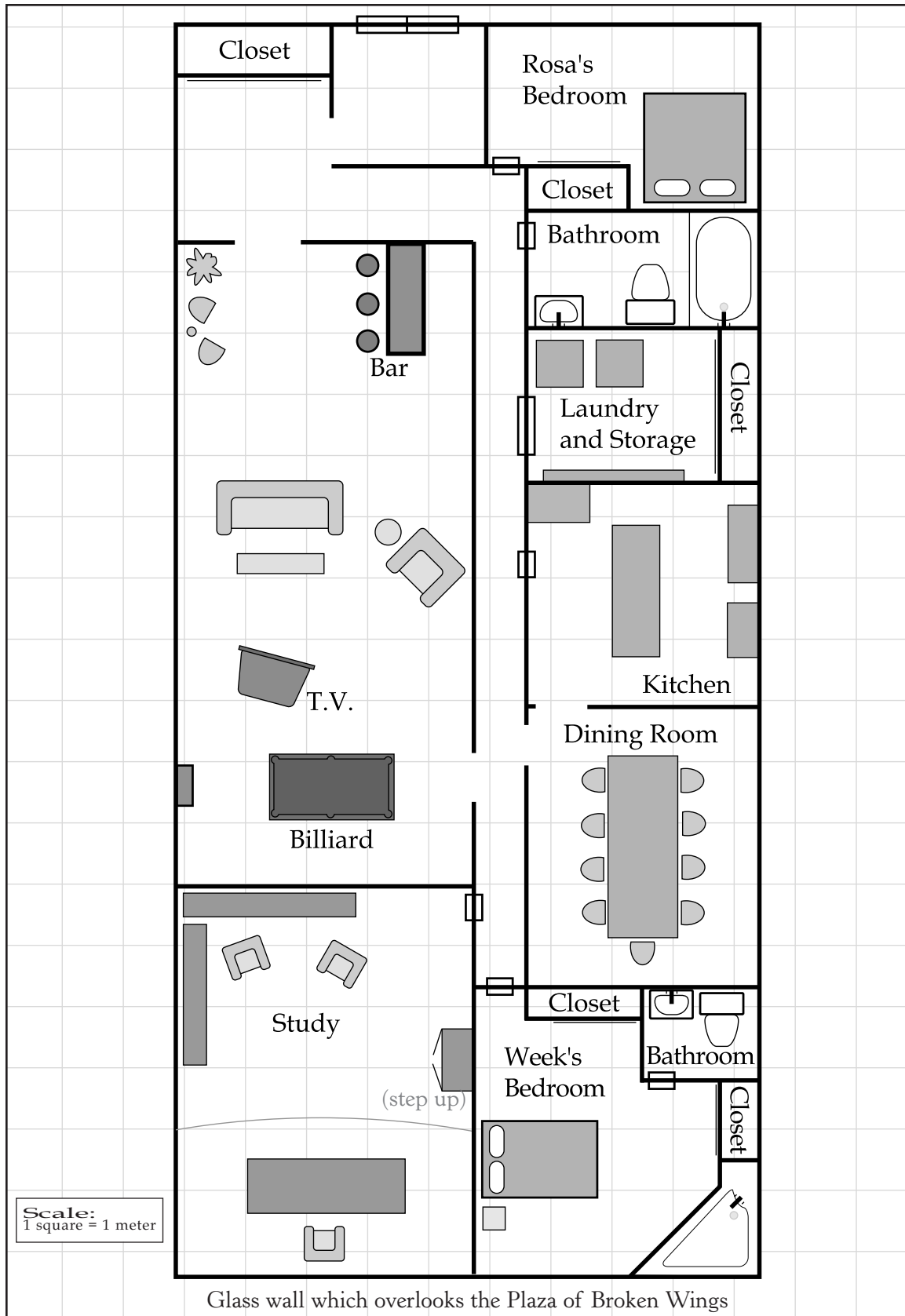
Senator Weeks

After missing his flight and extracting himself from the riot, Weeks instructs the driver of his Total Taxi to return him to his penthouse. Without further incident, he arrives there at about 6:30. At that time, he finds out about the bombing of the flight from his housemaid/bodyguard Rosa, who saw the reports on television. Assuming immediately (and correctly) that the attack was directed at him, he calls the front desk at the Sunset View Towers (where his penthouse is located) and instructs them that absolutely no one is to be admitted to see him. He then has a drink and falls asleep on the couch after instructing Rosa to allow no one in.

It is likely that the characters will want to go to Weeks’ penthouse to nose around and see if they can find him. By dressing nicely and behaving themselves, they will not be hassled in greater Broken Wings by Dunkelburg’s Security unless they are having too easy a time or you feel vicious.

If the characters did not think to ask Jessica where Weeks lived, they might have a slightly difficult time finding out. A call to his offices in Freedom City (the number can be found in any phone book) will yield the information that Mr. Weeks is out of town and is not expected back until Tuesday evening. Characters with a good line or skill at fast talking can discover that Weeks left for the airport from his Broken Wings apartment and that he has not been at his mansion in Freedom City since Saturday afternoon. Exceptional amounts of fast talking could pry loose his penthouse phone number, or even the address. Otherwise, the characters will have to resort to asking around in the proper circles, checking with their contacts, or whatever other methods they can think of. If the characters phone Jessica to ask her where Weeks apartment is, she will be most displeased, but will give them the information anyway.

Once they find the place, the characters are accosted in the lobby by a young man in a red uniform. It is his job to make sure that no one is allowed into the building uninvited. He takes his job very seriously. If the characters confide that they are looking for Weeks, he frowns and says that Mr. Weeks has been asked not to be disturbed. If they ask for someone else, he may or may not notice their subterfuge, depending on the skill of the fast talker and the plausibility of their story. If



MAP: Senator Weeks' Penthouse

he does notice that they are trying to gain admittance on the sly, he feels no compunction about calling Dunkelburg's. Of course, other methods aside, the characters can always bribe him, beat him up, or sneak around him.

Finding Weeks' penthouse within the building is not difficult, as all the suites are labeled with brass nameplates. If they knock, the door is answered by Rosa. She tries to turn the characters away, saying that Weeks is not seeing anyone. If they persist, she offers to take a message. She cannot be bribed, and since she is also his bodyguard when at home, she is difficult to overcome physically. Assuming that they get around her somehow, the characters find Weeks asleep on a couch in his study, or, if they made a lot of noise getting in, hiding armed in a closet having just called building security.

Weeks does not yield to questioning at first, especially if he has succeeded in calling security. If the characters have a long period to question him or if they use drugs, they can get him to tell a more accurate version of the story (from his disinforming point of view, anyway).

If they search his penthouse, they can find valuables as befit his station as a political leech on the citizens of Al Amarja. His papers contain many interesting items, and any characters who search long enough can find enough information on Weeks' illicit dealings (that have nothing to do with this scenario) to blackmail him should they wish. Nothing even vaguely resembling the formula for SACQ is present anywhere. Searching through Weeks' briefcase reveals travel documents — his passport, plane tickets, and hotel reservation documents — and some miscellaneous but legitimate paperwork. Also inside is a micro cassette recorder with several shrink-wrapped blank tapes, along with one that has been used. Playing it reveals a conversation between Weeks and an unidentified man (Bee-Zhou, posing as Agent i). It holds all the details of the deal: that Agent i has the formula for SACQ in his possession, that he fears for his life and wishes to sell it, that Weeks wishes to buy it, and that the two of them have arranged to meet at a hotel near the airport in Sicily to cut the deal. No price is mentioned, but the characters get the impression that the final deal will involve obscene amounts of money. No information is given on how Agent i can be reached, nor does there appear to be any kind of backup plan.

Blue Weasel Shipping Co.

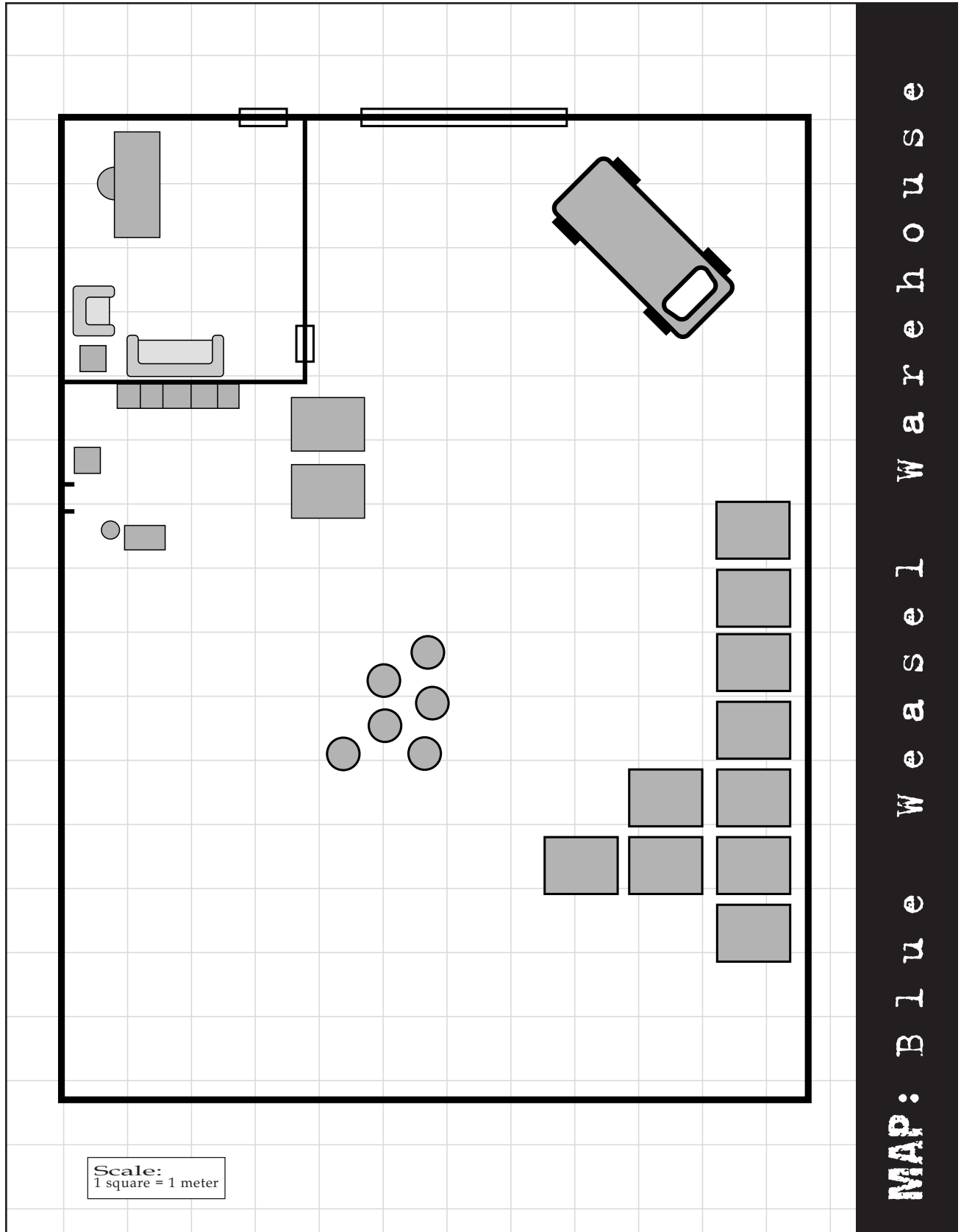
The characters are most likely to come across Blue Weasel by following the Priority agents back from the crash site. The warehouse itself is located in Great Men, though it lies nearer to Broken Wings than the Brink. It is a medium sized building made of concrete bricks with a roof of corrugated metal, bearing a faded wooden sign reading "Blue Weasel Shipping Co." A large garage door stands at one end, with a smaller door next to it for pedestrian traffic. There are no windows save for two evenly spaced plastic skylights in the roof which have been painted over to obscure the vision of anyone trying to spy on the activities within.

When the van arrives, one of the agents gets out and presses a number into the security keypad next to the garage door. Characters with a pair of binoculars or sharp eyes and a perception roll can observe the code: 782239. The door opens and the van drives in. The agents immediately begin to change out of their Peace Force garb. They then proceed to remove the Peace Force paraphernalia from their vehicle, storing it for future use in the crates next to the office. After getting all cleaned up and changed, they trickle out of the warehouse by ones, catching cabs or jitneys and heading to their homes. Each one keeps an eye out to make sure that he is not followed.

If the characters follow any of them to their homes, appropriate shadowing rolls are called for. They all have fairly normal apartments scattered in and between Great Men and Justice. Most of them take reasonable precautions with security at their homes. Breaking into any of them will yield no clues of consequence for this scenario, nor will it finger the Priority organization in any way.

Entering the warehouse after everyone has left will not be a difficult task if the characters have the alarm code. If they don't have it, getting in will be a difficult task requiring use of a relevant skill. If they botch it, the alarm goes off, but to no immediately obvious effect. It is rigged to page all five agents who are quartered here, as well as to call Mr. Roma's cell phone with an alert. They will all arrive within ten minutes (save Roma), heavily armed, to assess the situation and deal with any intruders.

The characters will find the inside of the ware-



house mostly empty. The van (now stripped of its Peace Force accoutrements) is pulled off to one side of the garage door. About a dozen pallets stacked with boxes containing only packing peanuts line the east wall. A few fifty gallon barrels (filled with water) are scattered about in the middle of the floor.

Near the office are two pallets containing boxes that actually appear to be used. They contain the Peace Force uniforms and the equipment required to camouflage the van. In other boxes are similar disguise sets for five people and the van in the names of EZ Bob's Cleaning Service, Al Amarjan Phone and Electric, and Blue Weasel Shipping Co. Around behind the pallets is a row of five large lockers. Each is locked with a combination lock. Characters with appropriate skills or a hacksaw can gain entrance fairly easily. Inside each are clothes, personal effects, and each agent's personal arsenal consisting of knives, tasers, garrotes, and the like. Near the lockers along the outside wall are a few clothing hooks, a sink with a mirror above it, and a small table flanked by a folding chair.

The door between the office and the warehouse is not kept locked. Inside the office sit a dusty sofa and large chair. A large desk dominates the far wall. The only thing on top of the desk is a solitary telephone. The drawers are empty save for a half empty carton of cheap cigarettes, a few pencils and paper clips, a dozen bogus shipping files, and the manual for the telephone. Scrawled on the inside of this book's cover is the phone number for the voice-mail account where the agents leave messages for Mr. Roma. This same number also resides in the phone's speed dial memory.

Agent i's Return

News of the plane crash was televised on the island starting at about 6:00, leading off the evening news on most stations. This event was also covered in Sicily and parts of southern Italy because many of the commuters on the plane were Italian citizens. The most important ramification of this quick dissemination of crash news outside Al Amarja is that Bee-Zhou found out about the crash almost immediately.

First he called Adriana Ruiz to update their plan. Still reeling from the news herself, she instructed him to board the first flight back to the

island. She spent the next half hour verifying Weeks' death. Since her original plan was disintegrating around her, she decided to adapt and accelerate. She began calling DBI informants around the city, telling them anonymously that she was willing to sell the secret of SACQ. She offered the name of the person who had it in exchange for \$1000 wired to a bogus account with First National Bank of the Edge (after all, she doesn't actually want the money, and having it sent to a location that could be traced to her would be tantamount to suicide). By 9:00 on Monday evening, at least three dozen sometime DBI stoolies "know" that Sydney Weeks has the formula for SACQ and that he is keeping it at his estate outside Freedom City. After spreading that word, she called Bee-Zhou, who by that time had arrived back on Al Amarja. She extended his contract with her to include traveling immediately to Senator Week's mansion and planting the false formula so it could be "found" by the horde that she assumed would be showing up to nab it. Her plan makes the assumption that her widely sown seeds will trickle through to some of Her Exaltedness's agents who can put 2 and 2 together and deal with Weeks. All of this activity, save for Bee-Zhou's actual planting of the formula, goes down between 6:00 and 10:00 without the characters' involvement.

SACQ Circus

After Ruiz's plan B goes into action, news of SACQ's availability spreads throughout the island. The characters should catch wind of this if they talk to any of their habitual contacts for help or further information on SACQ. Furthermore, they are contacted by Earl, a small-timer the characters have heard of, who offers them the job that they already have for a fraction of what Jessica is paying them. Admittedly, he does have some useful information that the characters don't. If your campaign already has a handy analog of Earl, feel free to use him or her instead.

Earl approaches the characters late Monday night as they are in some public place, panting and out of breath. "Say..." he says, calling one of the characters by name. "If you're not busy right at the moment, [wheeze] I've got a proposition for you. It pays [cough] pretty well. Yep, ol' Earl's gonna make you rich!" If they stop to listen, Earl continues. Otherwise, he pretends that he blew them off instead of the other way around.

"Follow me," he says, waving them to a more secluded place. When he is out of public earshot, he continues. "I just got word from my sources that Monique's private nerve gas is available for the takin'. Normally, it's all locked up in ol' Doc Nusbaum's secret research lab in Bermuda [*a load of BS — Earl has no idea where it is usually*], but recently some Senator named..." he thinks to himself, then consults a crumpled and dirty piece of paper in his pocket, "...Weeks managed to get hold of the formula.

"I'll pay you each \$1000 for the night's work if you break into his place and bring that formula back to me. I can tell you right where it is at in his house. Whaddaya say?" As the characters talk amongst themselves, try to keep them from realizing that Earl is referring to Weeks' mansion in Freedom City rather than his penthouse in Broken Wings. If the characters agree, Earl continues. "My source tells me that it's in the wall safe in his office, right behind a big portrait of him. Now you're on your own as far as your transportation to Freedom City goes, but I'll meet you in a shack halfway back to do the exchange tomorrow morning. To get there, you just follow Freedom Road back west toward the Edge. You turn off south onto this little track that's called Butler Road. It leads to a bunch of small houses where servant types live. I'll be waiting in number twenty six. I'll pay you then. Got it?"

If the characters press Earl for more information, he does not divulge his sources unless put in danger of physical harm. If put in such danger, he reveals that he got his information from an anonymous source that he works with sometimes (a lie — he's never heard from Ruiz before in his life). He says that he paid for his information by sending money to a PO Box at an office in Flowers (another lie — he wired it to the bogus bank account). If asked how much he paid for the information, he lies again and says \$10,000. Earl is not good for any other information, unless there is some other campaign-specific use that you have for him.

At Weeks' Estate That Night

If the characters don't get the location of Weeks' estate from Earl because they refused his

offer, it is also available from several Who's Who directories both in print and on the Internet. It lies just outside Freedom City in a rural area favored by many wealthy public servants. Rumor has it that Monique Herself maintains one of these mansions as a personal getaway.

The land around Weeks' compound has only sparse vegetation consisting of small trees and scrubby weeds. It is almost impossible to get near it unnoticed in daylight. Though it is easier under the cover of darkness, approaching by stealth is still a matter best left to professionals.

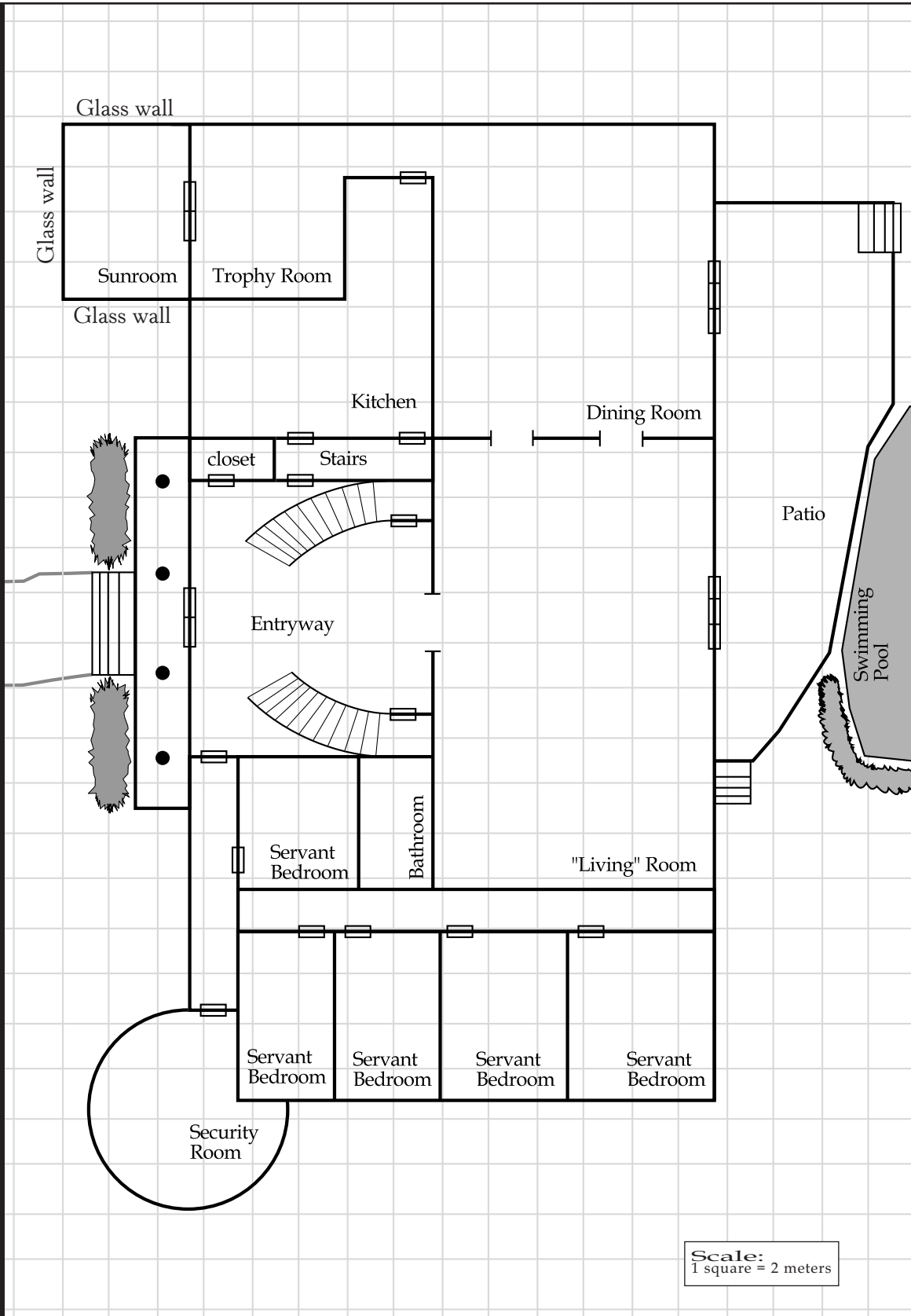
The road leading to Weeks' estate is paved (one of the benefits of having the power to appoint transportation officials). Though cars rarely travel the road, luxury models or limousines are unlikely to arouse any sort of suspicions unless they pull up into one of the private driveways along the road unexpectedly. There are several places where a car could be pulled off the road near Weeks' estate and be hidden in a depression or copse of trees.

Weeks is present at his estate after about 3:00 AM early Tuesday morning, unless the characters have kidnapped or killed him. Bee-Zhou is near by about 10:30 PM on Monday night, orchestrating his own break-in to place the bogus SACQ formula. He hopes to be finished before the army of amateurs show up and try to grab it for themselves. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, he is successful with this plan at about 1:00 AM.

If the characters break in before 1:00 they find nothing in the wall safe pertaining to SACQ. If they break in later than 1:00 they find the bogus information on an optical disk in the wall safe, right where Bee-Zhou planted it. If they go in close to 1:00 it is possible that they will intercept Bee-Zhou in the midst of his attempt. If they break in later than noon or so on Tuesday the disk is gone, having been discovered and removed by Weeks.

It is likely that the characters will also notice several other groups of cloaks, some professional, others not so professional, lurking about the countryside around Weeks' estate. One is composed of the Priority agents who have gotten word through Roma and the grapevine that the SACQ formula is there. One is a group of burger who have been hired by Earl as a back-up group (or a primary group, if the characters turned down his offer). Feel free to insert more groups if there are appropriate GMCs in your campaign. Instead of providing a timeline of when these various groups make their

MAP: Senator Weeks' Mansion: Ground Floor



moves, you should tailor their actions to dramatic effect. It is most fun if their attempts to break in directly conflict with the characters' attempts. One or both of these groups might notice the characters going in and wait to see if they come out with the formula. If the characters do, the GMCs jump them for it. The opposite could just as easily happen, with the characters jumping GMCs trying to escape with the goods. Alternatively, the characters could run across other groups inside the mansion. An encounter between three or more parties could be most amusing as all of them attempt to determine whether their enemy's enemy is their friend or not.

The Grounds

As mentioned above, the land around the estate is rocky with few trees or shrubs. The estate itself is surrounded by an eight-foot wrought iron fence. Stationary security cameras with motion detectors are mounted at sixty foot intervals along the top of the fence. A private driveway leads to a gate in the fence where a call box connects potential visitors to the security office. A prospective entrant must appear on the day's list to gain admittance unless he or she is a common visitor or a very smooth fast-talker.

Inside the fence luscious green grass grows, irrigated under the ground by an expensive system which also waters and feeds fruit trees and hedges. Characters who manage to get past the fence can find plenty of places to hide amidst the lush vegetation. In the back of the house, an expansive patio complete with an above-ground swimming pool dominates the area. It is about a thirty yard stretch from the fence to any point on the outer wall of the house.

The First Floor

All the windows and doors on this level are protected from would-be thieves by a security system which triggers an alarm in the security room if any door or window is opened when the system is on, which is generally between 10:00 PM and 6:00 AM. In case of a break-in, the guard on duty will go investigate the disturbance, alerting the other guards via walkie-talkie if the situation is dangerous or backup is needed for some other reason.

Entryway

This two-story room, the first that most visitors see, is dominated by two ornate staircases that sweep up to the second floor. The plush crimson carpeting is complemented by velvet wallpaper on either side wall. Portraits of no one in particular (Weeks has them because they look distinguished) line both staircases. A closet to one side of the room holds coats and shoes. Doors under each staircase lead to the first floor bathroom and stairs to the basement.

Living Room

This huge space encompasses several smaller areas, each set up around a different entertainment theme. One grouping centers on an overstocked bar, one around a large screen television, one around a billiard table, and one around a selection of video games including a sit-down virtual reality model. Arched doorways lead to the Dining Room and back into the entryway.

Dining Room

This room is dominated by an oaken dining table fully forty feet long. Chairs flank the table, with some others along each wall. Glass doors overlook the patio, and accompany modern-looking glass chandeliers. As in the entryway, portraits of no one in particular cover the walls.

Patio

This structure is made entirely of wood, and abuts the above-ground swimming pool. A huge barbecue made of brick is built in near the doors to the kitchen, and high quality oaken lawn furniture sits scattered about in small groups. The central air equipment for the entire house is located below the patio, as is the electric switchbox for the place. Entrance to this under-patio area is difficult because of a chain link fence that blocks access. Motion detectors also help deter potential burglars from tampering with either of these systems.

Kitchen

This marvel of polished steel holds tables, cup-

boards, utensils, and appliances, all of which are polished to gleaming. Characters in search of improvised weapons will have a field day with knives of all descriptions. Twin doorways lead to the servants’ staircases which run to the second floor linen closet and the basement/wine cellar (which is not pictured on the map).

Trophy Room and Sun Room

These two rooms contain stuffed animals of all stripes: moose, badgers, deer, zebras, birds — you name it. Weeks didn’t kill any of them himself, but he keeps them around because they provide nice décor. The sun room’s walls are all glass, providing a stunning view of the lush front lawn.

Security Room

This room has monitors for all of the outside security cameras, an audio link to the intercom at the front gate, and monitors for the alarm system on the ground floor. One security guard is always on duty here, watching the monitors (sometimes) or reading a book (slightly more often). If a major security breach should take place, one of the guards will remain here to supervise the situation while the others move to deal with the problem.

Servants’ Rooms

Each of these holds the mundane possessions and furniture of the various servants that keep the mansion going on a day to day basis. The four security guards share the largest bedroom, dormitory style. The servants’ bathroom is shared by all. If the characters are here by night, the servants are in their rooms, sleeping. During the day, they are found about the mansion, carrying out their duties.

The Second Floor

Master Suite

These three rooms (bedroom, bathroom, and private porch) are all impeccably furnished. A closet with mirrored doors runs the full length of the wall opposite the bathroom. If Weeks is present at the mansion he is probably here, sleeping.

Guest Suites

Similar to the master suite, each of these consists of a bedroom with an attached bathroom. Although they are not currently in use, both are still well-furnished, and the beds are kept made at all times. Clothing of various sizes and styles hangs in the closets in case guests have need of them.

Multi-Purpose Room

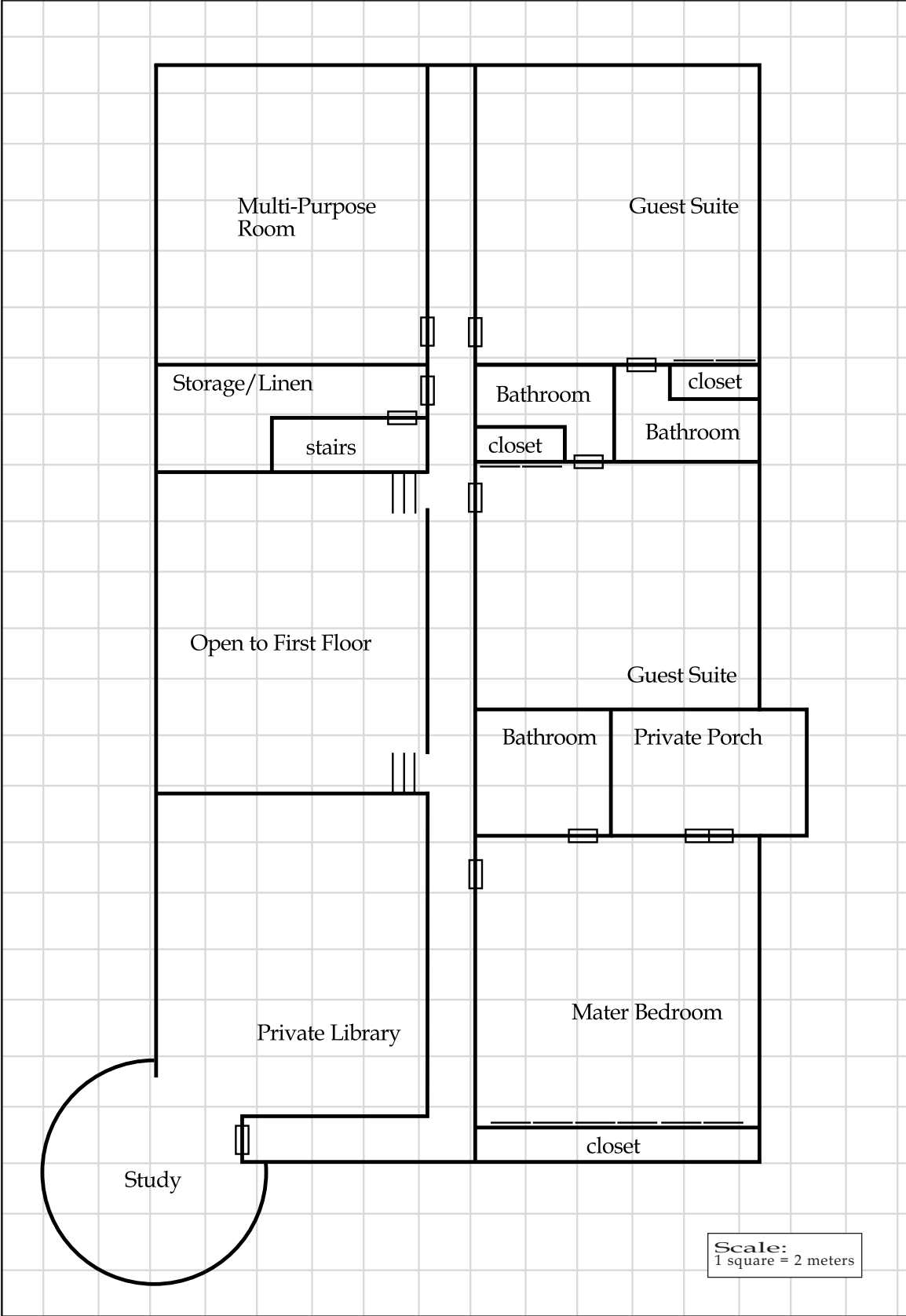
This room is currently totally empty, save for a box containing a personal computer against one wall. The computer itself is brand new, and the hard drive contains no information save the native operating system.

Study and Private Library

This room contains Weeks’ files, book collection, and desk. Thick carpeting covers the floor, and massive bookcases line the walls. The collection of books does not have any unifying theme. Most of them seem to be present because they have attractive bindings or because they are part of a large set of books that look nice together on the shelf.

Weeks’ desk and file cabinets are always kept locked. He carries the only key on him, though if the characters have detained him they may well have it. Searching through his desk and files will turn up all sorts of interesting information on Weeks’ dealings, as well as the dealings of the Al Amarjan Senate. Any specifics are left to the devious mind of the Game Moderator. Weeks’ Macintosh computer sits on his desk. It is password protected (but the password is simply “sydney”), containing mostly electronic duplicates of his physical files. In a folder labeled “Boring Old Tax Stuff” is a file which contains all that information that he keeps forgetting, including his credit card account numbers, PIN numbers, the combination to his luggage (1-2-3-4-5), and the combination to his safe.

Behind the desk is a life-sized portrait of Weeks, dressed in ceremonial robes and holding a book of Al Amarjan law. Behind the portrait (in the outside tower wall) is a safe with a combination lock. Getting into the safe requires an excellent roll on an applicable locksmithing skill or the accurate administration of an explosive device. Of course,



MAP: Senator Weeks' Mansion: 2nd Floor

entering the combination works just as well. Inside (assuming that Bee-Zhou has been here) is an optical disk conveniently labeled “SACQ,” the deeds to Weeks’ varied real estate holdings, and some fine jewelry.

Wrapping it Up

Once the characters have the formula they have several options. If a character with any kind of fringe science capacity examines it for more than an hour or so, she will be able to determine that it is not any kind of working formula for something that produces effects like the SACQ of Jessica’s videotape. Though it is not worthless per se, it is in the context of what they have been hired to do.

They can question Weeks about this discrepancy, if they have access to him. He has no idea how the formula in question got into his safe in the first place. If the characters manage to question Bee-Zhou by capturing him near Week’s estate, he will be a tough nut to crack. If they try hard enough, they can find out that he was hired by Adriana Ruiz to impersonate Agent i and deliver the false formula provided by her. He knows nothing of her motivation.

It is conceivable that the characters will try to track Ruiz down to question her. If placed under duress, she too will eventually crack. If she does and manages to escape with her life, she will attempt to take revenge on the characters using her considerable status within the DBI to have them killed before they can reveal what they have learned to anyone.

In any case, news that Weeks possessed the formula for SACQ makes its way to Monique, leading to a series of highly embarrassing discoveries, all leading up to Weeks’ hanging in the Plaza of Justice for treason against the state and against Her Exaltedness, Monique D’Aubainne, Historic Liberator and Current Shepherdess of Al Amarja.

If the characters deliver the false formula to Jessica either unwittingly or with the knowledge that it is not the true formula, she makes no comment, paying them their agreed-upon wage. The characters never hear from her again on the matter, and the phone number, should they ever try it again, is disconnected. If they point out to her that the formula is not the actual formula for SACQ, and that the actual formula was never really avail-

able, she comments, “But only you and I know that. What others believe, whether they are correct or not, is often well worth the price of admission.” She pays them the full amount upon the characters’ guarantee that they will not spread this “vicious spin-control rumor that the formula is anything but the true formula for Selective Annihilation at Close Quarters.”

GMCs and Factions

Priority

Edmondo Roma is a relatively young staffer at the Palace in Freedom City. Initiated into the Vornite cell at an early age because of his intelligence and knack for manipulation, he excelled in executing secret missions as his superiors felt out his abilities. Stats for Roma are not included here, as he is himself peripheral to this scenario.

Roma caught on to the Mover paradox early on (see OTE, p. 140). Realizing that everything he knew could be disinformation, he decided to set up his own secret base of power. To that end, he began cultivating his own contacts. He also set up a group of agents that he could call on to do his private dirty work. He called his new proto-cell Priority, and funded it with money gained through the blackmail of important government officials.

Priority consists of Roma and his five agents who operate out of the Blue Weasel Shipping warehouse in Great Men Barrio. Priority is not a full time occupation for any of them. Roma has official and Mover duties that keep him from doing that. The other agents all have other operations on the side. Among the six of them, however, they manage to do quite well in looking out for their interests. As far as any of them know, their organization is uncompromised. In truth, the only outside organization with inside information on Priority is the Net, who own agent Ford lock, stock and barrel. They rely on him for inside information on what Priority is up to.

The Priority Agents

Douglas, Ford, O'Donnell, Murphy, and Lewis

These five are all professional cloaks of one stripe or another, and all have freelance operations outside the scope of their work for Roma and Priority. They all work well together, though none completely trust the others.

Languages: All speak Al Amarjan patois and English, and at least one of them can speak each of the following languages: French, Spanish, German, Latin, Italian, Arabic, and Japanese.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage with various knives, batons, and other weapons at hand

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 26, 24, 21, 19, 18 (“professional” resilience)

Traits

“Professionals,” 4 dice — These men are all full-time cloaks, and know the tactics of espionage, stealth, shadowing, and intelligence. (Confident demeanor)

Combat Training, 3 dice — All have trained in the technical art of pounding the snot out of people who desperately deserve it. (Always armed)

Perceptive, 3 dice — It doesn’t pay to be a myopic cloak, and these five are no exception. They survive by not being surprised by anything. (Rapidly glance around to assess any new area or situation)

Adriana Ruiz

Assistant Director of the DBI

Adriana Ruiz was born in Puerto Rico, but she moved to the mainland United States after graduating from high school. Enrolling at the University of the Americas, she studied Law Enforcement and researched global conspiracy in her spare time. She was heavily recruited by the CIA when she graduated, but passed on their offer in order to move to Al Amarja, an intriguing place she had read much about in her studies.

When she arrived, she joined the Peace Force but quickly found the blatancy of her job mind-numbing. She was granted a transfer to the DBI

and has spent the past decade rising through the ranks, storing up dirt on her colleagues for a rainy day. She was thwarted in her rise to power by Senator Weeks, a source of pain that she had failed to foresee. Her desires for revenge and personal advancement fuel her enmity for him.

Puerto Rican woman, age 38, 170 cm, 58 kg. Tan skin with a few freckles, short black hair and brown eyes. Adriana wears loose fitting pants and simple shirts most of the time. She occasionally wears jewelry, but not as a rule. She is physically fit, but not to the point of distraction.

Languages: Spanish, English.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 18 (fit)

Traits

DBI Administrator, 5 dice — Ruiz has spend the past ten years rising through the ranks of the DBI. She knows procedures, contacts, informants, agents, and officials. More importantly, she knows what to do to make them dance to the beat of her drum. (Greet all DBI staff by name, carries pencil behind ear)

Blackmail, 4 dice — Ruiz has a knack for knowing just how much she can get out of a particularly juicy bit of “background information,” and just who she should release information to so that it deals the maximum amount of damage to its intended victims. (Uses the phrase “or else” in everyday conversation)

Conspiracy Theorist, 3 dice — She has done personal study into the nature of conspiracy and theorizes about what makes the perfect conspiracy, what sorts of world events may or may not have been caused by conspiracy, and whether or not the Black Helicopters actually exist. This background makes her an ideal candidate for Vornite recruitment, and incidentally, they have been watching her for some time. (Carefully assesses the internal hierarchy of people she meets in groups, then deals only with the “leader”)

Bee-Zhou/Agent i

Freelancer

Born in Al Amarja to Chinese parents who had fled the Red Chinese régime, Bee-Zhou learned most of what he knows about cloaking from the school of hard knocks. From his early enrollment in

street gangs to his two-year stint as a Peace Force officer to his present employment as a freelance operative, he has lived on the dangerous side of the law all his life, making contacts and setting up deals.

His prime motivation is money — his parents were staunch capitalists, and they instilled their ideology into Bee-Zhou. He has a well-developed sense of how far he can push things, though, and is unlikely to sell out his friends.

Al Amarjan male of Chinese ancestry, age 25, 160 cm, 72 kg. Black hair in a military haircut, brown eyes. Short and muscular, Bee-Zhou moves with the grace of an acrobat.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, a little Chinese.

Attack: 4 dice, X2 damage with stiletto

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 33 (tough as nails)

Traits

Streetwise, 4 dice — Since his early childhood, Bee-Zhou has been making contacts and learning how to survive and prosper on the island and in the Edge particularly. (Never consults maps, but can always find the place he's looking for)

Streetfighting, 4 dice — Bee-Zhou has pioneered his own style that uses his mass and speed to best advantage, while also taking advantage of such dirty moves as eye gouging and groin shots. (Fiddles with his knife)

Government Contacts, 2 dice — He's worked for the Peace Force and the DBI, so he knows people who can do him favors in those circles. (Inconspicuously wears a Peace symbol on his lapel)

“Jessica”

Net Associate

Jessica (not her real name) works for the Net as a consultant and solution provider. She has a strong track record, is privy to information at the highest levels of the Net hierarchy, and is paid very well in both cash and access to special equipment and services. Jessica cannot be bribed into revealing Net secrets, and is mentally hardened to the extent that it is very difficult to pry into her mind. Furthermore, she wears a crystal trap at all times.

British woman, age 31, 180 cm, 65 kg. Deeply

tanned skin, long walnut hair, brown eyes. Always well dressed in business attire of the latest styles. Moves smoothly, and addresses everyone in a businesslike manner.

Languages: English, Italian, Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 4 dice

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 25 (tends not to be hit, even by blows that look like they should connect)

Traits

Espionage, 5 dice — Jessica is a professional, there's no doubt about it. From shadowing to the finer points of money laundering, she has experience and theoretical knowledge. (Appraises all situations quickly, though not audibly)

Karate, 4 dice — Well-trained by the British intelligence services, she has kept herself up physically. (Does finger exercises to keep her cool)

Botany, 3 dice — In her spare time, Jessica keeps plants. (Remembers peoples' personalities by the plants they resemble)

Sydney J. Weeks

Al Amarjan Senator

Sydney Weeks' father was one of the small cabal of associates of Monique D'Aubainne when she “liberated” the island from fascist domination at the beginning of World War II. When Sydney was born, he was raised largely by proxies, and so never got to know either his father or his father's friends very well. This did not stop him from inheriting his father's seat in the Senate when the old man was killed by enemies of the State in 1989.

Weeks is not a genius, but neither is he a moron. He maintains what he has because he started out on top. He uses his wealth, political power, and proximity to Monique to his best advantage.

Al Amarjan male of Italian ancestry, age 45, 170 cm, 94 kg. Pale, unhealthy-looking skin, dirty blond hair, blue eyes. Weeks is paunchy, out of shape, and abuses his body regularly by smoking, drinking, and doing a variety of drugs, often in combination.

Languages: English, a little Italian.

Attack: 1 die

Defense: 2 dice, plus penalty die

Hit Points: 12 (flabby and weak, but slightly

bulky)

Traits

Senator, 4 dice — Weeks knows his way around the corridors of power on Al Amarja. He knows what strings to pull and when to pull them to get what he wants. (Wears large ruby ring of office)

Weasel, 4 dice — In addition to knowing his way around the Senate, Weeks is able to get what he wants out of people through a combination of whining, cajoling and threatening. (Effects winy voice when beneficial)

Games, 3 dice — Weeks likes to play games. He is pretty good at pool, video games, board games, and war games. (Uses game terminology in everyday life)

Rosa Sedano

Housekeeper/Bodyguard

Though she has an interesting job description, Rosa mostly just cleans and cooks. She has never actually been called upon to protect Senator Weeks from physical harm.

Spanish female, age 24, 149 cm, 69 kg. Dark skin, black hair, brown eyes. While Rosa is fairly short, she packs quite a wallop.

Languages: Spanish, French, a little English and a little Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 25 (compact and dense)

Traits

Housekeeper, 3 dice — She can cook, clean, and do the housekeeper thing. (Whistles while she works)

Bodyguard, 4 dice — She knows what to look for to identify potential attackers, and can hold her own in a fight if things come to that. (Alert eyes)

Deconstructionist, 3 dice — Rosa reads Derrida and the deconstructionists in her spare time. (Wonders out loud about subversion of meaning)

Earl Watkins

Wannabe

Earl Watkins is a wino with delusions of grandeur. Although he knows a lot of people, none of them are important in any major way, and most

of them hold him in low regard. Earl wants desperately to be a big wheel, and to that end he is constantly in search of the big score. He thinks he's finally found it.

Al Amarjan male, age 38, 160 cm, 68 kg. Pale, unhealthy looking skin, ratty brown hair, sunken blue eyes. Earl is always wheezing, but continues to chain smoke home-rolled cigarettes.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 2 dice plus penalty die

Defense: 2 dice plus penalty die

Hit Points: 13 (feeble)

Traits

Fixer, 3 dice — Although he is pretty sad in the grand scheme of things, he does know a few people, giving him one up on just about any burger you'd care to name. (Says, "Yeah, I know" all the time)

Latent Psychic, 1 die with penalty die — Earl doesn't know it, but his latent psychic abilities make him a magnet for pity. Maybe that's how he gets most of his information. This power is involuntary, and so Earl has no Psychic Pool. (Inspires pity)

Weeks Estate Security Guards

These rent-a-cops are competent, but are more concerned with not dying than with security. Luckily, these two motivation rarely overlap at Weeks' mansion.

Attack: 3 dice, X5 stun damage with tasers, X2 damage with nightsticks

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 18

Traits

Security Guard, 3 dice — These guys know how to do rounds, check the security monitors, fill out paperwork, and operate the coffee machine in the Security Room. (Wear uniforms)

D'Aubainne International Airport

PRESS RELATIONS OFFICE
TELEPHONE 350788 • FAX 350789
1 AIRPORT ROAD
THE EDGE, AL AMARJA

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Commuter Plane Jarred in Impact

A 'Martian Shuttle airplane bound for Sicily experienced an incident near the D'Aubainne International Airport early this evening. Flight six made an unscheduled landing several seconds after it left the runway at its regularly scheduled departure time of 5:45 PM.

"At this time, we believe that computer malfunction is at the root of this problem," said J. Salinas de la Cruz, 'Martian Shuttle spokesperson. "We regret this incident, and offer out deepest consolation and apologies to the families of the passengers." De la Cruz is unavailable for further comment.

Terminal staff were on the scene minutes after the circumstance arose, taking stock of the site and imposing order on the situation. All Terminal staffpersons are understandably shocked at this incident. All Terminal staffpersons work diligently to ensure that all Terminal activities offer the utmost in safety and comfort. Professional counselors are being made available to Terminal staffpersons who may be having difficulty coping with this affair.

There were twenty-two passengers aboard flight six: F. P. Bass, Franklin Chambers, Anthony DiGiovanni, Pietro Donazetti, Alphonse Eltorrio, Trice Eltorrio, Isabel Q. Houston, Marc de Mazzei, J. Todd Oberstar, Samuel Secci, Dirk Hobbes, Lucio Verde, Constance Macogni, Rico Masterson, Anthony Nunzio, Rahn-Dee Wuv-U, Colin Riamundo, Francesco Vigo, Joey Vitale, Valentina Lynne Vitale, Jerome X, and Terrence X. None survived, nor did any of the flight crew: Lemont Grace, Elaine Quincy-Taylor and Clio Warnerson.

#

PARTY CRASHERS

by John W. Baichtal

Setup

The drudgery and peculiarity of Al Amarjan life is broken for a bit when the characters get invited to a party. Out of the blue the PCs each receive a gold-embossed invitation from Phil, a Moroccan expatriate and stock market player. A distant acquaintance of the PCs, Phil must have taken a liking to them and put their names on his invitation list. A party's a party, right?

If the PCs are heavily involved in the island's conspiracies, the following matrix may be used to provide more structure around the PCs' presence at the party:

- **The Aries Gang/Sommerites:** "Hey, dude, I hear this Phil guy throws one hell of a party — check it out and give us the scoop!"
- **Sir Arthur Compton:** Phil's parties have begun to approach Compton's in terms of reputation, though they are tamer, of course. Still, Compton knows a challenge when he sees one. He sets the PCs to investigate the party and report back on what happens.
- **The Earthlings:** Want the PCs to contact Nancy Fu, touchy-feely inspirational speaker, about emceeding a 12-step seminar for Blue Shock addicts. She is a guest at the party.
- **Greeks:** Alpha Rho Tau found an example of Sophie L'Musaraigne's art, and simply *must* recruit her. Sigma Om dudes have heard that *the* Bruce Kowalski works as a bouncer at Phil's parties. As far as Delta Ep guys are concerned, the only thing better than composing odes to leprosy in haiku form is doing it while slamming free booze and drugs. Sigma Ep girls just *totally*, like, want to party, you know?
- **Kergillians:** The *Red Orca* has spotted a ship of unknown design in geostationary orbit above Al Amarja. The Kergillians have mobilized all of their agents to keep their eyes peeled (literally, in some cases) for signs of unauthorized alien intruders. "This is *our* planet, we got here first!"
- **The Mr. LeThuys:** "This idiotic party is probably full of future nihilists; go and recruit some."
- **The Movers:** They have decided to invite Phil to be a Junior Assistant Flunky in their cell. The characters are sent to set up a meeting.
- **The Net:** Is hoping to get Phil to launder some money for them. The PCs' job is to dig up some dirt on Phil so he will be more compliant when the "offer" is made.
- **The Neutralizers:** "There are some *weird* people at those parties — check it out!"
- **Peace Force:** "We have a report of a punk sticking up one of the host's invitees with a handgun. He may show up at the party using the stolen invitation. If he does, keep him under surveillance until he leaves the party, then contact us. Dismissed!"

Party Animals

The following are a number of GMCs the characters may encounter at the party. The GM may add to this list, but in general no important people will be there — e.g., Monique d'Aubainne won't show up.

Sophie L'Musaraigne

Sadistic Cartoonist

Phil's girlfriend is a quiet, sensuous woman with a nasty sense of humor. She spent most of her teenage years in an asylum after assaulting her parents with a propane torch, which she blandly explained as "I just wanted to hear them scream." After she got out, she worked as a hooker in the Plaza of the Four Cardinal Points, then got taken to one of Phil's parties by a trick. She quickly caught Phil's eye and has been his woman ever since.

Al Amarjan woman, age 25, 160 cm, 49 kg. Blonde hair, blue eyes, pale skin; likes slinky silk outfits. Wears a button that says, "The Therapist is the Rapist."

Languages: Al Amarjan patois.

"Party Crashers"

Illustration by Grey Thornberry



Attack: 3 dice (hysterically strong and swift), X1 damage with pencil

Defense: 2 dice

Traits

Artist, 3 dice — Good technique but creepy choice of subject matter. (Habitually carries a pencil)

Beauty, 3 dice — Nice to look at but unpleasant in terms of personality. (Graceful)

Sadist — Fantasizes about torturing people, enjoys watching it happen. (Occasionally stabs people with her pencil)

Bruce Kowalski

Ex-Linebacker Doorman

Bruce was a famous professional American football player for four years before he was forced to retire after being arrested for cocaine possession. He fled to Al Amarja three years ago to avoid the hounding reporters, and has remained, working as a high-profile bodyguard for the rich and famous. He

is currently freelancing for Phil, guarding the door at his parties.

American man, age 29, 201 cm, 140 kg. Brown hair (peroxided and worn long on the top, with the name 'Bruce' shaved into the close-cut hair on the sides of his head), blue eyes, chiseled features, diamond stud in left ear, championship ring on right ring finger, dresses in silver and black.

Attack: 5 dice (tackles and body slams only), 4 dice otherwise; X1 damage when unarmed

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 45 (Sheer physical power and determination)

Traits

Football Player, 5 dice — (In great shape)

Intimidation, 4 dice — He can be *really* scary when he wants to be. (Hugely muscular)

Star Appeal, 3 dice — Bruce takes his good looks and fame as far as it will go. (Million dollar grin)

Unconcerned — As long as the guests have invitations and aren't openly carrying weapons, he doesn't care who (or what) they are. (Acts bored)

Nancy Fu

Burger, Inspirational Speaker

Five years ago, Nancy was a cashier at a McKing burger franchise in Cleveland. Her life sucked, her family hated her, her boyfriend left her for an exotic dancer, and bill collectors were calling her apartment daily. One night, after a long and stressful shift, a dramatic change occurred in her life: A silvery disk swooped out of the dark sky and paralyzed her with a beam of light. As she stood there, frozen in her tracks, heavily garbed humanoids, hissing evilly, disembarked and brought her aboard the saucer. After being subjected to a number of humiliating experiments, Nancy was shot full of alien medicines, then let go.

From that day forward, Nancy was a different woman — confident, charismatic, success-oriented. She immediately began giving inspirational speeches at Rotary clubs and nursing homes, gradually working her way up the social ladder. Now she addresses huge crowds for \$100,000 honoraria. Unbeknownst to Nancy, she has been implanted with a transponder which allows the aliens to observe her movements, much like the way radio beacons are attached to whales so their migrations can be tracked.

Asian-American woman, 29, 150 cm, 50 kg. Long black hair, olive skin, black eyes, terrific figure. Wears expensive clothes.

Languages: English.

Traits

Charismatic Speaker, 5 dice — She is a convincing and entertaining speaker with an enchanting voice. (Great conversationalist)

Attractive, 3 dice — Looking good is part of her job. (Immaculately groomed)

Weird — Talks matter-of-factly about aliens and the various conspiracies which have kept their existence a secret for so long. (Glazed look in her eyes)

Finger

Foul-mouthed Punk

Finger is a gangster wanna-be who mugged a friend of Phil's by the name of Jerry Fontjoy, an invitee to the party. Finding the invitation among his haul, Finger decided to show up at the party to get liquored up. He is dressed in a plaid flannel

shirt and XXXL jeans which are threatening to slip off his butt, and has a baseball cap turned to a peculiar angle. Precariously stuck into his waistband is a Glock-17 automatic pistol with the safety off and a round in the pipe. Any violence done to Finger while the gun is in his waistband has a 1 in 6 chance of causing the weapon to discharge, gelding him.

To further spread his “loco” reputation, Finger occasionally (and spontaneously) shouts out rhymes and bits of rap lyrics. One of his favorites is: “When I die bury me six foot deep, with two shotguns under my feet!”

Al Amarjan man, age 21, 180 cm, 80 kg. Olive skin, shaved head, goatee, gold tooth, sunglasses, four-finger gold ring that says “Bad M— F—”.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 2 dice, X4 damage with Glock (Lousy shot, always fires as fast as he can regardless of accuracy)

Defense: 3 dice (Resilient)

Traits

Street Gang Poser, 4 dice — To those not in the know, Finger looks like the ultimate gangster. However, he is all bluster and no follow-through. (Swaggers)

Social Clod — Doesn't bathe, swears constantly; penalty die in all social situations. (Smelly, cusses)

Elwood “Woody” Light

Paranoid Inventor

Elwood Light is an American inventor who has recently suffered a turn of bad luck. His patent for a perpetual-motion energy generator was rejected, and he was arrested after breaking in to the offices of a certain battery company, which he believed responsible for quashing the application. According to Woody, the CIA took him from jail and inserted a piezoelectric crystal in his brain, which ostensibly controls his thoughts and prevents him from “spreading the truth” about what has happened. Light thinks that the reason battery technology has scarcely advanced in the last 30 years is that progress in the field of perpetual motion has been suppressed by the battery companies and their pawns, the CIA. Phil invites Woody to his parties for yucks, and also to butter him up in case he is right about perpetual motion technology.

American man, age 45, 165 cm, 100 kg. Sunburnt pale skin, brown hair (receding), darting brown eyes; wears faded jeans and a stained nylon jacket.

Languages: English, French (High school).

Traits

Electronics Guru, 3 dice — Knows a great deal about electronics hardware. (Solder burns on fingers)

Paranoid — Thinks everyone is out to make his life miserable. (Eyes dart nervously)

Piezoelectric Crystal Recipient — Gets a migraine headache whenever he thinks or speaks negatively about the United States, the CIA, Congress, Republicans, pink bunnies, and batteries. (Winces)

Chez Phil

Phil’s villa is on the northern coast of Al Amarja, about 12 km up from Scylla. It is a gleaming ultra-modern building done in the pink-white marble quarried from Mount Ralsius. The sounds of music and laughter can be heard from inside. When the PCs show up, Bruce, the huge door guard, makes a cursory examination of their invitations then lets them pass. However, Bruce turns away any character without an invitation.

There are about 100 people at the party, about half men and half women. All but two are guests, one being Bruce and the other is Phil’s girlfriend Sophie, who is serving as hostess — Phil is absent, though this is not surprising to his regulars.

Guest Matrix

The GM is free to flesh out other GMCs at the party, using the following matrix or some other means.

Adjectives

1. Dancing
2. Drunk
3. Jolly
4. Chatting
5. Oily
6. Sexy

Nouns

1. Burger
2. Dilettante
3. Grifter
4. Hooker
5. Jet-Setter
6. VIP

Ground Floor

Great Hall

This huge room is the main party area. To the right of the front door are bay windows giving a beautiful view of the Med. The bar is along the left side and separates the kitchen from the Hall. Opposite the front door is the exit to the pool area, where the water’s dancing reflections can be seen; to the right of this door is a huge, unlit fireplace. Next to the fireplace is a stereo which is constantly pounding out dance music, and guests are shaking their booties with abandon. The loud music makes conversation rather difficult in this room.

Numerous examples of fine art, mainly abstract paintings and ultra-modern sculpture, dot the hall, and in one corner is a rack holding a matched katana, wakizashi and tanto. The latter two are cheap imitations, but the katana is the real thing and worth about \$6,000. The guests won’t let PCs steal anything, and Bruce will recognize most of Phil’s valuables if a PC blatantly walks out the front door with it.

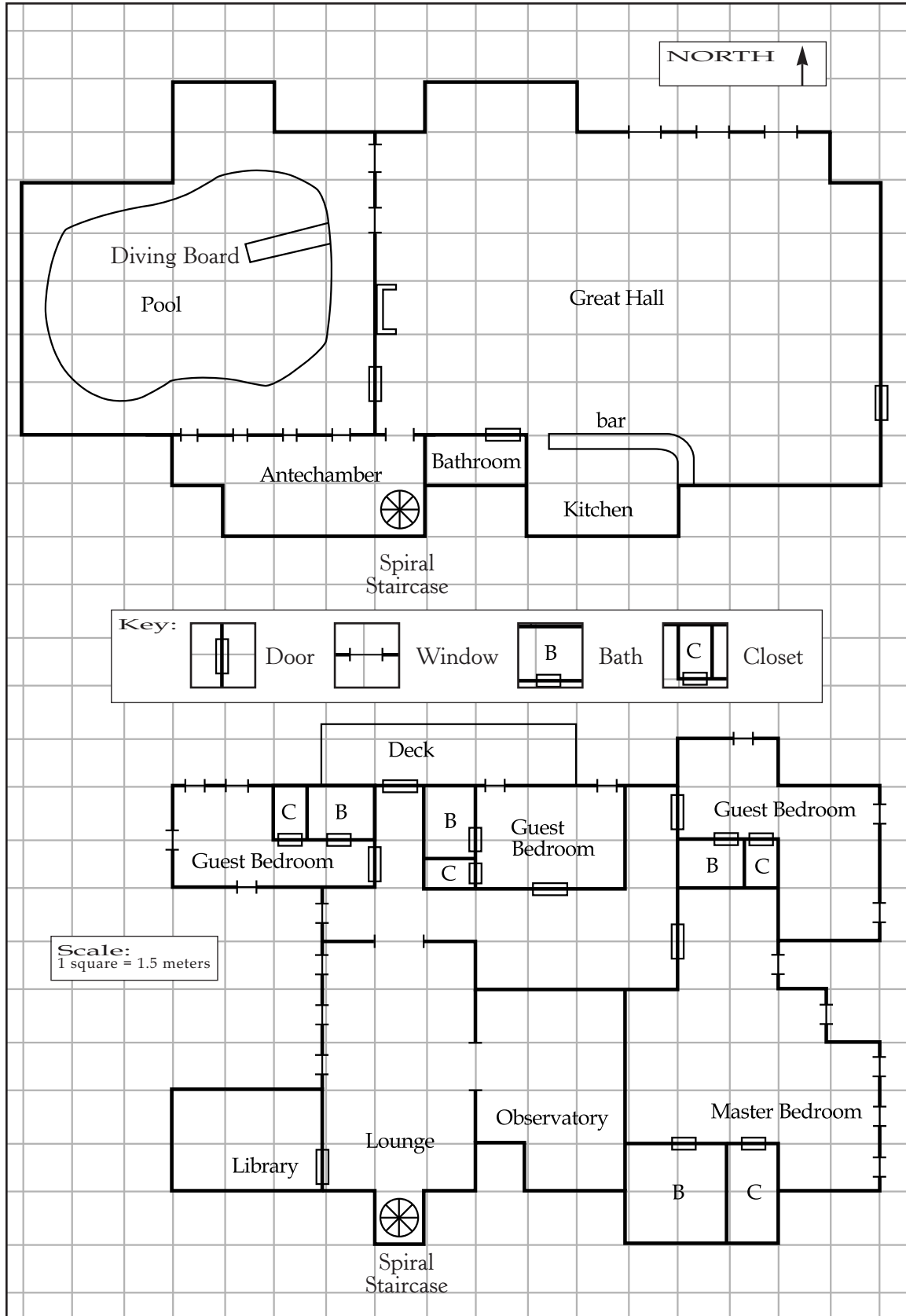
Set up next to the bar is a large buffet with peculiar *hors d’ouvres*: scotch eggs, dolphin-meat crepes and antelope shish-kabobs, as well as more conventional appetizers like buffalo wings (hot enough to make a Mexican reach for his water glass), caviar and deviled eggs.

Bruce has set up a chair by the front door and occasionally gets a drink, but basically stays on guard the whole night.

For the first few hours of the party, Sophie sits by the stairs and absently greets the PCs, then returns to doodling on a sketch pad.

The Kitchen

A long rosewood bar separates the kitchen from the Great Hall. During the course of the party,



MAP: Chez Phil

assorted guests volunteer at the bar, or perhaps no one will and the PC must get his own drink. Put simply, the bar is stocked with every imaginable type of beverage, including bags of drink mixes and three small fridges full of wine coolers and beer. The kitchen itself is quite clean, the caterers having come and gone a few hours before.

Antechamber

This quiet nook is convenient for private conversations or smooching. There are two couches facing the window overlooking the pool area, and the lights are kept low.

Woody Light hangs out here the whole evening, occasionally making forays to the bar for another cola. He is usually found haranguing anyone who listens about the evils perpetrated on the world in the name of the household alkaline battery. A typical rant: “You know those two guys in Utah who discovered cold fusion? Then they turned around and said it didn’t work. I’ve seen it before — the CIA and the corporations got to them and made them act like it was a failure. Does anyone have any aspirin?”

Pool

Phil’s fenced-in yard has a sunken swimming pool, and those guests who had the foresight to bring swimsuits splash around in the water or lounge nearby, ogling one another’s bodies. Finger, ersatz gangboy, is hanging out here “trying to get some m— f— action going with some females!” He is not having much luck. If a PC converses with him, he tries to disguise his lack of vocabulary and enunciation with a generous sprinkling of cuss words; e.g., “So I was walking down the street when this female walks up to me, understand what I’m saying? She was talking s— about she was gonna charge me a hundred m— f— bucks, and I sez ‘whassup you g— d— m— f— whore! I ain’t payin’ no hundred m— f— dollars for no woman! Kiss my m— f— a— you piece of s— b—!’ And she says, ‘that will cost you twenty!’”

Second Floor

Library

This room is covered with mahogany bookshelves, matched sets of books neatly filling the

rows. Though there is no dust on any of the books, they are all quite new and unworn, which suggests that Phil just keeps the library for style and not for actual reading.

After midnight, Sophie remains in the library, drawing. Anyone who sneaks a peek at her pad sees illustrations of the various party guests in poses of death and exquisite agony. If somebody gets too close or decides he’s an art critic, Sophie lays into him with her #2 until he flees.

Lounge

Guests mingle and sip their drinks, or walk down the stairs to the Great Hall. The walls are decorated with framed original art, paintings in the style of the great Impressionists; their subjects are still-lives, all-night diners, and portraits. The furniture is sparse, with only two small end tables which hold carafes of wine.

Nancy Fu has staked out this area, and is quietly conversing with other guests on a variety of topics. She has a tendency to speak of aliens as if they actually exist, which may freak out naive PCs. Example: “The Loch Ness Monster was a fake, the crop rings were fake, so people assume that every apparent manifestation of extraterrestrial activity is just some bored hick pulling a hoax. That is not the case! Every year there are over fifty confirmed alien abductions in the U.S. alone; I know — I was one of them!”

Balcony

Phil’s wooden deck overlooks the Mediterranean. This is another quiet area. Guests whisper to one another and fall quiet as others approach. It is a place of secrets and conspiracies.

Observatory

This room has a huge skylight, with an antique brass telescope positioned to look up at the stars. The walls are covered with framed antique star charts and the floor with thick carpeting. As the party may suspect, the observatory is like the library — only there to make the house cool.

Guest Bedrooms

These three rooms are open for the convenience of the guests, should their flirtings turn serious or they become too sloshed to drive home. Each bed-

room has a king sized bed, a dresser (with TV), a desk and chair, and an attached bathroom.

Master Bedroom

It will not be apparent what this door leads to, but by process of elimination the PCs may deduce that it is Phil's bedroom, and this is the case. This room is always kept locked, because Phil doesn't want guests to be digging around in his personal stuff. If the characters break in, they find a lavishly furnished bedroom with an attached bathroom and a huge closet full of clothes. An antique dresser is opposite the bed, and a desk with a PC sits in a corner. The computer requires a special code to access (or a hacker could do it) and contains information on stocks as well as a database of all his guests, including a great deal of personal information.

The bottom two drawers of the dresser are locked, and hold Phil's private (and highly illegal!) arsenal. The upper holds an AK-47 (X6 damage), a LAW-12 shotgun (X10), a Styer AUG assault rifle (X6), a 7.62mm FN-FAL (X7) and a .45 caliber Thompson submachinegun (X5). The lower drawer holds four pistols: a 9mm Beretta 92F (X4), a .45 caliber automatic pistol (X5), a .357 Magnum revolver (X5) and a 9mm Luger (X4). Also in the bottom drawer are three full loads of ammunition for each of the nine guns.

Party Crashers

Midnight. Things start really getting weird when six rather unusual people (even by Al Amarjan standards) show up. Bruce stolidly passes them through after seeing their invitations, and the newcomers begin mingling with the crowd. They are, outwardly at least, handsome blonde men with sharp suits, carrying musical instruments. What is weird about them is that they are all identical, and they have obviously plastic skin and hair and fixed grins on their waxen faces — like mannequins who came to life and showed up on Phil's doorstep ready to party. If the PCs didn't arrive until after midnight, they miss the grand entrance — the six amble in, toting their instruments, and everything goes quiet — even the stereo is turned down as all the guests stare at the plastic men. Gradually, the jaded Martians lose interest and go about whatever they were doing.

T'fhung

Aliens

The T'fhung are aliens from a distant stellar system. Their bodies are in the form of blobs, much like shiny black jellyfish. They totally lack the ability to see, and their sense of hearing is quite poor. They have compensated for this by developing a keen psychic perception which they call *emanation*. This perception is very acute and can tell many things about a person's mind and feelings. Their "disguises", which are so transparent to ordinary humans, are flawless to anyone who relies primarily on ESP. Anyone scanning the plastic men with such a power perceives (wrongly) that the T'fhung are harmless and friendly. As far as the T'fhung are concerned, their disguises are perfect, not realizing that most humans can instantly tell them from the real item.

The aliens got their invitations by murdering a guest (named Moquisha Q. Fung) and reproducing her invitation to the molecule. Of course, they all say Moquisha Q. Fung, but that is a minor issue in the eyes of the T'fhung. Bruce was too bored to notice.

Built into their musical instruments are death ray projectors which do terrible damage to organic beings. The rays have three settings, one which causes minor damage but induces terrible agony, one which does a great deal of damage but less pain, and a third setting which simply kills the victim. Also, the instruments have a store of paralytic nerve gas, which has a strength of 3 dice.

Attack: 4 dice, X3 damage (Hideously strong); Death ray does X1, X5 or X10 damage

Defense: 5 dice

Hit Points: 40 (Nearly indestructible)

Traits

Hard to Kill, 5 dice — Being made up of plastic and jello has its advantages. Realistically, anything other than a gun just annoys them. (Bounces when struck)

Curious, 3 dice — Eagerly absorbs data on every possible aspect of human society. (Nosy)

Bad Disguise — You would have to be pretty stupid to fall for their subterfuge.



Illustration by Grey Thornberry

What's Going On?

The T'fhung are here for research. They want to record the *emanations* of the human guests while they are experiencing various emotions and states — hope, love, glee, pride, lust, greed, shame, hate, shock, fear, agony, death. This data is of some value to T'fhung scientists, and the six plastic men will collect the *emanations* by pointing their musical instruments at people experiencing them. To “disguise” this procedure, the T'fhung play snippets 1970's Top-40 hits that they taped when the radio waves made it into the sensor range of one of their starships. Of course, to their sense of *emanation*, Elvis crooning sounds perfectly all right coming out of a saxophone.

Throughout the party, the T'fhung poke around with their musical instruments. A guy gets drunk and begins yelling at his girl — a plastic man is there, zapping the whole thing with his trumpet, which is piping “Staying Alive” out of the bell. A young couple kiss in a secluded nook and a T'fhung points his trombone which tootles out a rendition of “Go Cat Go...”

T'fhung Reply Matrix

Talking with the T'fhung reveals little — they do not speak any human language very well, and have twenty pre-recorded phrases that they hope will pass for small talk. So if a PC asks a plastic man where he got his suit, the response might be, “What a nifty day it is!” or “I do not enjoy seafood but Salisbury steaks are adequate.” The lines are all delivered in a telemarketer's cloyingly cheerful voice. Roll two dice to see what the alien says:

1-2

- 1 “Part of this nutritious breakfast!”
- 2 “No, thank you — I'm trying to cut down.”
- 3 “Hey, sugar buns, wanna dance?”
- 4 “Do you have minty fresh breath?”
- 5 “Hasta la vista, baby!”
- 6 “Life is good! Hahahaha!” OR “Ask yourself — does your shampoo tingle?”

3-4

- 1 "I prefer home-style mashed potatoes."
- 2 "Do you feel lucky, punk?"
- 3 "I'll have malt liquor, please. A forty ounce, if you have one."
- 4 "Is your regular detergent as foamy as new Dyna-Action Sprunt™?"
- 5 "What we got here is a failure to communicate."
- 6 "I had to try it to believe it." OR "Move along, please, move along. It's all over, folks."

5-6

- 1 "Dammit Jim, I'm a doctor, not an accountant!"
- 2 "He may go all the way! Fifteen! Ten! Five! Touchdoooooowwwwwwnnnnn!"
- 3 (Laughs hysterically for two minutes)
- 4 "Would you like the chicken macaroni or the three-cheese meatloaf, sir?"
- 5 "That wasn't a threat — it was a prediction."
- 6 "What makes a man the way he is?"

Showtime

Around 2 AM, after a few people have drifted home (and Phil still hasn't arrived), the aliens take their observations to the next level. The T'fhung have sampled most of the *emanations* they were after, all but three — agony, horror and death. The aliens station themselves as follows: One on the balcony, one in the swimming pool area, one by the front door, one in the lounge and two in the Great Hall. Then they begin shooting paralytic gas out of their musical instruments. Anyone who shakes off the effects of the gas (which takes about 10 minutes to fill the house) is blasted by a death ray. If the characters are all paralyzed, they and the guests undergo disgusting tortures (Sophie chortling the whole time) until the T'fhung are satisfied that they have all the data they need. Then everyone dies. Of course, being tougher (and maybe more paranoid) than the average, the PCs are unlikely to go down so easily.

Guest Response Matrix

The primary GMCs described at the beginning of the adventure react as follows when the action begins:

- Sophie stands still, alarmed, but when she sees people dying and getting paralyzed, she begins laughing hysterically. However, if a plastic man approaches her, she lays into it with her pencil, to little effect. She doesn't think of the guns in Phil's bedroom unless the PCs ask her if there are any weapons on the premises. It takes a certain amount of shaking and slapping to bring her to her senses to even ask the question, however.
- Bruce body-slams a T'fhung in the Great Hall, cracking its plastic carapace (black blood oozes out). If the PCs don't back him up, he is quickly blown away by the aliens. If he somehow survives, Bruce quickly bolts out the front door and speeds off on his Harley.
- Nancy, upon hearing the T'fhung's evil hissing, quickly makes the connection between these aliens and those that kidnapped her. She walks calmly toward the nearest plastic man to thank it for turning her life around, and it promptly zaps her at the lowest setting of its death ray. At this point, she goes bonkers and darts about, screaming and weeping, until the gas or a death ray claims her.
- Finger snatches his Glock from his waistband so fast that if the GM rolls a 1 on one die, the gun discharged into his briefs, ruining his social life forever. If he avoids neutering himself, he fires off his clip as fast as he can pull the trigger. Finger gets one good shot per round, plus another that receives a penalty die, plus three other shots which have no chance of hitting their intended target but which may strike bystanders, as adjudicated by the GM. There are seventeen bullets in the gun at the beginning of the adventure.
- Woody screams that the "plastic people from the battery commercials" have come to get revenge on him for making them obsolete. He runs around shrieking and generally get in the way of people doing constructive things.

Conclusion

Around 3 AM, Phil arrives back home to see how the party is coming. Perhaps he returns to a house full of corpses — not an unheard of thing in Al Amarja, of course...but then, what is unheard-of here? Then again, he may return to a battle or the aftermath of one where the party defeated the aliens. If all the PCs were paralyzed, Phil may return home in time to rescue them, at the GM's option.

Phil

Socialite

Phil, whose real name is Karim Nur al-Rayib, is a welterweight player in what passes for high society on Al Amarja. He is famous for throwing fabulous parties with tons of cocktails and food, and invites guests to these parties apparently at random — some he barely knows, while others are relatives and lifelong friends. After organizing these great parties, Phil never shows up, or if he does, it is late into the night when many people have already gone home. In actuality, Phil does it to make contacts and tie them to him with a debt of gratitude, if only for *hors d'ouvres* and champagne.

His practice is to repeatedly invite likely allies to his parties until they think they are his friend, then use them for something important. The reason Phil rarely shows up to his own events is that he is usually schmoozing with his high society friends at *their* parties.

Moroccan man, age 40, 165 cm, 100 kg. Bronze skin, oiled black hair, dresses in Italian suits.

Languages: Arabic, English.

Attack: 4 dice, X4 damage with katana; 3 dice otherwise

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 36 (Swift and powerful)

Traits

Kendo Master, 4 dice — Learned the art of Japanese fencing in college, keeps in practice. (Sure movements)

Socialite, 3 dice — Parties are his meat and drink. He has so many on his calendar that he rarely attends the ones he hosts. (Smiles easily)

Stock Broker, 3 dice — He is good enough to make a posh living for himself, but not enough to leave Al Amarja. (Often perusing the *Wall Street Journal*)

Perspires — Sweats profusely with any stress. Penalty die on tense situations where he is trying to appear calm and in control.



Illustration by Grey Thornberry

THE JACKBOOT STOMP

by Chris Pramas

Introduction

“The Jackboot Stomp” is a somewhat unconventional adventure for your *Over the Edge* game. It is not meant to be played straight through like a normal adventure, but inserted into an ongoing campaign. More than that though, it is designed to be usable in any series. Many of the nitty gritty details are left in the hands of individual GMs, since only you know what makes sense in your series. Although there is a timeline to work from, it is a simple matter to shorten or lengthen the adventure to taste.

The adventure itself revolves around the return of a savage figure from Al Amarja’s past. His name is Alphonse D’Ascoli and he was the fascist governor-general of Al Amarja during the 1930’s. Long thought dead, D’Ascoli has returned to the island to unseat Monique D’Aubainne and make Al Amarja his again. If he succeeds, Al Amarja will become a tiny fascist state and the status quo upheld for so long by Monique will be shattered. This being the case, it is in the best interests of everyone (except perhaps the Throckmortons) to see that D’Ascoli is stopped. Unfortunately, D’Ascoli has impressive resources and the advantage of being an unknown quantity.

Part One: The Background

Birth of a Fascist

Alphonse D’Ascoli was born in the Alpine regions in the north of Italy. He grew up speaking both German and Italian and looking more of the former than the latter. He fought in World War I and then became involved in politics after the war. He was sickened by the disorder and decadence he saw around him. He had known Mussolini in the army and was quickly attracted to the fascist ideol-

ogy. He joined Mussolini and marched into Rome at his side. He was rewarded for his early and strident support of Mussolini with a string of government jobs. In 1932 he was promoted again and given the governor-generalship of Al Amarja.

Al Amarja in the '30s

Al Amarja has a long history of changing hands. The British controlled it throughout the 19th century, using it as a strategically located naval base (and incidentally introducing the islanders to the English language). At the end of World War I, however, the British ceded Al Amarja to the Italians to reward them for coming into the war on the right side. Throughout the '20s and early '30s, Al Amarja was controlled by a string of incompetent and disinterested governors and people were pretty much left to their own devices.

When the fascists came to power and began to crack the heads of those who disagreed with their views, many Italians fled to Al Amarja. Known as a haven for political dissidents, Al Amarja became the stomping ground of displaced anarchists, communists, unionists, and socialists of all stripes. Though these groups spent much time fighting amongst themselves, they did do much organizing as well. Conspiracies more familiar to modern Al Amarjans may have been around, but their role was much more secretive and restrained than it is in Al Amarja today. The glugs and Pharaohs, of course, were there, but lying low. The Movers were busy fighting ideological battles for the soul of Europe, and the kergillians were still in space. In short, the real action on Al Amarja was political. For once, Al Amarja was in sync with the rest of the world.

D’Ascoli Arrives

D’Ascoli arrived at a time of great political turmoil. Fascism was on the rise all over Europe. Within a year of D’Ascoli’s arrival, Hitler was in power in Germany. Franco was soon to follow in Spain. Leftists, in disarray and losing ground, called for the creation of the Popular Front. The

"The Jackboot Stomp"

Popular Front was an attempt to weld the left into a truly cohesive political force to fight fascism. The threat was deemed so great that disputes within the left were to be tabled until the fascists had been defeated. For the first time, communists, anarchists, and democrats all marched together.

Al Amarja, with its high concentration of dissidents, had become a hotbed of Popular Front activity. So much so that D'Ascoli requested that additional army units be sent over the island. Mussolini agreed and sent over more troops. So fortified, D'Ascoli began his war on the Popular Front in 1934. Army patrols raided newspaper offices, broke up demonstrations, and instituted random ID checks. Known troublemakers were targeted and assassinated by roving squads of black shirts. The repression was so bad that all Popular Front activity was forced underground. The Soviet agents on the island proved instrumental in setting up an underground network of political activists and agents. Just when things seemed to have stabilized, however, disaster struck.

News came from the Soviet Union of the Great Purges of 1936. As fate would have it, the wife of a key Soviet agent was arrested and killed on

Stalin's orders. Soon after he had heard this dreadful news, he was captured by one of D'Ascoli's patrols. Already shattered by the news of his wife's murder, the agent proved quite susceptible to torture. A few days in D'Ascoli's private dungeon cracked the agent and gave D'Ascoli all the information he needed.

Two days later fascist troops hit the streets. They hit a dozen targets simultaneously. Safe houses were raided, printing presses were destroyed, weapon caches were captured, and many skulls were cracked. By the end of the day the Popular Front on Al Amarja had been all but destroyed. Most of its leaders were dead or imprisoned, and those who had escaped fled the island. It was the end of an era on Al Amarja. Mass party politics were never again to play a major part in the life of the island.

The last few years of D'Ascoli's reign were relatively quiet. With all the political groups smashed, the army troops were sent back to Italy. D'Ascoli started paying more attention to other parts of Al Amarja. He found out about a number of the strange wizards, psychics, and witches on the island. This awakened an interest in the occult in



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

D'Ascoli, which he pursued vehemently with the powers of his office.

Then suddenly and without warning, Mussolini sold the island to Monique D'Aubainne. D'Ascoli was recalled to Italy for other duties. Enraged, he ordered his mansion by the volcano leveled. Unbeknownst to Monique, however, he had built a secret underground complex beneath his mansion. He planned to return there when the war was over. It has been undisturbed for the past 55 years.

Meanwhile, Back in the Alps

While D'Ascoli was still enjoying his last year on Al Amarja, his homeland had received some strange visitors. A field team of the *Ahnenerbe*, the SS branch charged with investigating occult theories of the origin of the Aryan race, was sent to Italy in 1939 to see if it could find any remnants of primeval Aryan man in the icy crags of the Alps. They were assured the cooperation of the Mussolini government but found Il Duce's support for this project to be lacking. After Himmler received several reports about Mussolini's lack of enthusiasm, he demanded that Mussolini assign a high ranking fascist as a liaison to the project. Himmler thought that having one of Mussolini's toadies on hand would facilitate the work of his team. He was right.

So D'Ascoli found himself back in the land of his youth. Mussolini had thought him the perfect candidate for the job. He grew up in the Alps, spoke German like a native, was familiar with magical mumbo jumbo, and even looked Aryan. And sending D'Ascoli to the Alps to play tour guide to a bunch of crazed Nazis seemed just the thing to keep a disgruntled former governor-general out of Il Duce's way.

D'Ascoli and his team spent the remainder of the war engaged in occult research. They let the grunts fight the battles while they tried to ferret out the secrets of magic and the universe. Initially resentful of Mussolini's appointment, D'Ascoli soon realized that he had been sent exactly where he needed to be. His team, and the *Ahnenerbe* general, made some amazing discoveries.

Perhaps it is fortunate that their research was not completed with enough alacrity to help the

Nazi cause. They made their biggest breakthrough a mere month before Berlin fell to the Allies. What they had discovered, a way to open portals to another world, did, however, allow them to escape from the avenging armies of the Allies.

Nazi Magic

The magic of D'Ascoli and his Nazi cronies was based on the manipulation of two concepts: the World Ice Theory and the runes. The runes are familiar to most people, although their use in magic is much more dimly understood. The World Ice Theory, however, requires a bit of explanation.

The World Ice Theory (*Welteislehre* in German) was the brainchild of an Austrian engineer named Hans Hoerbiger. Hans was amazed when he saw that molten steel poured onto snow caused the ground to explode. He imagined that the universe was created in a similar fashion. In particular, he believed that a giant space iceberg of "cosmic ice" collided with the sun and the resulting explosion formed the universe. The explosion was so violent, in fact, that its aftershocks caused the Great Deluge, the Ice Age, and the differentiation of races. He thought that earth had previously had three other moons, all of which had crashed into the earth due to the aforementioned aftershocks. Our current moon, which he envisaged as an ocean of ice, was destined to eventually crash into the earth as well.

The ideas of Hoerbiger were met with enthusiasm by many occult groups in Germany and Austria and the World Ice Theory was developed throughout the '20s and '30s to explain much of world history. According to German occult groups, the original Aryan master race lived in a northerly part of Europe known as Thule, which is to be identified with the lost continent of Atlantis. The Aryans had an advanced culture and, due to the gravitational pull of a moon much closer to earth, were truly "giants in the earth." The third falling moon caused the Ice Age, but this only served to temper and strengthen the Aryans. However, when the great glaciers melted, the resulting floods drowned Thule forever. This was the fall of man. Since that time, man has degenerated and has yet to recapture the glories of Aryan civilization.

According to Hoerbiger, cosmic events recur. He calculated that the last Ice Age was 6,000 years ago and that a new one was due any time.

However, this time supermen who had mastered the secrets of cosmic ice and fire could use their powers to stop the Ice Age and make their civilization immortal. Hoerbiger was lucky enough to die in 1931, so he did not have to live through another Ice Age. His son, however, continued his father's work, and in 1936 Heinrich Himmler appointed Hans Robert Hoerbiger Cosmic Ice Führer.

Runes are more familiar territory. Long of interest to occultists, runes were rediscovered by German groups such as the Armanen Brotherhood and the Thule Society in the early part of the 20th century. Considered a part of their Teutonic heritage, the runes were studied and used by a wide variety of occult groups. Many of these groups mixed a healthy dose of racism into their occultism and there is a legitimate case to be made for their influence on the nascent Nazi Party. Himmler in particular was an avid student of the occult, so much so that in 1935 he set up a branch of the SS called *Ahnenerbe* (“Ancestral Research”) to subsidize research into occult theories of the ancestral origins of the Aryan race.

The *Ahnenerbe* worked diligently on synthesizing the World Ice Theory and runic magic. Their work was more successful than they had imagined possible, but their triumphs came too late in the war to have any appreciable effect. The research did, however, enable many SS men to escape to a another world before the allies rolled into Berlin. They were saved by Hoerbiger again. He had theorized that there was another world where the laws of cosmic ice were not operable. He turned out to be correct and it was to this world that many of the SS fled.

Walking in a Nazi Wonderland

This other world has been the home to these Nazis and their descendants for the past 50 years. The less said about this Nazi wonderland the better, but suffice it to say that they've had plenty of time to practice magic. While the laws of cosmic ice were not operable, runic magic still worked in this world and the former SS men have made many strides in the occult sciences.

D'Ascoli's field was the integration of runic magic and technology. This was made necessary by the lack of technological resources available in the

other world. Over the years he has achieved some startling results. His biggest breakthrough was the realization that runes could be broken down into numerical values. These values could be used when constructing devices to make them functional with magical power. To make a lighter, for instance, one only needs to figure out the proper dimensions based on the numerical values of the appropriate fire runes. This serves to charge the lighter with runic power which causes it to make fire without the use of fluid. The more complex the device, the more complicated the runic calculations. The shape of the device, its component material, and astrological factors are also important. Runic inscriptions are also common, as these runes add to the inherent power of the device. They can also be used to add secondary effects not intrinsic in the design.

A Sensitive Fascist Is Very Rare

D'Ascoli and his SS buddies have been away from earth for over 50 years. Magic, and the different timeflow of their new home, have kept them relatively young. While most of the exiled SS men were content to stay in their new home, D'Ascoli began to dream about returning to earth. He kept thinking about his glory years, the days when he had ruled Al Amarja with an iron fist. Eventually, he decided that he had to return. Al Amarja had to be his again.

He marshalled his resources and recruited help from some of the younger generation. These youngsters had never experienced Earth and many were excited by the prospect of returning to their ancestral homeland. They followed D'Ascoli back to earth and Al Amarja. Once there, D'Ascoli reopened the underground complex under the ruins of his former mansion. Then he began to watch, learn, and plan. Now he is ready to strike.

Part Two: The Timeline

D'Ascoli has been on Al Amarja for the past year. It took some time to set up and take stock of the situation. He began to act about six months

ago. His basic plan is to undermine the credibility of Monique and then step in with an offer to make Al Amarja safe again. The timeline here is a suggestion only and can be adapted to suit the needs of your campaign. There are a number of events, called seeding events, that need to happen during the six month period before the real action starts. Ideally, these events should be dropped into an ongoing campaign so as not to arouse player suspicion ("The GM mentioned it, it must be important"). If you'd prefer to start right away, you can have unrelated GMCs refer to these events in casual conversation and then tell the PCs what they remember about those events.

Seeding Events

A Bad Day for Hans

Six months ago: The news is all over town. Hans Knudson has been ousted as head of the Aries gang. A new warlord has taken over and promises to make the Aries a force to be reckoned with.

If the PCs investigate, they find out the following. Hans was challenged by Einar Volundson, a relative newcomer to the island. They fought a ritual combat with spears, the weapon of Odin, and Einar trounced Hans. Einar then announced that the Aries would change under his leadership. Substance abuse and recklessness had made the Aries weak, he said. Now that they had a worthy leader, they would be strong. About a third of the Aries quit when they realized that the drunken debauchery had come to an end. They turned to Hans Knudson, who started a new gang called the Hammers of Thor.

As the months go by, the Aries become much more organized and efficient. Gang patrols become regular and they begin to operate in paramilitary style. Warlord Einar Volundson, who is, of course, one of D'Ascoli's men, leads the Aries into a new era. Clashes with the Hammers of Thor are frequent and the superior organization of the Aries usually gives them the upper hand. This could be graphically illustrated by having the PCs stumble into a gang fight in progress. Warlord Volundson's real agenda is to prepare a paramilitary force that will be ready when D'Ascoli seizes power. The Aries also stand ready to neutralize any threat to D'Ascoli's plan.

Death of a Hero

Four months ago: Hank Garfield, noted Peace Force hero, dies tragically in a fire. PCs read the following story in Al Amarja Today. (You may photocopy this page to provide this clipping as a handout to your players, if you wish.)

Peace Force Hero Dies Saving Child from Flames

by Rich S. Marpas
Al Amarja Today

The Edge — Hank Garfield died today saving the life of a four year old child. Garfield, a 12 year veteran of the Peace Force, was patrolling near the Plaza of Flowers when house went up in flames. After calling the Fire Department, Hank rushed to scene. When a distraught mother told Hank that her little girl was trapped inside, he braved the flames and smoke to rescue the child. He passed out as he delivered the child to safety and was rushed to D'Aubainne Hospital. Doctors struggled in vain to save him but he had inhaled too much smoke. His irreparably damaged lungs failed him at 12:15 AM.

Hank Garfield died showing the kind of valor that made him a hero to many in the Edge. He was decorated repeatedly for bravery and is best remembered for his epic shoot-out with Colombian drug dealers on the docks of Skylla. Surviving him is his wife of five years, Martha. A memorial will be held tomorrow in Freedom City to commemorate the fallen hero.

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Death Haunts the Edge

Two months ago: A series of brutal murders begins in the Edge. They always take place at night and are noteworthy for their frequency and

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brutality. The bodies of the victims are found mutilated and partially eaten. PCs might stumble on one of these bodies if they are out performing late night hi-jinx. As the murders continue, the press goes wild. There are new headlines every few days. “Cannibal Killer Strikes Again, Peace Force Confounded by Serial Killer,” and so on.

In actuality, this is the beginning of D’Ascoli’s plan. He dug up the body of Hank Garfield and used a magic ritual to turn it into a Draugar. Draugar are the walking dead of Norse and Teutonic mythology. They are relatively mindless but crave human flesh and blood. Hank Garfield now patrols the Edge once more, attracting little notice in his Peace Force uniform. Those who see him up close will notice that his face is blue and contorted, but anyone who gets that close doesn’t usually live for very long. Every few nights D’Ascoli teleports his Draugar into the Edge from his secret hideout. Garfield runs rampant for an hour or so and then D’Ascoli summons him back via a metal spike that’s been driven into the top of his head (this is usually hidden by his helmet).

Hank can be used in two ways. First, he can rack up an impressive body count until the PCs chance across him or hunt him down. Parties interested in fighting will find Hank a tough opponent. Second, his presence can be kept in the background for the whole campaign, making late night operations fraught with fear of an unknown killer. If this option is chosen, GM’s can really play with the emotions of their players. A copy cat killer could emerge and be caught by the Peace Force or the PCs. The night after the newspapers display joyous headlines of the captured killer, Hank strikes again. As D’Ascoli’s campaign of terror intensifies, so will the attacks of his Draugar.

Hank Garfield

Undead Cop

Hank used to be a hero but now he is a mindless killer. His taste for blood and flesh drives him to unspeakable acts. Deprived of food while caged by D’Ascoli, he goes wild on the nights when he is released in the Edge.

American, age 32, 175 cm, 70 kg, dressed in Peace Force uniform, blue face.

Languages: None remaining.

Attack: 4 Dice, X3 damage with truncheon



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 32 (already dead)

Traits

Draugar, 4 dice — D'Ascoli has turned poor Hank into a creature of the night. The once proud cop is now an undead killer. This gives him the ability to soak up huge amounts of damage and adds a savagery to Hank's already considerable fighting ability. (Blue face)

Life Drain, 2 dice — The touch of a Draugar can suck the life force out of a victim and chill them to the bone. Instead of making a normal attack, Hank can grab an opponent and make a Life Drain attack. He rolls his Attack as normal, but uses Life Drain if he hits. Most PCs roll 2 dice for defense, although those with special magical defenses may get more dice or a bonus die. If Hank beats an opponent's dice roll, one die is lost from each physical trait for 1-6 days. (Air around Hank is chilly)

Mindless, flaw — While Hank's instincts for fighting remain intact, his mind is gone. He doesn't understand fear, or tactics, or really much of anything. This can easily be used against him. (Blank stare)

Christmas in July

One month ago: Meteorologists on Al Amarja are confounded by unusually cold weather. According to their calculations (and Mediterranean common sense), the weather should be warm and pleasant. For some reason, however, it just keeps getting colder. When it begins to snow on Al Amarja, everyone knows that something is screwy is going on.

This is one of D'Ascoli's master strokes. He has built an enormous machine inside the volcano that changes the heat of magma into the chill of ice. The device is huge and would certainly be noticed were anyone to overfly the volcano. It's a mass of vents, stacks, and fins and the air above the volcano is below freezing. Unless noticed and disabled, the device continues to chill Al Amarja throughout the campaign. This enormous outpouring of runic energy also serves to disturb other users of magic on the island. Those who use non-runic magic begin to get headaches as it gets colder. These headaches increase in frequency and potency as the temperature drops. Penalty dice may be assigned at the GM's discretion.

This drastic change in weather is yet another way that D'Ascoli is trying to change the atmosphere of Al Amarja (this time somewhat literally). He wants people to think that something is so deeply wrong with Al Amarja that even that weather is changing. Down the line, he will forcibly make the point that the thing that is wrong is the rule of Monique. For now, he is content to watch the streetside preachers predict the apocalypse, the importing of cold weather clothing become a monopoly people will kill for, and the temperament of everybody get put on edge.

The Real Action

Once all of the seeding events are in place, D'Ascoli begins his campaign to unseat Monique in earnest. Having created fear and unrest on the island, he now moves ahead with a plan to make people feel that the Peace Force cannot even protect itself, never mind the rest of the island. He has been training special goon squads deep in his underground hideout. He now deploys these goon squads and starts ambushing Peace Force officers. Normally, nobody messes with the Peace Force, so when the body count start rising, everyone is surprised. It is with the killing of the first Peace Force officers that the campaign really kicks off.

Cop Killers

The PCs wake up one morning to find the Edge abuzz. It seems two Peace Force officers were found riddled with bullets this morning. No one knows whose responsible but Peace Force patrols are out in force, questioning and intimidating people. PCs stupid enough to mouth off to the Peace Force will end up in the slammer, where they are gently questioned about the slayings. *Al Amarja Today's* headline is "Manhunt Continues for Cop Killers."

Two nights later, it happens again. This time four Peace officers are dead. Two of them have been burned to a crisp, which further enrages the Peace Force. Rumors fly all over the Edge. Some point the finger at the new Aries gang, others blame ex-KGB agents, or unnamed terrorists. Monique appears on television promising the killers will be brought to justice. Helicopters with spotlights are now patrolling the Edge every night.

PCs with connections at the Peace Force or D'Aubainne Hospital can find out the following.

The bullets found in the dead cops are not of modern design. They are of a type used at least 30 years ago. Also, the burned officers seem to have been hit with a flame-thrower. No one knows how something like this might have made its way onto Al Amarja. So far no witnesses have come forward.

The Loyal Defenders

All of this is too much for Monique. After the second ambush, she calls out the Loyal Defenders. They hit the Edge like a ton of bricks, performing lightning raids and hunting for clues. Naturally, the poor sections of the Edge get the worst of it. Even their efforts, however turn up nothing. A few days pass and people begin to calm down. Try to encourage PCs to get out and about their normal business. Also try to get them all out together late at night.

As the PCs are making their way through the Edge (pick whatever barrio works for you, it doesn't really matter), they hear the sounds of gunshots a few streets over. A few seconds later, there is a bright flash and then an explosion. If they go to investigate, they come upon a strange scene. The bodies of an entire Loyal Defender patrol (six men in all) are scattered all over the street. Three of them have been blown apart, the rest apparently shot. In the middle of the street is a group of bizarrely attired individuals (see illustration, p. 57). They are dressed in black uniforms with no insignia. They wear helmets with spikes sticking out of them (reminiscent of the German soldiers of WWI) and gas masks. Two men have enormous tanks attached to their backs that look to be flame-throwers and the rest carry what look like submachine guns. As the PCs arrive, they are gathering in a circle. In the center of the circle are two more of the strange soldiers, who look to be wounded or dead. As the PCs watch, they are surrounded by blue energy and disappear.

Astute PCs may notice that although two of these men carried what looked like flame-throwers, none of the Loyal Defenders were killed by being burned.

One of their dead, however, remains. The goon squad screwed up for the first time. The spikes in the helmets they wear serve as a homing signal for D'Ascoli's magic. The dead fascist had his helmet knocked off by one of the Loyal Defenders and the rest of his goon squad buddies forgot to replace it before leaving. This gives the

PCs a chance to examine the body before anyone else does. Unless they want to take the body and leave the scene, they only have a few minutes before more Peace Force officers and a helicopter arrive. If they are still on the scene when the Peace Force shows up, they will have some explaining to do, but should be fine as long as they don't lie too much.

The body of the dead fascist provides some interesting clues. When his gas mask is removed, he proves to be a human with blond hair and blue eyes. Anyone who examines the gas mask will note some strange things about it. The lenses are cold to the touch and appear to be made of ice. There are also runes carved into the metal of the nozzle. Anyone who puts it on will find that they can see in the dark. Tucked into the belt of the dead man is a large dagger with a black handle and a silver pommel. The pommel has the German eagle and SS logo worked into it. Anyone familiar with antiques or a student of WW2 will recognize this as a piece of Nazi paraphernalia. SS daggers now fetch high prices at collectors' auctions, so it is a little strange to see one being carried around as a street weapon. Of his weapon and helmet, there is no sign. The submachine gun was taken by the others and the helmet was transported by the ritual, *sans* its owner.

Things That Go Boom!

Of course, all of Al Amarja is up in arms the next day. An entire Loyal Defender patrol wiped out. Is anyone safe? To make matters worse, D'Ascoli makes his boldest move yet. Until now, his attacks have taken place in the Edge and at night. This time he strikes in broad daylight in the heart of Freedom City. He attacks something near and dear to Monique's heart: a bank. At 3 PM four men bearing the strange tanks appeared outside the First Amalgamated Bank of Al Amarja, two on each side. Two on one side of the building opened up with burning jets of flame, while the other two let rip with bellowing cloud of freezing ice. The building was charred on side and frozen on the other. Then the cosmic fire and ice met in the middle of the building and the whole thing blew sky high. After the explosion, the men with the strange gear were gone.

Nothing like this has *ever* happened in Freedom City.

The Jackboot Falls

At this point, Monique begins to panic in a serious way. She contacts the Pharaohs and even they are of no help. She cannot figure out who would want her ousted and why they haven't named their price. So, she panics and resorts to the only weapon at her disposal: repression. She decides that she is going to crack down on almost all the conspiracies on Al Amarja. She figures that either she will unearth the culprits or she'll make it so hard on everyone that someone will come forward with information.

The next day the raids begin. Squads of Loyal Defenders and Peace Force officers raid known headquarters and hangouts of the Glorious Lords, Aries Gang, Cut-Ups, Dog-Faces, and Earthlings. Even Sir Arthur Compton's home receives a visit. Meanwhile, a gang of hired muscle that Monique uses in her Net activities begins to shake down the other members of the Net. Customs and Immigration begins turning people away in droves and sending out teams to inspect the ID of random people in the Edge to make sure they passed through C&I to begin with. Lots of people end up in jail.

The conspiracies are quick to blame each other for bringing down this wave of repression on Al Amarja. Some take advantage of the confusion to launch attacks of their own, others try to lie low. Whatever conspiracies or individuals that the PCs belong to or are affiliated with, make sure the jackboot falls on them. It suddenly becomes in their best interest to find out who wants Monique ousted and why.

The particulars of how the different groups react is ultimately the GM's to decide. Only the GM truly knows what is right for the campaign. Below, however, are some suggestions for how the different groups might react. At this point, D'Ascoli plans to sit back and watch Al Amarja disintegrate into chaos. The length of this dissension is up to the individual GM and again should be appropriate for the campaign. If the PCs are enjoying the chaos or launching long planned offensives, it can go on for a month or more. If finding out what's going on totally consumes them, it can last a few days. Whatever the case, possible conspiracy reactions are as follows:

Aries Gang

Warlord Einar Volundson is under orders from D'Ascoli not to squander his strength on meaningless street encounters. So, Volundson is trying to manipulate the Glorious Lords and the Dog-Faces into fighting each other. He is doing this by ambushing members of each group and planting evidence to make it look like the other side made the attack. It works beautifully. Other than that, the Aries fend off attacks from the Hammers of Thor and sit tight.

Sir Arthur Compton

Sir Arthur knows that something magical is going on, but he doesn't know what. He plans to sit in his mansion until he can figure out what is going on. He is contacting many of his occult friends throughout Europe to see if they can help. PCs may actually be able to find out some useful information from Compton, especially if they bring him the SS dagger. He could tell them that it is magical and came from the *Ahnenerbe* branch of the SS.

The Cut-Ups

Despite the raids on them by the Peace Force, the Cut-Ups are having a grand old time. They are seeing true chaos on Al Amarja for the first time and they love it. They are also doing all they can to help the chaos along. Cut-Up activities during this time include everything from spreading false rumors to starting street riots. If it looks like D'Ascoli is going to take power and institute a fascist regime, the Cut-Ups will weigh the option to activate the Cut-Ups Machine to try and stop him. This could take the campaign in a whole new direction. (Most likely they would not activate the Machine, unless it is apparent that D'Ascoli's iron fist is about to grab the rest of the world in short order.)

The Dog-Faces

Molly is being set up by Einar Volundson. She has been led to believe that both the Peace Force raids on the Jungle and the attacks on her patrols were part of a Glorious Lords' offensive on the Four Points. As the campaign progresses, street

fight between Baboon Patrols and the Glorious Lords will increase in frequency and brutality.

Earthlings

The Earthlings are greatly concerned with current events on Al Amarja. They are bending all their resources to try to find out who is behind them. Unfortunately, due to the increased tension on the island and the mounting paranoia of all the power groups, a number of their infiltrators in other groups have been exposed and neutralized. Nonetheless, the efforts of the Earthlings continue. They can be a great source of aid and information to PCs, but their efforts shouldn't be allowed to overshadow that of the PCs.

The Glorious Lords

Avan Bloodlord has decided that Dog-Faces' time has come. The chilling of Al Amarja, in Avan's eyes, was a sign from Lucifer that it was time to act. He believes that the only way to make the island warmer is by spilling the hot blood of his enemies on the streets of the Edge. He plans to take on the Aries after the Dog-Faces are dealt with, so his “emissaries” have been active amongst the other Satanist gangs. He is trying to form a Satanic Coalition to take over the streets. Even if D'Ascoli is defeated, Avan's plans may keep the Edge hot for some time to come.

Glugs

The glugs are not a violent people. For the most part, they are trying to lie low until the trouble blows over. At least one slug, however, is not convinced that this is a storm that can be weathered by inaction. Nura Pezzi is a young slug religious leader. She is convinced that current events on Al Amarja are the opening move in a aggressive new Pharaoh plan to wipe out the glugs and complete their domination of the world. She is trying to get the glugs to stand up and fight back. She advocates sending out teams to recover lost slug artifacts from the war against the Eight Evil Sages and then using them to stop the Pharaohs once and for all. So far her results have been mixed, but she may provide aid to PCs if they have any ties to the slug community.

Kergillians

The kergillians don't have any idea what's going on. When it becomes clear that Al Amarja is simply too dangerous for normal activities, they retreat to Red Orca to wait until the situation stabilizes. A “Classes Temporarily Suspended” sign appears in the window of the First School of True Sensation.

The Mr. LeThuys

Mr. LeThuy is quite excited by the assault on Monique. With all the chaos, disorder, and infighting going on, it seems that Al Amarja is about to self-destruct. And destruction is so very beautiful. Mr. LeThuy wants to speed this process along and in this is the unknowing ally of D'Ascoli. He sends his operatives out to further the cause of entropy, and can be a great source of red herrings. He may, for instance, start his own wave of bombings and assassinations that, among other things, will serve to confuse the PCs and throw them off the trail to D'Ascoli.

Movers

Each of the Mover Cells is up in arms. They each believe that another cell is behind D'Ascoli's grab for power and that they are being outmaneuvered. They are spending all their resources trying to gather information about other Mover Cells, and so are missing what's really going on. All of their underground maneuvering has very little impact on the campaign, unless the PCs are aligned with one of the cells.

Pharaohs

The Pharaohs, for once, don't really know what's going on. They've helped Monique as much as they are able, although Monique suspects they are holding out on her. While this is not technically the case, the Pharaohs are not exactly exerting themselves to find out who is responsible. They figure that anyone who could unseat Monique would be a useful tool in their plans. They are monitoring the situation with great interest.



Throckmortons

The Throckmorton Device has decided that its creation would be all but assured if Al Amarja became a fascist state, so it is using its powers to help D'Ascoli achieve his goals. How exactly this manifests in the campaign is up to the individual GM. Like the LeThuys, Throckmorton agents make good red herrings. Of course, in the long run, the Throckmorton Device is a much more insidious problem, and this campaign can be a good way to introduce it into a game.

Looking For Clues

Throughout this period of chaos, it is likely that the PCs will be trying to figure out what is going on. They should have two pieces of hard evidence: the SS dagger and the gas mask. Investigating these items will unearth the following:

If the dagger is taken to Gun Metal or an antique dealer, PCs find out that the dagger is an authentic Nazi artifact. It is valued at roughly \$300, a rather expensive street weapon.

If the dagger and the gas mask are taken to

someone with occult expertise (exactly who depends largely on who the PCs know), the PCs find out that they are both enchanted. Putting the dagger in a freezer for a few minutes causes finely etched runes to become visible on the blade. These runes, as well as those on the gas mask, are only really meaningful to a practitioner of runic magic. Although any decent wizard is able to make some educated guesses on the nature of the enchantments and their potency, their true nature requires the services of an expert. Any member of the occult community who has been on the island longer than a year knows that the resident expert on runic magic is a man named Otto Krueger. Assuming the PCs don't offend their contact, they are referred to Otto and given an address in Broken Wings Barrio.

Not the Nazi You're Looking For

Otto Krueger lives in a spacious townhouse in Broken Wings barrio. When not traveling, he spends most of his days at home, so he should be home when the PCs come knocking. If the adventure is progressing too quickly, simply have Otto

out of town for a few days on business. He often travels to purchase *objets d’art* and occult curios. As the PCs see when they enter his home, Otto has quite a collection.

Otto Krueger is Al Amarja’s resident expert on runic magic. He learned his craft the same place that D’Ascoli did: the SS. As it turns out, Krueger was in the *Ahnenerbe* and knew D’Ascoli. He was not, however, one of the lucky few who escaped to the Nazi wonderland. He fled to Al Amarja after the war and posed as a harmless occultist from Switzerland. He knows that someone has been using potent runic magic on the island, but until the PCs show up he doesn’t know who it could be.

When the PCs come to see him, he greets them cordially and politely asks their business. If shown the dagger and gas mask, he examines them quietly for a few minutes. He is beginning to form ideas about who is behind the island’s woes, but wants to keep these to himself until he learns more about the PCs. He has this to say about the artifacts:

“Yes, these are both enchanted with runic energy. The dagger, as you’ve no doubt deduced already, is an SS dagger. However, these runes here” — he points to the blade — “indicate that it came from the *Ahnenerbe*. It means, roughly, ‘ancestral research,’ and was the SS division in charge of investigating occult theories of the origin of the Aryan race. There were many members of the *Ahnenerbe* skilled in runic magic, although as far as I know none of their major practitioners survived the war. This dagger is enchanted to help the bearer in battle. An old casting, but still useful. The gas mask, however, is something else entirely. I’ve never seen anything like it. It seems to combine runic enchantment with scientific functions. I’d need to run some tests on it to really find out what it does, but it is an interesting find.”

This is all that Krueger is willing to say at the moment. He is willing to field a few questions about the *Ahnenerbe*, but answers only generally. He speculates that neo-Nazis might be to blame and suggests an investigation of local groups. He offers to examine the gas mask thoroughly and suggests the PCs come back to see him in a few days. If the PCs are rude to him or threaten him in any way, he asks them to leave and never return.

On Returning

After the PCs left, Krueger did some investigating of his own. Everything he found out pointed to D’Ascoli, so he tried to contact D’Ascoli through the runes. D’Ascoli treated Krueger as an old friend and told him there might be room for him in his plans. After breaking contact, D’Ascoli immediately tracked down Krueger and sent a goon squad to take care of him. A few hours before the PCs show up, Krueger is murdered in his home. D’Ascoli is taking no chances.

When the PCs come knocking, no one answers the door. If the PCs break in to the house, they find Krueger dead in his library. He lies face down in a pool of blood. His body bears multiple stab wounds. Spelled out on the floor is one word: D’Ascoli. It is written in blood and appears to have been the dying act of Otto Krueger. There is no sign of his assailant and anything the PCs may have left with him is gone.

If the PCs examine the library, they find that Otto had quite a collection of occult books. Of more immediate interest is a copy of Hans Hoerbiger’s classic *Glazialkosmogonie*, the 772-page volume that first introduced the World Ice Theory to the world. The book, written in German of course, lies open to a page in which Hoerbiger explains the interaction between cosmic ice and fire. Namely, that bringing the two together causes an explosion and that the universe was created when a celestial glacier of cosmic ice collided with the sun.

What’s a D’Ascoli?

The PCs now have a name to work with. Since D’Ascoli was a fearsome figure of Al Amarja’s past, it should not be too difficult to find out who he is. Asking around, especially amongst people old enough to remember, should quickly give the PCs the information that they need. No one knows, however, what happened to D’Ascoli after he left Al Amarja. PCs savvy enough to check a history book find the entry (reproduced at the top of p. 59) in the *Encyclopedia of Al Amarja* (available in hypertext on the D’Aubainne University World Wide Web site, as well as in hard copy).

This tidbit should be enough to get most PCs heading off to Mount Ralsius to check out D’Ascoli’s former mansion. If it isn’t, make sure that all the GMCs they talk to about D’Ascoli

From the *Encyclopedia of Al Amarja* (hypertext edition, available at <http://www.dau.edu.aa/eoaa.html>)

D'ASCOLI, ALPHONSE: Governor-general of Al Amarja from 1932 to 1940. Credited with smashing the **Popular Front** on Al Amarja, D'Ascoli was known for his brutal methods. He ruled the island from a mansion at the base of **Mount Ralsius**. The mansion, and D'Ascoli's black shirts, were destroyed by the liberating army of **Monique D'Aubainne**. He fled the island in disgrace and died in obscurity during World War 2.

mention that the mansion was his center of power. GMCs old enough to remember that time might also mention that D'Ascoli leveled the mansion himself.

Part Three: The Resolution

There is no one way to resolve this campaign. Much will depend on the PCs and the details of your game. Below you will find D'Ascoli's basic plan, Monique's defense, and PC options. How things proceed and at what pace is up to you.

D'Ascoli's Plan

By this point, D'Ascoli feels that he has sufficiently undermined Monique's credibility. It is now time to topple her. He has drawn up two leaflets calling for two separate demonstrations on the same day (you pick the day, but it shouldn't be more than a few days away). One calls for the direct overthrow of Monique and the installation of a democratic government. The other one calls on Monique to make the streets safe for Martians and the island safe for business. Both rallies are scheduled for noon. D'Ascoli plans to use *agents provocateurs* and the Aries gang to stir up trouble at both demonstrations. What he is trying to do is start a riot and get the entire Edge in turmoil. A disturbance that large would require the deployment of almost the entire Peace Force. While the Peace Force is struggling to put down the riots, D'Ascoli and his henchmen would teleport to Freedom City and topple Monique. With Monique out of the way, it would be a small matter to cement his control over Al Amarja. Or so D'Ascoli thinks.

The two leaflets are reproduced on the following page and should be strewn all over the Edge. (If you want to provide them as handouts to your players, we suggest photocopying the page onto colored paper for an authentic "home-made flyer" look.) The overthrow Monique leaflet is more prominent around the Four Points Barrio, the Great Men Barrio, and the Science Barrio. The save-our-streets leaflet is found chiefly in the Broken Wings Barrio, the Golden Barrio, and the Justice Barrio. Any attempt to find the groups responsible for the fliers ends in failure. No one knows exactly who these committees are, but other groups are mobilizing and plan to make their presence known.

Monique's Defense

Her jackboot tactics having failed to turn up anything, Monique has decided to mount a massive PR campaign. Suddenly, she is on TV every night, downplaying the events of the last two months and talking up her plans for increased security. A supposed autobiography, written years ago and saved for a crisis such as this, is rushed to the printers and appears all over the island. In it, Monique talks frankly about her many struggles to make the island safe for everyone. PCs may note that there is a section on D'Ascoli in which he is portrayed as a corrupt and ineffectual fascist bureaucrat who was easily trounced by Monique and her bodyguard.

Behind this public façade, Monique is attempting subtler means to find out who wants her deposed. Her agents are combing the island and quietly taking away many people for "questioning." The Peace Force is on maximum alert. They have orders to let the protesters march and rally but to deal with them harshly if they get out of line.

DOWN WITH MONIQUE!!!!

Monique D'Aubainne is a fraud. Her reign of lies must come to an end! She claims to have liberated Al Amarja from the fascists, but the truth is she bought it from Mussolini and so helped fund the fascist war effort. And why? To enrich herself, to play dictator, and to exploit the peace loving citizens of our fair island. We say it is time to take back Al Amarja! Join us at 12 noon on the commons of D'Aubainne University. We will take to the streets and show Monique who really rules Al Amarja. Down with Monique! Democracy Now!!!

— *The Committee for Democracy on Al Amarja*

Save Our Streets!

It used to be that the streets of the Edge were safe for our children. No more. The last two months have seen a drastic upswing of murders, gang fights, and other acts of violence. The Peace Force can't even protect itself, never mind us! We say that it is time for drastic action. We call on Monique D'Aubainne to make the cleaning up of the streets her highest priority. We call for more Peace Force protection, harsher punishments for criminals, and the building of a new jail to house those who break the law. We demand justice! Save our streets! Save our Children!

— *Committee for Safer Streets*

Dealing with D'Ascoli

The PCs have three basic options (well, four if you count doing nothing, but we'll assume they aren't that lame). These options are the most probable, but players often have a way of doing the unexpected. If they decide on their own plan, you'll have to improvise, but you should have a pretty good idea of what D'Ascoli is all about by this point. All of these options assume that the PCs have gone up to Mount Ralsius to take a look at D'Ascoli's former mansion (which, although still in ruins, shows definite signs of recent use). If the PCs haven't found D'Ascoli's hideaway yet, you'll have to drop some large hints.

The DIY Option

Many players will no doubt want to take care of D'Ascoli themselves. This is not as easy as it sounds. His HQ is underground and guarded by fanatical fascists armed with firearms and bizarre magics. There is no negotiating with D'Ascoli either, unless PCs want to join him for some reason. Make sure the PCs understand that this is not some bar fight in the Edge. It is brutal combat versus fascist goons. Unless the PCs are well-armed and numerous, they can expect at least a few character deaths. If they strike on the day D'Ascoli has pegged for his takeover, however, the complex will be much easier to take because many of D'Ascoli's troops will be in the Edge.

Strength in Numbers

PCs with connections may find that this is an ideal time to call in favors. Having the resources and manpower of a major conspiracy behind them would make the PCs' lives much easier. The only group that might help them just for the sake of decency is the Earthlings. Getting the help of other groups requires deal-making. Magic-using groups (such as the Hermetic Movers) might well be lured in by the promise of learning D'Ascoli's secrets. The PCs, of course, might decide that this is a compelling reason not to ask for help in the first place.

Telling Monique

The PCs may decide that the simplest way to deal with D'Ascoli is to tell Monique and let her deal with him with helicopter gunships. It's certainly the safest option, although getting through to

Monique is easier said than done. Once again, deal-making is required. PCs had best be careful in dealing with the government in general and Monique in particular. Once D'Ascoli is dealt with, there is nothing to stop Monique from icing the PCs if they offended or betrayed her in some way. Nonetheless, there should be ways that PCs can turn this to their advantage.

D'Ascoli's Secret HQ

D'Ascoli built this base when he was governor-general of Al Amarja. It consists of two extensive levels, and has its own sources of water, power, and electricity. The complex is home to D'Ascoli and his 50 fascist goons. The entire structure has been warded to keep out astral and psychic lurkers.

Up above, there are signs of activity in the ruins of the mansion: a couple of humvees, numerous tracks, and a detachment of guards. The entrance is secreted in the ruins.

For complete details on the base, see the end of the adventure.

Aftermath

Whatever happens, Al Amarja will be changed forever. The amount of pure havoc unleashed in a short space of time is certain to have consequences. Much will depend on how the various conspiracies reacted during the crisis. You might even decide that it would be fun to let D'Ascoli succeed. That option certainly would change the tone of the game, but does have its own allure. It's more likely, however, that D'Ascoli will be thwarted and either killed or chased back to his otherworld. If D'Ascoli escapes, he can easily return for vengeance at a later date, especially if he learns who it is that undid him. It is also possible that this adventure served as an introduction to some other threats to the island. The PCs may have begun to uncover both Throckmorton and LeThuy activities, in which case they have their work cut out for them. As always, the PCs should be sure to look over their shoulders. You never know what will come back to haunt you.



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

Appendix

Characters

Alphonse D'Ascoli

Occult Fascist

Alphonse is a relatively simple man. He wants power, power, and then some power. His skill at magic and manipulation make him a worthy opponent. His devious mind is equally adept at long-range planning and spontaneous innovation. He suffers somewhat in his lack of knowledge of the modern world, but so far he has not let that slow him down. Underestimating him is dangerous and not recommended.

Northern Italian man, age 88 (looks 40), 174 cm, 72 kg, blond hair, blue eyes, mustache.

Languages: Italian, German, English, Norse

Attack: 3 dice, X3 damage (broadsword), X4 damage (Mjolnir; see below)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (tough old bird)

Armor: 3b (runic necklace; see below)

Traits

Runic Magic, 4 dice — Alphonse is adept at runecasting. He can cast fortunes, create curses, and enchant items with runic power. His specialty is combining runic magic and technology. None of these abilities are usable off the cuff. He must have time to scribe the runes, imbue them with power, and activate them. He does, however, carry many items on his person for emergencies (see below). (Clothing decorated with runes)

Manipulation, 3 dice — D'Ascoli knows how to manipulate people, both as individuals and groups. He knows how to play on their desires and their fears, how to get people to do what he wants by making them think it's what they want. (Over-inquisitive)

Fighting, 3 dice — As an ex-military man, D'Ascoli knows how to use a variety of weapons and fighting styles. (Predatory stare)

Temporally Challenged — D'Ascoli has not been on earth in over 50 years. He does not know many details of recent history and doesn't understand much of modern technology (such as computers or

even TV). (Avoids tech talk)

Equipment

D'Ascoli always carries a number of runic items for his own protection. The ones below are his old standbys, but feel free to create others to taste.

Mjolnir — Named after Thor's hammer, this unique weapon is one of D'Ascoli's runic masterworks. It looks like a large silver hammer, but has no sharp angles. It's all crazy curves and elaborate interweaves. About the size of a SMG, it is held by the hammer head. When fired, the haft of the weapon shoots out an arc of lightning. Since the damage is electrical, armor is no defense. X4 damage.

Bone Necklace — This necklace is made out of six pieces of skull bone, each carved into the shape of a potent rune. All of bone runes also have other runes carved into them. Together, all these runes provide potent protection. Magical attacks on D'Ascoli are reduced by 1 die. It also counts as physical armor (rating 3b).

Grenade of Obscurement — D'Ascoli's ace in the hole, this weapon is a smoke grenade at root. However, the smoke is actually a thick fog that spreads 50 feet a minute for 5 minutes. Those within the fog have all mental traits reduced by 1 die for as long as they remain in the cloud. Victims find it hard to think and concentrate. D'Ascoli is immune to its effects.

Einar Volundson

Gang Leader with (someone else's) vision

Einar was born in the Nazi wonderland and so really is not of this earth. Since he was brought up by renegade SS men, he entirely lacks traits like compassion, mercy, and pity. He was raised to follow orders with brutality and efficiency and revels in the chance to prove himself on Al Amarja. He has molded the Aries into a tightly disciplined group who obey his orders without question. If he is stranded on Al Amarja by D'Ascoli, there's no telling what he might do. It would be the first time in his life that he could do whatever he pleased. Look out.

He is always accompanied by a bodyguard (his "Huscarls") of six heavily armed Aries and is a difficult man to talk to. Those who prove themselves in appropriately manly endeavors may get the

opportunity to speak to him, but under no circumstances would he betray D'Ascoli.

German man, 27 years old, 172 cm, 74 kg, blond hair, blue eyes, full beard.

Languages: German, Norse, English.

Attack: 4 dice, X3 damage (spear), X4 damage (Luger pistol, used only in emergencies)

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 28 (take your best shot)

Traits

Combat Specialist, 4 dice — Einar has been trained since birth to fight with a variety of weapons. His personal favorite is the spear (Odin's weapon), but he is equally adept with knives, swords, pistols, and rifles. The renegade SS men have developed their own style of close combat during their 50 year exile, and this has proved quite an advantage over Earthly opponents. (Unusual stance)

Born Leader, 3 dice — Einar has all the instincts of a great leader. Running the Aries Gang has been his first practical experience, but so far his instincts (coupled with that SS training) have been right on the money. (Commanding presence)

Fanatic, 3 dice — In the world where Einar grew up, the essential correctness of the SS world view was indisputable. He is well-nigh unshakable in his beliefs and can readily stand up to torture and other means of coercion. (Manic gleam in his eyes)

Not of this Earth — While he knows a great deal about Earth history, Einar did not grow up on Earth. This has left severe gaps in his knowledge, which sometimes become glaringly obvious. (Doesn't get pop culture references)

Equipment

Spear — Einar's spear was enchanted by D'Ascoli. Runes were inscribed on the haft of the spear that made the spear especially potent against Hans Knudson. The runes are still there and could be easily deciphered by someone with knowledge of the runes.

Nazi Goons

D'Ascoli's Henchmen

All of these men were born in the Nazi wonderland and brought up under SS tutelage and indoctrinated with Nazi ideology. They followed D'Ascoli to Al Amarja because they wanted a

chance see their home world and to use their well-honed skills. They respect and fear D’Ascoli and his power and all would rather die than face his wrath.

Attack: 3 dice, X3 damage (SS daggers), X4 damage (submachineguns), or X7 damage (flame or ice throwers).

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (well-trained)

Traits

Soldier, 3 dice — D’Ascoli’s men have been very well trained. They are adept with firearms, hand to hand combat, special weapons, and small unit tactics. (Disciplined)

Fanatic, 3 dice — Anything for the cause. (Never surrender)

Equipment

Standard equipment for the goon squads is a submachine gun, pistol, SS dagger, runic gas mask, and homing helmet (which allows D’Ascoli to teleport them back to base).

For special assignments, one or more member of a squad may be issued one of the following:

Cosmic Fire Thrower — weapon taps into the primal power of cosmic fire. It doesn’t use fuel, but is powered by runic magic instead. Its base damage is X7, but if its flames come into contact with ice, an explosion results. The intensity of the explosion depends on how much ice there was. When the streams of a Cosmic Fire Thrower and Cosmic Ice Thrower cross, an explosion that does X10 damage results.

Cosmic Ice Thrower — Similar in design to the Fire Thrower, this weapon shoots out great gouts of ice instead.

Gungnir: D’Ascoli’s Secret HQ

Named after Odin’s spear, Gungnir is D’Ascoli’s base of operations on Al Amarja. The original complex was built during the 1930’s, but D’Ascoli has built a new section in the last year. The entrance to Gungnir is hidden in the ruins of D’Ascoli’s old mansion at the base of Mt. Ralsius. There are always two guards on duty there.

PCs who get close to the ruins see definite signs of habitation. There are two humvees parked near

the ruins, though they are covered with camouflaged netting to hide them from spying aircraft. The turf around the mansion shows that vehicles have been active in the area. An examination of the ruins themselves indicates that a large section of masonry was moved recently. Underneath another canopy of netting is a large metal trapdoor that leads down to Gungnir. A metal ladder leads down thirty feet to room 1.

Upper Level

Room 1: Upper Guard Room

This room serves as the base for the guards on the surface. There are usually two guards down here who switch with those above ground every two hours. The room has a table and three chairs. A door leads to the rest of the complex.

Rooms 2 and 3: Barracks

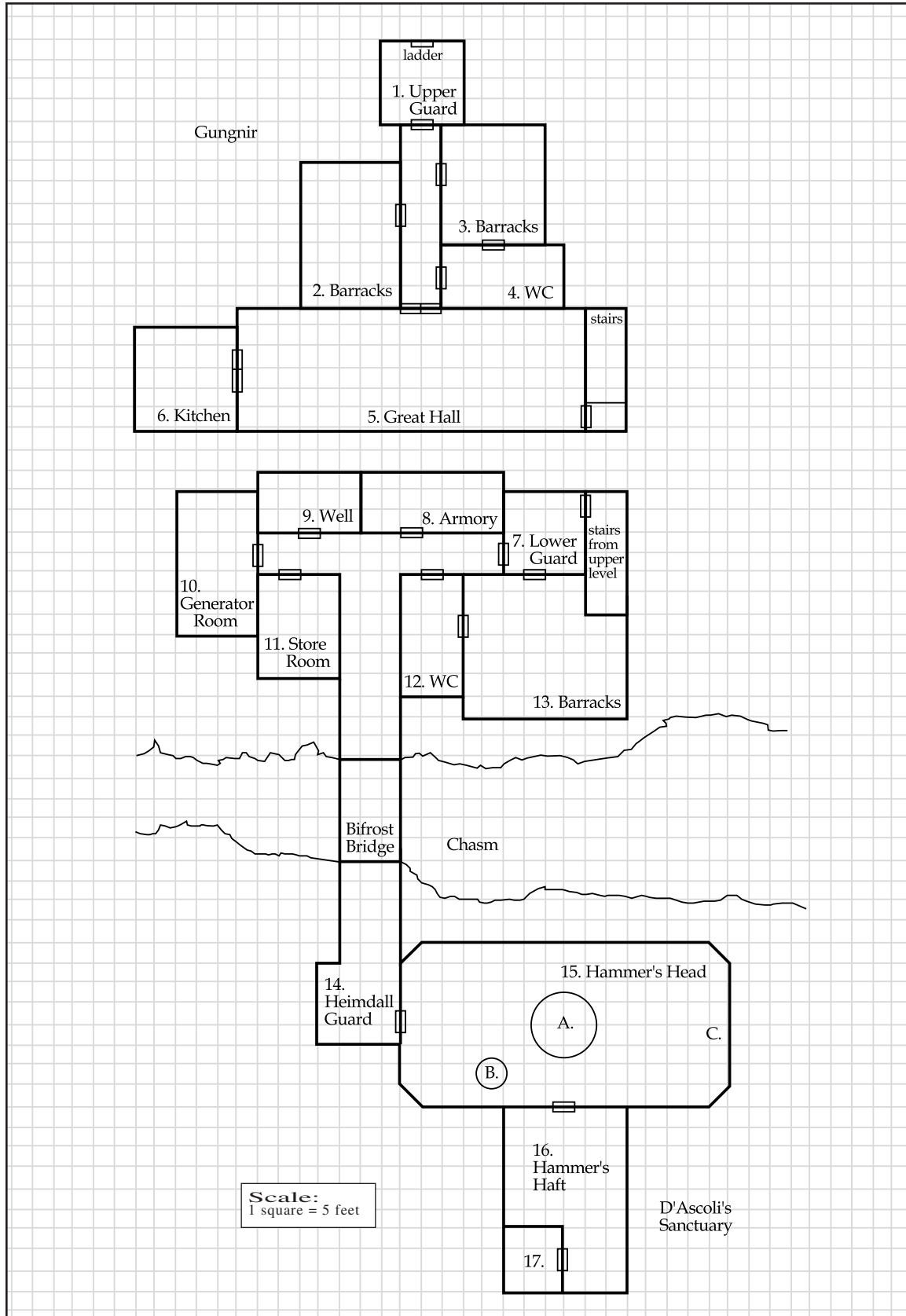
These two rooms are the living quarters for 32 of D’Ascoli’s goons. It contains many bunks, foot lockers, and the personal effects of the soldiers. PCs who spend time searching these rooms find many curious artifacts from the Nazi wonderland.

Room 4: WC

Showers and toilets for the troops.

Room 5: The Great Hall

This enormous room is the central meeting and dining room of Gungnir. D’Ascoli has done his best to decorate it with medieval splendor. Three enormous flags decorate the back wall. The first is the classic Nazi swastika flag, done in red, black, and white. The second is an SS *Totenkopfring* (Death head ring) flag, done in black and white. The third flag, which occupies the center position, is unusual and only meaningful to someone versed in rune lore or Norse mythology. A black design of three interlocking triangles in a triangular pattern is set on a white field. This symbol, the Valknut or knot of the slain, is a symbol of devotion to Odin and indicates that one is ready to be taken into the ranks of Odin’s chosen at any time. The SS of the otherworld have adopted this as their symbol.



MAP: Gungnir: D'Ascoli's Secret Headquarters

The Great Hall also contains two large oak tables, a head table that seats twelve and a long table that seats about 40. Tapestries showing various scenes from Teutonic mythology decorate the other walls and dozens of sconces with black candles are scattered about the room.

Room 6: The Kitchen

All the cooking at Gungnir is done here. There are a number of ovens and stoves here, along with the usual cooking implements and dishes. The ovens are wood burners and there is a stack of wood against one wall. Except during the late evenings, there will always be about five men in here cooking.

Lower Level

A doorway off the Great Hall leads to a steep stairway down. This stairway descends at least 30 feet. There is another door at the landing, which leads to the Lower Guard Room.

Room 7: Lower Guard Room

Another guard room with a table and chairs. There are usually two guards on duty here, although they tend to be somewhat lax.

Room 8: Armory

This room contains D’Ascoli’s weapons cache. It is filled with submachine guns, pistols, and ammo, plus an impressive array of medieval weapons such as broadswords and battle axes.

Room 9: Well Room

This room contains Gungnir’s water supply, a large well bored into the rock. Somewhere below is a safe water source.

Room 10: Generator Room

Most of this room is taken up with an old style gasoline generator. A cursory examination shows that the generator has been substantially modified. The exact nature of the modifications is difficult to assess. In fact, D’Ascoli is working on converting

the generator to run on runic power. He has been too busy to finish this project, but at least has made it more efficient.

Room 11: Storeroom

This room is full of supplies: canned food, clothing, rope, flashlights, etc.

Room 12: WC

Yet more toilets and showers.

Room 13: Barracks

Another barracks. This one holds about 20 men.

D’Ascoli’s Sanctuary

The rest of the complex was built recently by D’Ascoli. When he was building the original complex, he ran into a snag in the form of a 25 foot chasm that was so deep you couldn’t see the bottom. On his return, he built a bridge of shining ice to cross the chasm. The bridge, known as Bifrost in honor of the bridge to Asgard, leads to D’Ascoli’s true center of power. He carved out chambers in the shape of an enormous hammer, the symbol of Thor. The hammer-shaped chambers serve as a focus for D’Ascoli’s magic and allow him to harness great power.

Room 14: Heimdall Guard Room

D’Ascoli’s personal guard are known as the Heimdall Guard. Like their namesake, they guard the Bifrost Bridge. Most of the time, there are two guards here and two at the bridge. The room only contains a table and four chairs.

Room 15: The Hammer’s Head

This large room is D’Ascoli’s magical sanctuary and the site of his greatest magics. It has a number of interesting features:

A. Yggdrasill — In the center of the room is an enormous tree made of silver, gold, and steel. This is a representation of Yggdrasill, the world tree of Norse mythology, surrounded by runic cir-

cle inscribed in the floor. It is also the means by which D'Ascoli teleports his fascist goon squads. The twisted branches reach up twenty feet to the ceiling. The lower branches arc downward like a willow. Those wishing to be transported make their way under the lower branches. D'Ascoli, who stands in his own runic circle (location B), then activates Yggdrasill. When he receives their signal, he homes in on their helmet spikes and transports them back the same way.

B. Runic Circle — This circle inscribed on the floor is D'Ascoli's protective ring. He stands here when performing rituals.

C. Map — The east wall of the Hammer's Head has a large map of Al Amarja on it. There are large push pins in various locations. PCs familiar with recent events see the areas of D'Ascoli's activities marked out. If they take the time to examine the map in detail, they notice a push pin in Mt. Ralsius (this represents the device that is cooling Al Amarja) and another one on Monique's HQ.

D. Work Table — This oak table has the various tools of D'Ascoli's trade: knives for carving, paints for coloring, a horn, a mortar and pestle, assorted staves, and a bag of bones with a rune inscribed on each one.

Room 16: The Hammer's Haft

These are D'Ascoli's personal quarters. They contain a large bed, a number of bookshelves with assorted occult tomes and D'Ascoli's personal diaries (quite fascinating actually), and a number of unfinished runic projects. There is also a box with a few bars of gold in it. These bars, stamped with the Nazi eagle, are vintage WW2 merchandise and worth a lot of money to the right buyers. D'Ascoli has already sold a number of these to fund his effort.

The east wall has a runic doorway inscribed on it. This is D'Ascoli's personal escape hatch to the Nazi wonderland. If PC's could figure out how to activate, they could have no end of fun with Nazis.

Room 17: The Big Man's WC

A bathroom fit for a fascist.



Illustration by Ovi Hondru

DREAMING ON THE VERGE OF STRIFE

by Keith Baker

You're dreaming that same dream. You're sitting at the counter of the old City Diner, gazing adoringly at the waitress who never noticed you in high school, the one who went on to marry your best friend's brother. You know that she's about to take your order, and you're trying to find the words to let her know how you really feel. Any moment now, you'll realize that you have no pants.

Four people sit in a booth in the corner. If you looked away from the waitress and noticed them, you might wonder at their presence. You wouldn't recognize any of them. That's because they aren't actually part of your dream. They just came for the \$3.00 special.

"Dreaming on the Verge of Strife" is a doorway to the nocturnal world of the *shapers*, a group of people with an unusual gift. Shapers do not dream. When they sleep, they enter the dreams of others. As they grow in strength, they can alter those dreams, reshaping them to match their own desires.

This adventure resource is divided into three chapters. The first describes the shapers themselves, explaining their abilities and the different groups of shapers found on Al Amarja. The second chapter discusses the many uses of dreams in your *Over the Edge* campaign. The final chapter, "Morphia Soup", is a short adventure which pulls the players into the escalating conflict between two of the Edge's most secret societies: The Vornite Movers and the Circle of Dreams.

The Shapers

The true nature of the shapers is unknown. They may be a mutant strain of humanity, or ordinary people who have been touched by some mystical power. What is known is the one trait they all share: They are dream parasites who spend their sleeping hours in the minds of others. Initially, this is a completely unconscious action. Living in the dreams of family members or friends, a latent shaper may not realize that she possesses an unusual ability. But once she awakens to her true nature, her powers begin to build. Shapers can travel between dreams, and as they gain experience they find that they can alter the nature of those dreams. The strongest shapers can survive the death of the physical body, casting their spirits into the sea of dreaming minds.

The shapers have little in the way of culture or history. Their numbers are small; shaping talent appears randomly, and is rarely passed on to children. Until this century, most shapers were isolated and alone. With the advent of modern transportation and technology, a group of shapers has begun to scour the world, seeking those with shaping abilities and bringing them together. This group is known as the Circle of Dreams. It will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter.

Dreamshaping

All shapers have the fringe power *Dreamshaping*. At any level, this power has the following uses:

- The shaper can enter the dreams of others.
- The shaper can call other shapers to the dream he occupies.

- The shaper can recognize other shapers: by touch in the waking world, or by sight in dreams.

The latter two abilities are dependent on the power of the two shapers involved: the stronger shaper can always refuse the invitation, or conceal her true nature while in dreams. In the case of equal power, roll for success. While a shaper can conceal her true nature in dreams, touch recognition is foolproof.

Levels of Shaping

As a shaper grows in power, he gains additional influence over dreams. These abilities are summarized as follows.

1 die — The shaper can enter into the dreams of anyone he has established a link to. He cannot alter the reality of the dream through supernatural means, although he can speak to the characters in the dream and take any sort of action he could perform in the real world. He can summon other shapers to the dream he

Imagine the collective unconscious as a vast ocean, buried deep beneath the surface of our conscious minds. When you sleep your mind drops into that ocean, creating an island of dreams. While most of that land comes from your own experiences and memories, other thoughts can wash up on the shore: messages in bottles, driftwood floating loose on the sea... Now imagine a man who has no dreams of his own. When he falls into the ocean each night, he swims to the closest island. As time goes by he learns to build a boat, to find his way to other islands. Eventually he learns to reshape the landscape of any island he inhabits. If you can see this, you have glimpsed the world of the shapers, souls cast adrift on the ocean of the night.

— from the unpublished notes
of Dr. Iraj Mehar



currently inhabits. Entering a dream or calling another shaper both require a shot from the dreaming pool.

- 2 dice** — While in dreams, the shaper can alter his own appearance by spending a shot from his dreaming pool. In addition, he can try to gain a glimpse of a person’s recent dreams when forging a link. This uses a shot, and requires a dreamshaping roll against the target’s willpower (default 2 dice). The better the roll, the clearer the vision.
- 3 dice** — By spending a shot from his pool, the shaper can alter any aspect of a dream: the setting, the characters, the mood. Any change requires a roll against the actual dreamer’s willpower (default 2 dice). If the change is a vast stretch from the existing dream, the shaper takes a penalty die; if the change fits the setting of the dream, he can receive a bonus die. At this level, he gains two additional benefits. He can explore dreams without a link — the equivalent of spinning the globe and putting your finger down, no control over the destination. In addition, he can use this trait to resist psy-

chic attacks or for any other “willpower” check, due to the tremendous mental strength required to attain this level.

- 4 dice** — The shaper no longer needs to use a shot to enter dreams or to call other shapers to a dream, he can survive his own death by casting his spirit into dreams, and he can forge a link to anyone within his line of sight — physical contact is no longer necessary.
- 5 dice** — The shaper no longer needs a dreaming pool, and can perform any dreamshaping action with no cost. This level of power is rarely available to mortal shapers.

The Link

An important element of dreamshaping is the *link*. The link is the “psychic address” of a particular dreamer: in order to enter a dream, a shaper must have a link to the dreamer. The simplest way to gain a link is through physical contact. If a shaper touches you — even while you are awake — he gains access to your dreams. When one shaper touches another, it creates a psychic loop. This is the simplest way for shapers to recognize one

another. The loop is a pleasant experience; some shapers prefer this psychic connection to physical intercourse.

The second way to gain a link is through invitation. One shaper can call another to the dream he currently occupies. If the second shaper accepts the invitation, she gains a link in the process. Other methods of linking are available only to experienced shapers, who can link to someone by sight or explore the unconscious without a link — jumping into one of the billion random dreams that happen to be available at any given time.

Maintaining a link is much like remembering a phone number. As long as the shaper continues to use the link, it remains open. If left unused for a long period, it may fade away.

What Can You Do in Dreams?

You've tried scrubbing and scraping, but you can't get those pesky shapers out of your brain. What's the worst they can do? Good question.

At its weakest levels, shaping is a useful way to gather information. By observing your dreams, a shaper can see what motivates you, what frightens you, and generally what's going on in your life. He can talk to "you"; you may answer questions you'd never answer while awake. As the shaper grows in power, his repertoire of tricks increases. At the 2 die level, he can change his appearance to that of someone you'd trust: your husband's forgotten the combination to the safe, what was it again? By the 3 die level, he can construct entire scenarios designed to get you to spill the beans. If he wants the missile launch codes, you'll keep having dreams where the nation is under nuclear attack and the president needs those codes NOW!

Another use of shaping is manipulation. Depending on the skill of the shaper and the state of your mind, this can be straightforward (Karla Sommers tells you that she'll date you if you shoot Her Exaltedness) or extremely subtle (a long series of dreams which lead you to believe that Her Exaltedness has been watching your dreams, that she's an evil being with supernatural powers, and that now you know her secret she's going to arrange for a convenient accident to befall you... unless you *get her first!*). Bear in mind that people rarely remember most of their dreams, so manipulation can require a great deal of reinforcement. Of course, seeds planted in the subconscious mind can

be just as effective as a message from Karla — often more so.

The final advantages of shaping only apply to groups of shapers: secrecy and time-saving. Dreams are ideal for private meetings. No one can follow you or see who you're talking to, and you save a bundle on long-distance bills. The Circle maintains strongholds in the minds of coma victims around the world, places where shapers can go for complete privacy at any time. In addition time flows differently in dreams than in the real world. A minute of dreaming can seem to last for hours. This gives shapers a great deal of time to scheme, and also allows them to learn new skills in a seemingly short period of time. With a willing instructor, a shaper can condense weeks of training into a few nights.

Dreaming Beyond Death

When a powerful shaper dies she can refuse to pass on, hurling her spirit into the collective unconscious and continuing to exist as a ghost in the mind of others. This transition is only an option for shapers with 4 or more dice in dreamshaping. Weaker shapers may persist for a short time, but lack the willpower to maintain their existence. They will either advance to the next level or fade away. A shaper who makes the transition to life beyond death is referred to as an "Architect".

Defending Your Dreams

So you want to keep shapers out of your dreams? Simple enough: don't dream. Since the shaper accesses dreams through the collective unconscious rather than attacking an individual mind, psychic defense technology is unreliable:

- White thought generators and brain loopers provide no protection against shapers. If the target can dream, a shaper can enter the dream.
- Crystal traps will prevent a shaper from forming a link in the waking world. But if the shaper already *has* a link, a crystal trap will not prevent her from using that link. Likewise, a crystal trap will not protect against a shaper who is "exploring".
- Shapers do not register as using any sort of psychic ability while they are in another person's dreams. It's a completely natural act: they have nowhere else to go. The formation of a link is a psychic act, but it involves a minimal

amount of energy and happens almost instantly, so it may escape undetected.

Needless to say, the Vornites are hard at work developing new technology to deal with shapers.

Tenants in Your Subconscious

This section covers the different groups currently active in the dreams of Al Amarja. Most shapers belong to the *Circle*, a conspiracy actively recruiting shapers and using their abilities to manipulate the world. Those who stand outside the Circle include the *Lost Ones* — cast-offs unable to deal with their paranormal powers — and the *Architects of Nod*, immortal ghosts haunting your dreams. And then there are the *Vornites*. They aren't in your dreams yet, but they're working on it...

The Circle

Fanatics also have their dreams, there to build a paradise for a sect.

— John Keats, “Fall of Hyperion”

Type: Growing Conspiracy.

Rep: None.

Brief: A network of shapers manipulating the world through dreams.

Allies: None.

Enemies: Movers (Vornites), Neutralizers.

The Circle is a global network of shapers which uses dream manipulation to influence the waking world. Though small in size, the Circle has mas-

tered the art of manipulating others to do its work. Unbalanced sociopaths and religious zealots are tools waiting to be used. Artists and scientists could be listening to Circle muses. Anyone who has ever been inspired to action by a dream could be an unwitting agent of the Circle.

Another strength of the Circle is its ability to acquire information. Dream cloaks can pluck secrets straight from sleeping minds, leaving no evi-

dence of their passing. With this knowledge at its fingertips, the Circle can usually blackmail those it cannot influence through dreams.

The final tool in the Circle's arsenal is invisibility. Its offices are in the dreaming minds of coma victims, and its agents receive orders in their sleep. There are no secret handshakes to spot, no telephone calls to trace. Anyone you know could be a Circle shaper. Do you really know where your partner spends his nights?

The short term goals of the Circle are to expand its influence by gather-

ing information, locating and training latent Shapers, and planting seeds in useful minds. The ultimate goals of the conspiracy are a mystery even to its own agents. From the darkness it pulls the strings of artists, politicians, and scientists. But does it seek control, or is the shaping of culture an end in itself?

The Shape of the Circle

The structure of the Circle mirrors that of a Mover cell, a pyramid structure where those below know very little of what goes on above.

At the bottom are the *Rooks*. Many Rooks are normal humans who work for money or information the Circle can provide. The rest are fledgling shapers, who spend their time observing dreams and making links, gathering information and doing the groundwork for more experienced shapers. At

There is a conspiracy lurking in your mind — a network of shapers pulling the strings of the world's dreams. They know about your secret love for the girl next door. They know about your dreams of replacing Juno as the head of your department. They should know — They made those dreams.

the next level are the *Dream Cloaks*, agents with 2 to 3 dice of shaping skill. These agents oversee the Rooks and perform the more subtle manipulations which are beyond the skill of the weaker shapers. Above the Cloaks are the *Shepherds*, powerful shapers who coordinate all Circle activities within a certain area and handle the most delicate operations.

At the top of the pyramid are the *Lords of the Inner Circle*. Seen only in dreams, the identity of these masters of sleep is a mystery even to the Shepherds. They might be aliens attempting to invade Earth through its dreams, or beings of pure spirit working to lead humanity to the next level of universal consciousness. Or they could simply be Movers, a secret cell unknown even to the Vornites. Anyone who could discover the true nature of the Inner Circle would undoubtedly determine the ultimate goal of the Circle itself. But for now, both remain mysteries.

Circle GMCs

Salome

Head Shaper

Salome is the current Shepherdess of Al Amarja, coordinating all Circle activities on the island. She is a mutant with an astonishing deformity: she has no body. She has the head of an attractive woman, a long, slender neck which widens towards the base, a suggestion of shoulders... and that's all. Her anatomy is as miraculous as it is bizarre. Her brain is only one-third the size of a normal human brain, but she makes full use of the smaller organ. Her heart and lungs take up the rest of her skull cavity. Her digestive system is located in her neck. Her tongue is a prehensile

limb which she can extend out to three feet. The base of her neck is rather like a slug's foot; she can move about very slowly using this flexible muscle. She disposes of liquid waste through her foot membrane, and occasionally spits out pellets of solid waste.

Born to a wealthy Saudi family, Salome probably would have been killed at birth if not for the Circle. A member of the Inner Circle sensed her potential as she dreamed in the womb, and influenced her parents through their dreams. Despite her appearance (she looks to be in her early twenties) she is only eight years old, chronologically.

But time is subjective for a shaper. Tutored in her dreams, she had her full intellect by the time she was two, and traveled to Al Amarja when she was three.

Currently, she operates out of the Darkling Bros. Diversions & House of Grotesques, an ancient run-down amusement park on the road to Skylla.

"Diversion House" is a sanctuary for a large group of mutants, so Salome fits right in. She is respected in the mutant community for her wisdom and her beautiful voice, and others among the Grotesques take care of her and see to her needs. None suspect her secret inner life. Players who frequent Bitter & Herb's may hear of her; she may even travel to the

bar to perform at some point.

When she appears to others in dreams, Salome will always mask her appearance. Despite her impoverished lifestyle, she can call on the resources of the Circle, and can arrange transfers of money or materiel if it serves her purposes.

Arabic woman, early twenties, no body below the neck. 36 cm, 10 kg. Shoulder-length, wavy black hair, dark brown eyes. She has a deep, soft



Illustration by Grey Thornberry

voice. Given her astounding deformity, she seems remarkably serene, at peace with herself and the world.

Languages: Arabic, English, French, German, Japanese.

Hit Points: 7 (All skull)

Dreaming Pool: 10 shots

Traits

*Dreamshaper**, 4 dice — Salome has extensive influence over dreams. While she is capable of forming a link to anyone within her line of sight, she usually relies on Cerise to make links for her. (She seems vaguely familiar, even though you’ve never met)

Perceptive, 3 dice — As a result of her vast experience with human dreams, Salome is extremely sensitive to the body language and emotional states of those around her. Her senses are sharp and she has a eye for fine details. (Has a knack for saying the right thing)

Singing, 4 dice — In spite of her tiny lungs, Salome has a remarkable singing voice and can produce an astounding range of tones with her voice. She generally uses her voice as an instrument, as opposed to singing lyrics. (Beautiful voice)

Silver Tongue, 3 dice — With her insights into human nature and her mastery of her own voice, Salome is skilled at telling people what they want to hear... or convincing them that they want to hear what she tells them. (Her advice always seems to be sensible and sincere)

No Body — When it comes down to it, Salome is just a head. She receives a penalty die on all physical actions. She can only move at a slow crawl. Her manipulation is limited to actions she can perform with her prehensile tongue. She can use a pen or even a knife, and she can type — if very slowly — but most physical actions are beyond her. (No body)

Cerise

The dog of your dreams

Cerise Barrault discovered her latent shaping powers at the moment of her death. When she was struck by a car, her soul instinctively sought refuge in dreams. She lacked the strength to make the transition to Architect, but somehow she worked a miracle and transferred her spirit into the body of a sleeping puppy on Al Amarja. Eventually, she was

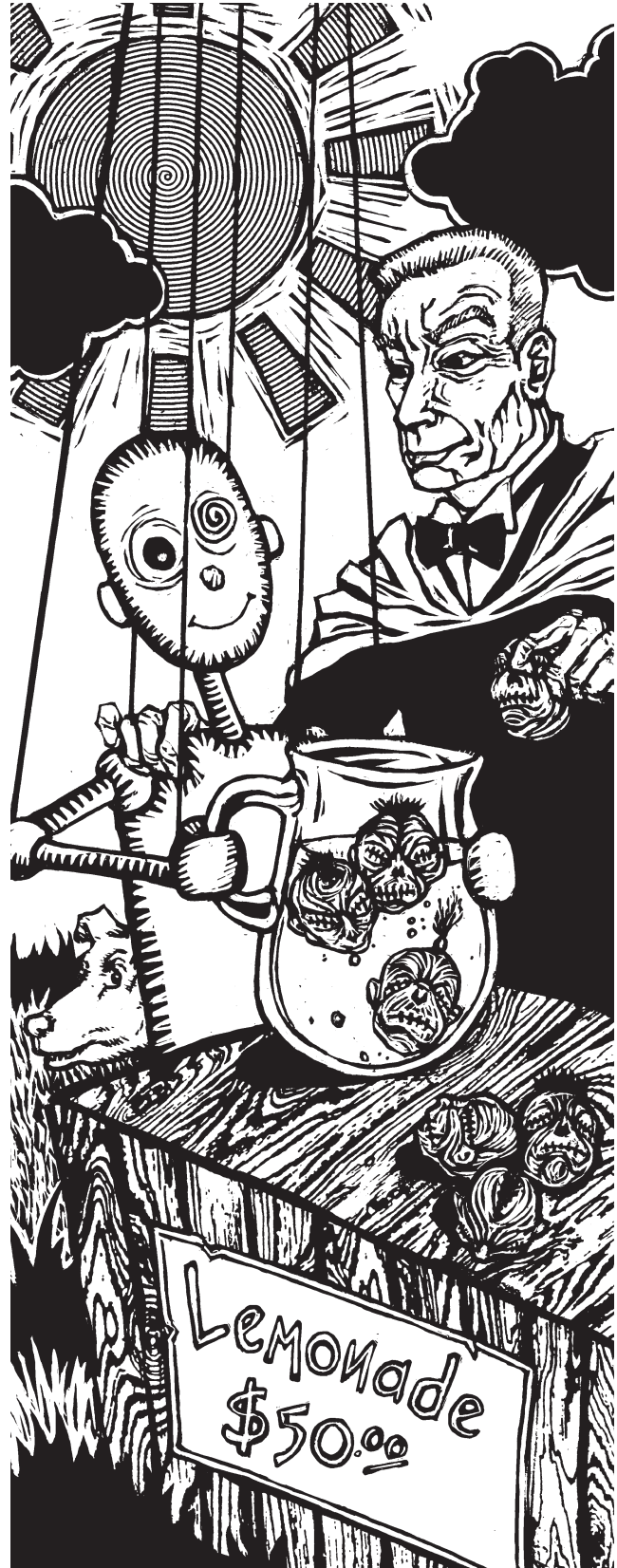


Illustration by Grey Thornberry

discovered by Salome and brought into the Circle. With Salome's help, Cerise has come to terms with her canine condition and become one of the Circle's top Dream Cloaks. She has the remarkable ability to smell dreams, and she can form a dream-link through scent: an old scrap of clothing is all she needs to find her way into your mind. By day, she roams the Edge keeping an eye on current events. By night she wanders through dreams, making links so Salome can follow. She should make frequent cameo appearances in the dreams of the players; people should begin to wonder about the significance of the strange red dog in their dreams.

Cerise is not a talking dog like the Edge's other canine celebrities. She can speak in dreams, but she usually won't if she is appearing in her canine form. It's entirely possible that she possesses the capacity for human speech but has never actually tried to develop it. This could change after an encounter with the Andalusia Dog or Rex (see *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*), either of whom could develop an interest in this mystery pooch.

Mongrel dog, 38 cm, 14 kg, medium-length red fur, some traces of Irish Setter and Golden Retriever in her ancestry. She is extremely energetic, constantly bounding off after another interesting smell.

Languages: English, French, Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice, X1 damage

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 13 (Small dog)

Dreaming Pool: 5 shots

Traits

*Dreamshaper**, 3 dice — While she prefers to spend her sleeping hours exploring and bounding from dream to dream, Cerise is a powerful shaper and can alter dream reality with ease. Using a shot from her pool, she can form a dream-link by scent; assign a difficulty roll based on the strength of the smell. (Seems vaguely familiar)

Dog Fighting, 3 dice — During her troubled second childhood, Cerise learned to defend herself from low-lives and the advances of other dogs. She is quick and possesses a boundless supply of energy, but she lacks a truly vicious nature. She usually goes for her opponent's legs and then heads for the hills. (Quick and wiry, always in motion)

Tracking, 3 dice — Cerise's dreamscenting ability is an adjunct of her excellent sense of smell. Combining her natural intelligence with her canine nose, she can follow even the trickiest trail. (Sniffs the air with obvious relish)

No Thumbs — Like any dog, Cerise is incapable of using tools or operating heavy machinery. (She's a dog)

Dr. Iraj Mehar

Dream Cloak and Exalted Order mole

Dr. Mehar is a respected therapist, specializing in the interpretation of dreams. He used to teach at DAU, and maintains his contacts in the Psychology department. He has pioneered a program of "dream therapy," providing restful sleep and positive reinforcement for his wealthy clients through a series of images, smells and ambient sound. Of course, his true success stems from the fact that he is a shaper, capable of observing and adjusting his patients' dreams first-hand.

Over the last few years, Mehar has worked his way into the Exalted Order of Dream Kings. He holds the rank of Prince of Dreams, and functions as a Guide to the Gateway. From this position, he provides data about the activities of the Order to the Circle. He is also developing his own theories about tulpas. Mehar believes that tulpas are pure dream-energy which has leaked out of the collective unconscious. He believes that a skilled shaper should be able to reshape a tulpa in the same way he can manipulate a dream. He hasn't had enough private access to the Order's tulpas to test his theories, but the Circle is quite interested in his work. His superiors in the Exalted Order have no suspicions about his true loyalties. They are pleased with his work, especially his ability to find subjects with intense nightmares. He occasionally moonlights at the Order's Sleep Disorders Clinic.

Al Amarjan man, age 48, 170 cm, 75 kg. Salt-and pepper hair with a growing bald spot, mustache and goatee. Wears thin spectacles. He has a deep, soothing voice.

Languages: Arabic, English, reads German.

Dreaming Pool: 3 shots

Traits

*Dreamshaper**, 3 dice — While he is not as strong a shaper as Cerise or Salome, Mehar can use

his knowledge of psychology to great effect when manipulating dreams. (Seems vaguely familiar)

Psychology, 3 dice — Mehar is a skilled therapist with a solid background in psychology. His specialty (4 dice) is the interpretation of dream images and sleep disorders. (Constantly brings up Freud)

Sedentary — Mehar spends most of his time behind a desk, and is in poor physical condition. He takes a penalty die on all strenuous physical activity. (Frequently stops to catch his breath)

Story Ideas

You should pick a few of your established GMCs to be Circle agents. These operatives may be “sleepers” waiting to be activated, Rooks without any actual shaping ability, or Dream Cloaks who have been working for the Circle right under the noses of the players. One interesting possibility would be Cheryl D’Aubainne, whose insights into the beliefs of others could be the result of powerful shaping abilities. She could even be a member of the Inner Circle, the true power behind the Circle on Al Amarja.

Other ideas:

- A player character with latent shaping abilities is approached by a Dream Cloak in her dreams. The Cloak offers to help her develop her skills and discover her true nature, in exchange for her services as a Rook. If she refuses, the Circle will try to manipulate her into accepting their offer. Strange, threatening events will begin to happen to her while awake and while asleep; the Cloak reappears and implies that the player needs the Circle’s help to control her powers before the danger gets out of hand. If the player completely refuses to work with the Circle, they label her a Lost One and leave her alone. However, if she is contacted by the Vornites or begins to use her shaping abilities for any other organization, they will try to have her killed.
- The Circle wants to put an end to the distribution of Nightmare, and decide to use the Sommerites as their catspaws. Numerous Sommerites have visions of Karla or gain “new insights” into her works which cause them to rally against Nightmare. When Sommerite bands begin to take vigilante actions to stop the distribution of Nightmare, they come into con-

flict with Sandmen and the Exalted Order of Dream Kings, and things get ugly very quickly. Sommerite players or characters with Sommerite patrons could be pressured to join the anti-Nightmare activities. Or players may need to convince their Sommerite friends to leave well enough alone, before the Sandmen get upset. Since the Circle has a spy in the Order, the Sommerites will have solid information about the Order’s activities and target its weak links. It’s the Night of Sixty Knives with a hip soundtrack.

- A vicious serial killer escapes from D’Aubainne Asylum and begins a spree of murders. The murderer is guided by “voices” — the voices of Circle Cloaks. With help from his Circle guides, he stalks Vornite agents, CPC investigators who are beginning to suspect the existence of the Circle and oppenheimers who are working in the field of dream research. Can the players put the pieces together?
- Dr. Iraj Mehar finds a strange trend in the dreams of his clients: early warning signs of Throckmorton domination. Can the Circle fight off the Throckmorton effect as it spreads throughout the collective unconscious? This could involve an uneasy alliance with Vornite oppenheimers, as the two groups try to counter this threat to the world.

The Lost Ones

A young Apollo, golden-haired,
Stands dreaming on the
verge of strife,
Magnificently unprepared
For the long littleness of
life.

— *Rupert Brooke,*
“Francis Cornfield”

“Lost One” is a name the Circle gives to those shapers who are useless for its purposes. Lost Ones generally fall into one of three categories. A few are naïve or simpleminded, unsuited to the secret work of the Circle. Others are self-centered sociopaths who revel in their ability to spread

nightmares and terror among normal people; shapers of this type are often referred to as “Kruegers.” Most often, Lost Ones are people who are incapable of dealing with the strange and confusing life of a shaper, schizophrenics who cannot distinguish between dream and reality. While those of the first category can lead perfectly normal lives, the latter two tend to be low-lives and zeroes. A chance encounter with a street crazy can be a ticket to weeks of poor sleep...

Lost One GMCs

See Summer, pp. 92-93.

Story Ideas

The Lost Ones are likely candidates for the players’ first contact with shapers. Members of the Circle keep their powers well-hidden, but the Lost Ones lack self-control. The Circle does keep an eye on known Lost Ones, and will have them killed if they become too public or endanger the plans of the Circle in any way. “Morphia Soup” is an example of this; the Vornites are experimenting on Lost Ones and the Circle wants to stop the research.

Other ideas:

- A player finds a series of murals or scrawled messages on a wall in Great Men. These images are clearly drawn from the player’s dreams. Alternatively, a player troubled by horrible dreams finds out that someone is distributing Nightmare based on her dreams. The actual source of the Nightmare — and the dreams — is a Lost One being tapped by a Sandman.
- A player mistreats a low-life, who turns out to be a powerful Lost One. The shaper begins to take an elaborate vengeance: Friends and lovers have nightmares in which the player tortures them, business contacts suddenly develop cold feet due to subconscious suggestions, etc. The player must find the Lost One and somehow convince him to call off the attack. Killing the shaper might simply make matters worse: if he makes the transition to Architect, he will continue the attacks, and up the ante. Associates of the player begin to fall into mysterious comas, “killed” from within. At the point, the

player’s only hope lies in the Circle, another Architect, or Vornite technology.

- A group of Lost Ones fall under the influence of the Throckmorton Device, and begin an aggressive campaign to “cleanse” the dreams of Al Amarja — starting with those of the players.

The Architects of Nod

I am weary of days and
hours

Blown buds of barren
flowers

Desires and dreams and
powers

And everything but sleep.

— *Algernon Charles
Swinburne, “The Garden
of Proserpine”*

When a powerful shaper dies, her spirit may pass into the collective unconscious and continue to exist as a ghost in the dreams of others. While they are not organized in any real way, these phantom elders are aware of one another and maintain a loose connection— an extremely old boy’s club, as it were. They refer to themselves as “the Architects of Nod.” Other shapers shorten the title, speaking of “the Architects.”

By definition, the Architects are the most powerful shapers in existence. They have to be strong to survive death, and after death they continue to grow in strength. The irony is that an Architect has no real use for her power. She is dead, after all. The concerns of the waking world — money, politics, shelter — are irrelevant, and interest in these things quickly fades. Some try to carry on their previous lives, recreating their daily life in the dreams of some poor dupe or working with the Circle to stay in touch with current events, but most eventually tire of the game.

Once they have accepted their death, they seek new diversions, anything to while away the hours of the long immortal dream. They may drive people mad, found new religions, inspire artists to new heights of glory or depravity. The distinction between the antics of the Architects and the machi-

nations of the Circle is that the Architects have no real interest in the long-term effects of their actions. They are demigods playing with toys — they set up an interesting game and then abandon it as soon as it becomes boring. Take Joan of Arc: If the Circle was responsible for her visions, it would reflect a desire to restructure the political situation in France. If an Architect was behind her voices, it would be because he wanted to see how much fun he could have with this little French girl. After a time, an Architect loses all empathy, seeking only personal gratification and entertainment.

Architect GMCs

Sussex

Jaded Demigod

In his mortal life, Sussex was a member of the British aristocracy during the reign of Queen Victoria. When he appears in human form, he tends to dress in the clothing of that period, but he is just as likely to appear as a lion, a ceramic pagoda or a burning bush. After spending a century in the dreams of England, he drifted over to Al Amarja, fascinated by the vivid colors of the dreams he saw there. Over the last few years, he’s been trying to think of an interesting way to make the island even more colorful, but he hasn’t settled on a plan.

Sussex could be an interesting patron for one of the players, especially a player with vivid and colorful dreams. Having observed Al Amarja from the other side, Sussex knows a great deal about the many conspiracies of the island — or so he thinks. Unlike the shapers of the Circle, Sussex has no reference points in the real world. When a Vornite dreams that he’s being chased by the alien soldiers of the Silver Empire, or when a child dreams that he’s the captain of the *Enterprise*, Sussex has no way to tell that these dreams are pure fantasy. So while he has access to a great deal of information, much of it is fictional or half-true. Hints dropped by Sussex may outline a detailed and sinister plot that is remarkably similar to a miniseries running concurrently on AATV. Further, while he’ll happily run with a player for a little while, dropping cryptic clues or twisting the minds of others to help the player, he’ll cheerfully lead the player into a dead-end trap or give information to the player’s worst enemy. He has no loyalties; anything he

does, he does for his own amusement.

His appearance is utterly random; he rarely appears the same way twice. He often mimics interesting characters he’s seen in other dreams.

Attack: 5 dice, damage multiple varies based on his chosen attack

Defense: 5 dice

Hit Points: 35, only damaged in dreams

(These statistics only apply to attacks made against him in dreams. He has no physical body.)

Traits

*Dreamshaping**, 5 dice — Sussex has complete control over the reality of any dream he inhabits. Because of his vast power, this trait is not linked to a dreaming pool. (Alters dreams when he appears)

Story Ideas

The Architects are the shapers who are most likely to help the player characters, offering information or other assistance. However, an Architect’s “help” is often a double-edged sword.

Other ideas:

- An Architect decides to play a little game involving one of the players. He directs a vicious Sandman to kill or cripple friends of the player, paying for these services with astonishingly powerful nightmares. He gives the player riddles and hints about the Sandman’s next victim. Only suggested if you’re prepared to lose a few GMCs.
- Backed by “the Horned One” — an Architect posing as the Devil — a young man attempts to unify the Satanists of Great Men, starting a major gang war with the Glorious Lords. He calls himself “Satan’s Messiah” and proclaims the coming of the Apocalypse. As others across the island begin to have disturbing dreams which echo the young man’s words, the players will have to decide whether to ignore the war or get involved. Eventually the Architect will tire of the game, leaving his poor Messiah without a vision.
- An associate of the players who has been in a coma suddenly regains consciousness. Or so it seems. In actuality, a dying shaper — unable to make the transition to Architect — has managed to assume control of the brain-dead body.



Illustration by Grey Thornberry

The Vornite Agenda

Now o'er the one-
half world
Nature seems dead,
and wicked dreams
abuse
The curtain'd sleep...

— William
Shakespeare,
Macbeth

Those who know of the Vornites believe that they intend to control the world through the use of psychic abilities. This is only partly true. The Vornites seek a complete understanding of the human mind. For decades, they have worked to unlock the secrets of the brain, in search of the key to unquestioning obedience — the neural pathways used by the Eight Evil Sages when they created the mutant humans and the Pharaohs to command them. Along the way, Vornite researchers have discovered a great deal about psychic powers, and the conspiracy employs a vast number of agents with paranormal powers. But this is just a coincidence, a fringe benefit of their research. The true Vornite agenda is the direct control of the human mind, through any means possible.

Consummate masters of manipulation, the Vornites have agents in almost all of the other cells and major conspiracies. Despite their power, they are obsessed with secrecy. Most of what is known about the cell is disinformation spread by Vornite infiltrators. They rarely take any sort of direct action, preferring to influence others from the shadows as they continue their esoteric studies of the brain. When they do act, they favor elaborate double-blind schemes, even when direct action would be simpler and more effective. The use of Soup in “Morphia Soup” is one example of this Vornite passion for secrecy.

While they have no knowledge of the Circle, the Vornite Directorate has recently discovered the existence of the shapers, through incidents involving Lost Ones and Architects. They have suppressed investigations by the CPC, preferring to keep the knowledge secret. The Vornites are always interested in researching unusual psychic abilities, to gain new insights into the workings of

the mind. But more than that, they see the vast potential in having a direct link to the collective unconscious. They have discovered the gateway to dreams, and they want in. What they don't realize is that the Circle is waiting on the other side, and that it intends to keep them out.

Vornite GMCs

See Simon Grace (p. 93) and Inongé Kitleli (pp. 93-94).

Story Ideas

Unless one of your players is a latent shaper, the Vornites are the best way to draw the players into dreams. The Vornites are developing ways for normal humans to mimic the natural powers of shapers and to defend themselves against shaper powers. Players can gain access to Vornite technology or become unwitting subjects in Vornite experiments. Eventually, there will be a full-scale war between the Circle and the Vornites, with Vornite technology and subversive influence matched against the Circle's power and experience with dreams. “Morphia Soup” is the prelude to this conflict, and will introduce the players to some of the principal characters on both sides.

Other ideas:

- The players have random dreams involving battles between Vornite pioneers and Circle Cloaks, giving them a sense of the building conflict. If the war gets out of hand, people may begin to fall into mysterious comas: both Circle and Vornite agents, and innocent people whose minds are destroyed during vicious battles in their dreams.
- A player receives latent shaping ability as a result of secret Vornite experiments. She is approached by Vornite agents posing as “Dream Police” loosely connected to the CPC. If the player agrees to work with the Vornites, they will help her develop her powers and send her on missions against the Circle. If she refuses, they will employ unpleasant means of coercion — the Circle may be her only hope for survival.
- A Vornite oppenheimer develops a device allowing multiple people to enter a dream. The Circle has the scientist killed, and the device

falls into the hands of the players. The Vornites want it back, the Circle wants it destroyed, and the players can joy-ride in dreams as long as they have it.

Dreams and the Modern Role-playing Game

If you plan to use shapers in your campaign, I strongly suggest that you start giving the player characters dreams on a regular basis. You want the players to be used to their characters dreaming, so that they won't immediately assume any given dream has GAME SIGNIFICANCE. Aside from hiding shaper activities, role-playing the dreams of the characters can add a new level of depth to your campaign. To name just a few of the many uses of dreams:

Fiction is Stranger than Truth

Al Amarja is a bizarre place. Dealing with dreams allows you to make it even stranger. Use your twisted imagination to spark that of your players. In addition to breaking the laws of physics, nature, and good taste, dreams allow you to use existing characters in unconventional ways:

You are five years old, and you have opened a lemonade stand with Sir Arthur Compton. Arthur is complaining because your mother won't let you sleep over at his house. The D'Aubainne girls, Cheryl and Constance, come by and order lemonade. Arthur passes you some lemons to squeeze, but when you look down, you see that they aren't lemons at all; they are tiny human heads.

Instant Replay

Did the players miss an important detail in a previous encounter? Replay the event as a dream, focusing the player's attention on the detail. The character's subconscious is smarter than she is.

Beware the Ides of March

While you don't want to overdo it, there's no reason that dreams can't foreshadow important upcoming events. Dreams may warn the character of personal danger, tip her off to a friend in need of assistance, or provide advance notice of strange events — like Arthur Compton inviting the character to join his new lemonade franchise. The dreamer may be tapping into the collective unconscious for this information, or a friendly shaper may be behind the warning.

Clyde, Anyone?

Dreams are an excellent way to sneak Throckmorton domination into the life of a player character. One of the PCs begins to have dreams intended to win her over to the Throckmorton cause. This should occur over a long period of time, and as subtly as possible: focus on the chaos of her current life, the comfort of order and structure, the concept that she is one of the chosen with a special role to play in making the world a better, cleaner place. Handled properly, the player herself may become sympathetic to the Throckmorton cause, without any intrusive “You're a zombie Throckmorton slave” commands from the Game Moderator. Or the PC may seek the help of the Circle or other shapers to stop these Throckmorton dreams; you'll have to decide if this is possible.

Reality Ain't What it Used to Be

As we've said, Al Amarja is a strange place. Reality often comes into question. Mixing unusual late-night events with bizarre dreams allows you to push those barriers even further, leaving your players guessing as to what is real and what's just in their imaginary imaginations:

Phil wakes up in the middle of the night because he hears a noise. When he goes to investigate, he finds his old partner Ray — who's been missing for days — standing in the living room. “You've got to help me, Phil,” Ray mutters. “They're after me.” Ignoring Phil's questions, Ray says “I need a drink,” and stumbles into the kitchen. When he emerges, he says “Phil... there's someone in your kitchen,” and

falls apart, every joint in his body separating and the flesh sloughing off his bones. The corpse disintegrates, leaving only a thin gray residue and a charred and twisted needle.

Actually, this event really happened. “Ray” was a strange form of tulpa who was being hunted by a rogue Neutralizer. But Phil didn't believe it until the sun came up and the strange needle was still there.

Another angle: Give one character a series of dreams in which he is the agent of some major conspiracy. Eventually, run a session set in that character's dreams; give the rest of your players other characters in the conspiracy. Aim for the “Am I a Cut-Up dreaming I'm a Gladstein oppenheimer, or an oppenheimer dreaming I'm a Cut-Up” feeling.

The Dream's the Thing

Between the Circle and the Vornites, dreams can actually be a central part of an adventure. “Morphia Soup” is an example of this, and the shaper background section provides many plot hooks. With Vornite technology or a PC shaper, entire adventures can occur *in* the dreams of one of the characters.

Don't overuse dreams. You don't need to give every character a dream every time the PCs go to sleep. Just drop in a dream in here and there. Start off a game by giving one of the PCs a dream about a vegetable group mind which takes over the brains of anyone who eats pea soup. Then drop a few idle comments about pea soup (Special today at Sarah's Teahouse!) and watch him squirm.

Generating Dreams

With any dream, there are two main questions that need to be answered: the voice of the dream and the subject matter.

Voice

Choosing a voice is the easy part. A dream can be *passive* or *lucid*. In a lucid dream, the player is in conscious control of her actions. It's a miniature adventure. You present the player with the situation, and she decides what she wants to do. This may involve combat, conversation, or use of other

traits. Of course, since it is a dream, anything can happen. The setting can change without warning. Equipment or fringe powers may operate in unusual ways, if they operate at all.

In a passive dream, the player is just an observer. You describe the dream from start to finish, without giving the player any input. It's a story as opposed to an adventure. This has two advantages: the dream doesn't take much time away from the actual adventure, and you can have the character perform actions the player would normally avoid:

You decide to join the Coast Guard, and you are packed onto a small boat which will take you to the big training ship. As the journey progresses, you realize that once you reach the training ship you'll have to cut your hair. You can't bear the thought of losing your hair, and rush to the recruiter and explain that you've made a terrible mistake. The recruiter smiles and says that he didn't even start a file for you when you enlisted, because he could tell you didn't really want to be in the Coast Guard.

The point is that the character would never try to join the Coast Guard, and she wouldn't be *that* concerned about cutting her hair; but in a dream, anything can happen. If you have a specific story you want to tell, passive dreaming is your best option.

Subject

Generating the story of a dream is usually more work than choosing the voice. If the dream serves a specific story function, you may already know what the dream should be about. But sometimes a dream has no purpose; it's just adding color to the environment. Luckily, OTE characters come with a lot of useful baggage, waiting to be unpacked. Each character has a Secret and an Important Person... right there you have two elements that should frequently appear in random dreams. Mix in any major events from the character's past and add a dash of recent events and you should have a fair amount of material for incidental dreams. For example, you have a character who joined the Cut-Ups after a horrible experience with the public education system in his youth. You have a basic dream idea: Martians invade his home town. The catch? The Martians are working with

his bitter old math teacher from high school. They capture him and the teacher is going to give him an exam, and the character finds that he's forgotten everything he knew about algebra. At the last minute he's saved by that glamorous street performer he's seen in Flowers a few times. This way you develop the character's past and have an opportunity to draw attention to current events — what's the story with that street performer, anyway?

Another valuable tool for generating dreams is the Cut-Ups Method, as described in *Weather the Cuckoo Likes*. Pick four words at random from your favorite novel, and make a sentence using those words. Try to extend that sentence into a short paragraph. Mix in a piece of the character's history or present and see where that gets you.

Adventuring in the Dreams of Others

There are a few questions you will have to answer, if your players start mucking around in dreams:

- **How do skills and fringe powers work?** Are characters limited to their real-world capabilities, or can they attempt ridiculous or impossible actions? One answer is to use the Cut-Ups method for all PC actions: creativity is the key to success, not skill. In this case, experienced shapers or characters with strong “willpower” traits should get additional cut-ups, to represent their greater ability to control their environment. A character trying to influence her *own* dreams could also receive a bonus.
- **What happens if a character is “killed” in a dream?** If the character is in someone else's dream, perhaps he's simply barred from returning to that dream for a time — the dreamer's subconscious considers him to be dead and won't let him in. In a darker campaign, death in a dream could throw the unfortunate character into a coma — he's physically uninjured, but his mind believes that he is dead and acts accordingly. A character attacked in his own dream will usually escape by waking up, but a powerful shaper could perform a psychic pin, keeping a character's spirit in the dream long enough to deliver a final blow (Dreamshaping vs. Willpower, and the shaper needs to spend a dreaming shot).

- What happens to people in a dream when the dreamer wakes up? Are they kicked back to their bodies, or are they trapped in the dreamer's head until he goes back to sleep? Perhaps this explains those days when you just can't get out of bed — the shapers are desperately trying to abandon ship!

As a final note, remember that dreams are constantly changing. Shapers can determine the action of a dream and hold it on a stable course. But non-shapers exploring another person's dreams are at the mercy of her subconscious. The situation can and should change at a moment's notice.

Morphia Soup

"Morphia Soup" is an adventure which sets the stage for the Vornite-Circle conflict. It pulls the PCs into the world of the shapers, but leaves them with more questions than answers. The shapers are subtle and secretive, and it should be some time before the players learn their story. This adventure paves the way for future interactions with the shapers, bringing the PCs to the attention of the Circle, the Vornites, and a (hopefully) friendly Architect.

Overview

The Vornites have been seeking information about the shapers for a long time. Recently, agents in the CPC identified a number of Lost Ones in the low-life population of the Edge. The Vornite Directorate dispatched a pair of cloaks and an oppenheimer to follow up on these leads, in a way that couldn't be tracked back to the Vornites. To this end the lead cloak, Simon Grace, enlisted the aid of a group of angry — and not especially talented — art students. Channeling their frustration, he forged them into Soup, a band of guerrilla artists intent on making their mark on the dreams of Al Amarja.

By the time the player characters get involved, Grace is following up on one of his last leads. The PCs are on the scene when Grace abducts Summer, a Lost One. The trick: before she is kidnapped, the girl forms a link with one of the PCs. She approaches this person in dreams, begging for help. At the same time, the Vornites are trying to follow



Illustration by Grey Thornberry

her — right into the character’s mind. Eventually, the Circle gets involved: it wants the Vornite experiments stopped, but it doesn’t want to get personally involved. The PCs are convenient tools. But the Circle doesn’t want the girl rescued. It wants her dead, so she can never be used against them again.

Setting the Scene

There is a certain amount of pipe that needs to be laid before you begin “Morphia Soup”. Try to drop these elements into previous game sessions at natural opportunities.

- Two D’Aubainne University faculty members are murdered (on separate occasions). At least one of the two should be known to the PCs, or a friend of a friend. There is no apparent motive for the killings. No theft is involved, and neither of the victims have common enemies or suspicious connections. The cause of death is multiple stab wounds, with unnecessary mutilation of the bodies. The Peace believe the murders to be the work of a single, mentally disturbed individual. The actual murderer is Simon Grace, the Vornite troubleshooter. He is setting up the scene so he can abduct Lost Ones, claiming that they are suspects in the murders.
- Soup cans begin appearing around Science and Flowers. These cans are paint cans which have been filled with concrete and then painted with odd variations of the Campbell’s Soup label, à la Andy Warhol. These little cans should turn up in odd and inconvenient places. After a while, some might be filled with red paint and small homemade explosives — just when people are beginning to ignore them, SPLAT.
- The following notes appear in Little Scratches: “Never underestimate the power of Soup. It’s Umm Umm God!”, “Die, Karla, Die!”, and “The people I end up caring for so much I lose. The story of my f—ing life. My music kept me sane. JSB.” Are they related? Maybe.
- You will have to pick one of the PCs to be the “contact” Summer links to. Try to pick a character who enjoys mysteries and will be intrigued by the possibility of dream manipulation, or a soft-hearted character who will be sympathetic to Summer’s plight. Once you’ve chosen the contact character, give one of the

other player characters a dream involving a red dog (Cerise, pp. 74-75).

The Day Before (Day One)

The session before you expect to begin “Soup”, there are two additional elements to add: The Soup Virus, and a brief encounter with Summer. It is critical to spring these on the players while they are still involved in some other activity; you want them to be busy and slightly distracted.

The Soup Virus

At 12:03 PM, a virus becomes active on computers throughout DAU and connected systems. All infected files are renamed “Soup” — “Soup1”, “Soup2”, etc. Screen backgrounds and icons are replaced by artistically altered Warhol soup cans. The virus is generally benign. No data is permanently lost, though people will have to waste a great amount of time renaming files. By the time the PCs hear about the virus, the situation is probably under control.

This virus is the work of Aniella Kjeds, a hacker affiliated with Soup. She used an old Gladstein program she obtained from Simon Grace. Player characters familiar with computers and the Gladsteins may recognize the code. The Gladsteins themselves are puzzled, but the program is out of date so it provokes no major response.

A Glimpse of Summer

This scene can occur in Science, Sunken or Four Points. The contact character is approached by a low-life girl, Summer. She is dirty and disheveled, and will certainly seem out of place in Sunken or Science. She approaches the contact character without being seen and gets his attention by touching his shoulder. “Do you have any food?” she asks. Despite her ragged appearance, she seems quite happy, as if the PC is an old friend she has been looking forward to seeing again.

Summer is not really on top of reality, and her conversation should reflect this. She jumps from subject to subject, and her answers often seem like nonsense. Try to drop in at least one obscure reference to a dream the contact character has had recently. If he dreamt about waiting in a long line for a jitney, Summer would say “Did you ever catch the bus?” You want to be subtle, but you want the

contact character to realize that there is more to this crazy girl than meets the eye. A few Summer answers to typical questions:

- *What sort of food would you like?* “Popcorn. Or a telephone. But no one ever calls.”
- *Where are your parents?* “Hollywood...” (She seems depressed for a moment) “But they weren’t good eating. Do you have any food?”
- *What’s your name?* “It depends where I live.”
- *Where do you live?* “The names are always changing.”

After the PCs have had a brief exchange with Summer, three men get out of a nearby Total Taxi. All three are dressed in conservative suits and nooses. The trio includes a slim Englishman, a large African and a burly Al Amarjan. The Englishman — Grace — is clearly the leader. He is carrying a clipboard and chewing on a pen. The two goons have stinger juniors in belt holsters and have their hands on pocketed tasers. A good perception roll will notice the tasers and also that the two men seem slightly nervous.

The trio approach Summer, who seems completely at ease, as though these were additional old friends. The burly man puts one hand on her shoulder, keeping the other on his taser. Grace addresses the PCs, saying “Excuse me. I hope we aren’t interrupting anything. I’m afraid we have business with the young lady.” If there is no resistance, the girl is escorted back to the taxi.

If any PCs ask for additional information, Grace takes them aside. He identifies himself as Dr. Stephen Grace of the D’Aubainne Asylum Repo Division, and can produce ID on request. He explains that the girl is a schizophrenic with dangerous psychotic tendencies who recently escaped — “Eloped, as we say” — from a high security wing of the Asylum. He says that he knows little of her history, and that her only known name is “Summer”. If pressed, he says “I probably shouldn’t say anything, but she’s the lead suspect in the recent murders at D’Aubainne University. When she has a psychotic episode, she can be extremely dangerous.” At this point, the listener realizes that the nervousness shown by Grace and the guards is actually directed towards the girl, not towards the PCs. This thought is the result of Grace’s moving skill and his psychic ability.

While Grace is talking with the player characters, the guards are escorting her to the taxi. If combat occurs, they will respond with tasers and

stinger juniors. They are Soup toughs with 3 dice of fighting skill and 19 hit points. Grace will hit the nearest PC with the micro-taser concealed in his pen. They will try to stun the PCs and escape with Summer; they aren’t looking for a fight.

Played correctly, this encounter shouldn’t end in combat. You want to play this as just another bizarre street encounter — “You run into a friendly street urchin who turns out to be a vicious killer.” Do your best to make “Doctor” Grace seem reasonable and sincere.

Opening Night — Night 1

At this point “Morphia Soup” is ready to begin. The night after the encounter with Summer, two strange events occur. You can run these events at the end of your previous adventure as a trailer for the next session, or at the opening of the first Soup session.

Soup Strikes

Soup breaks into the Museum of Modern Life and vandalizes the Fine Arts section. They add mustaches, glasses and thought balloons — with phrases like “Up with Soup” or “I need to go to the Louvre” — to paintings, in addition to ripping canvases and scraping off layers of paint. Statues lose limbs and noses, and gain black eyes or Groucho glasses. Nothing is stolen, and the more unusual areas of the museum are left untouched. The intruders successfully evade or disable all of the museum’s security measures, leaving no clues except for the frequent use of the word “Soup”. (If you prefer, the target can be the Zefilli Fine Arts building at DAU.)

Troubled Sleep

The contact character has two strange dreams:

You wake in the middle of the night with the feeling that someone is at the door. You feel vaguely drugged and confused. When you try to get out of bed, you find that you are strapped down, completely unable to move or turn your head. A blinding white light snaps on. Unseen hands hold your eyes open and force you to look at the light. “Tell us the secret,” says

a friendly male voice — American accent, New England.

At this point, give the dreamer a chance to answer the question. However, regardless of his answer —

*You receive a vicious electric shock.
“Tell us the secret,” the voice repeats.
A second shock jolts you awake.*

This dream is Summer’s first attempt to reach the contact character. Her mental state prevents her from using her powers effectively, and she is simply projecting some of her recent experiences to the dreamer. The Vornites have been torturing her, not because they think that she knows any secret, but because they *want* her to seek help. The Vornite oppenheimer Carter is working on Morphia-12, a drug which allows a normal human to “hitchhike” with a shaper, and he needs Summer to visit dreams so he can test the drug.

After the character returns to sleep, he has a second dream. A friend is in trouble. It’s an old friend of the dreamer, preferably female, someone he cares about but hasn’t seen in awhile. If no one fits the bill, use one of the other PCs: Tell her what to say before running the dream. You want the dreamer to be slightly nervous—is this another dream, or is this for real?

You wake up a second time. This time, someone is at the door. It’s (the old friend), and she’s banging on the door and shouting. “You’ve got to help me! They’re trying to kill me! I don’t know what they want!”

If the contact character asks for additional information, the friend cannot supply any, and becomes increasingly hysterical. “I don’t know who they are! I don’t know what they want! You’ve got to help me, please!” She continues in this vein until the dreamer actually moves to open the door. At this point, she shouts “No! They’re trying to follow me! I’ve got to get out of here!”

When you open the door, no one is outside. You catch a quick glimpse of a red dog — down the stairwell, disappearing down the hall — and hear the faint sound of applause. Then a passing Peace siren rouses you from your dream.

In this dream Summer managed to communicate with the contact character, but she wasn’t col-

lected enough to appear in her own form. Instead she grabbed an appropriate image out of the dreamer’s subconscious. She detected Carter’s attempt to follow her and fled before he could make the connection. The dog was the shaper Cerise. She was in the area and smelled Summer; now her interest has been raised.

At least one other PC should have a random, inconsequential dream. When the contact character mentions his dreams, you want other people to be able to say “Yeah, I’ve had some strange dreams, too. Lay off the anchovies, pal.”

Day Two

The following morning, the PCs will hear about the raid on the museum. The Cut-Ups are curious. Dionysus is disgusted. DETh is divided as to whether it was a bold blow against the establishment or a senseless waste of art. Unfortunately, there are no real clues. Soup disabled all security systems, displaying a reasonable level of skill. Guards were knocked out with tasers. The vandals got in quickly, did their work and left before the Peace Force had time to respond to the disabled alarms: clearly, they knew the museum and had chosen their targets before the actual assault.

Attempts to track down Summer are unsuccessful. D’Aubainne Asylum has no Dr. Grace on staff. While patient records are confidential, clever digging or a reasonable bribe will reveal that no patient named “Summer” is listed on Asylum files. If the PCs canvass the low-lives, they can find a few who know the girl. No one knows her history; she appeared about a year ago. The old-timers generally feel sorry for her, “poor crazy thing.” Diligent searching and the proper inducement will eventually turns up someone who mentions that “Summer seemed to know things. Things from your sleep.” No other useful information can be found.

Night Two

Just like the previous night, Soup makes a move and the contact character has a bad dream. Only this time, both dream and crime leave clues behind.

Soup at the Goodmans'

This time, Soup hits a bigger target: the private collection of Lydia Goodman. In the late evening, while Ms. Goodman is attending a Sommerite gathering, Soup stages a false Peace raid on the Goodman estate. Using floodlights, bullhorns, and recorded sounds of machine-gun fire, sirens and helicopters, a handful of Soup members draw the staff out of the estate, while the remaining artists slip in and commit assorted acts of vandalism.

Summer breaks through

The contact player has another dream. This time, Summer manages to make a better connection, although her confused mental state remains as a barrier. She projects a clear image of the room in which she is being held prisoner, and identifies a few of her captors:

You are in a dark room with cold concrete floor. A metal plug is sunk into the floor, and you are shackled to this plug with heavy chains. Occasionally a ceiling light flickers on, like a strobe, allowing you to catch a glimpse of your surroundings.

The room has two stretchers, each equipped with leather restraints. Scientific gear — monitors, test tubes — has been set on a small table next to one of the stretchers. There are two posters on the walls: a Karla Sommers concert poster — defaced so Karla has horns and a beard — and a poster for “No Exit” — presumably the play, although it could be a band. There is a can of hair spray on the floor. The dreamer notices these details over time, picking up additional details with each flash. The first thing he notices is a young woman, covered with burns and bruises, also chained to the floor. It’s Summer. She speaks with a weak voice. “They’re keeping me here. They’re hurting me.” While she is speaking, the light flickers off. When it flashes on again, the girl has become a slim Englishman — Simon Grace. Despite the change in her appearance, she still speaks with Summer’s voice.

This time, the contact character has time to ask a few questions. As she talks, Summer continues to change shape, showing those who have been torturing her. She will change to the following bodies: Simon Grace, Randy Carter, Inongé Kitleli, and two members of Soup — a Al Amarjan woman and an Indian man with long, dark hair. These faces

are the most useful information Summer has to offer; she doesn’t have anything especially useful to say. Answers to a few sample questions:

- *Who is doing this?* “I don’t know! I don’t know!” (Flashes show Kitleli or Carter)
- *What are they doing?* A flash of bright light electric shock drugged spinning back into the darkness. “I don’t know! They’re dancing through the garbage and looking for the key.”
- *Where are you?* “I’m in you, but I can’t stay. My hair is on fire, and they’re listening for the sound.”

After the PC has had time to talk, the door to the room flies open. A dark figure is silhouetted by a blinding light. A friendly male voice says “So, where are we now?” The dreamer recognizes the voice from the first dream on Night One. Summer leaps to her feet, shattering her chains, shouting “NO!!! GETOUTDON’TFOLLOW ME!!!” There is a blinding flash of light and the contact character wakes up with a splitting headache. In the final flash of light, he seems to recall seeing a red dog curled up under one of the stretchers.

Day Three

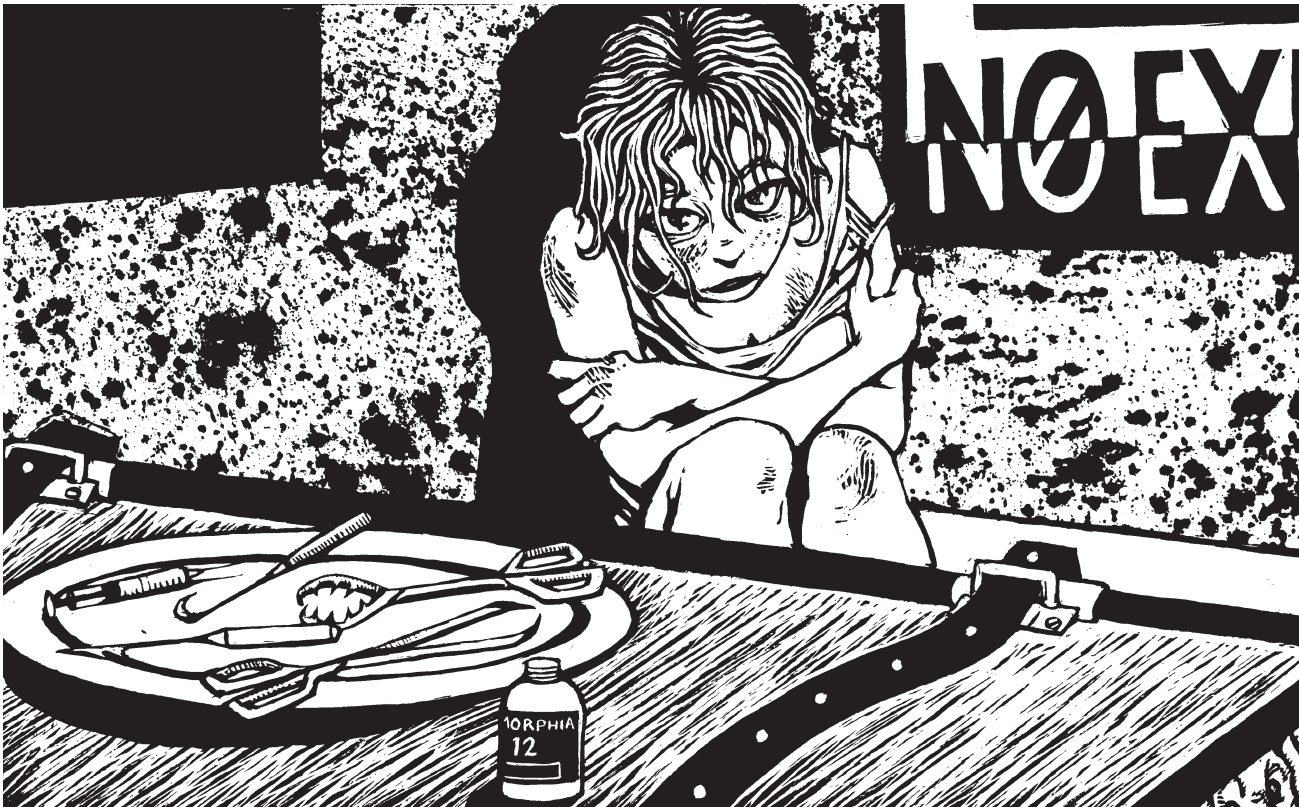
The news about the Goodman raid hits the streets. The Sommerites are outraged by this act of senseless vandalism against their patron. PCs could be approached by Goodman or Joy Laughter and asked to investigate Soup. The Cut-Ups are still curious, but most of the other conspiracies are ignoring the whole mess. An anonymous editorial in the DAU campus newspaper actually praises Soup’s actions, calling them “Performance artists on a grand scale, striking a blow against the stagnant traditions of the past.” This article, was, of course, written by a Soup brother.

At this point, the PCs could take a number of paths. They might go to the Goodman estate in search of clues. Or they could follow up on any of the various elements of Summer’s last message. Or they could sit on their hands, in which case you can cut straight to Night Three.

Talking to Lydia

Nigel Goodman is away on business, and knows nothing of the vandalism. Ms. Goodman is highly distressed. While the vandals only had time to damage a small part of her collection, the cost is

Illustration by Grey Thornberry



incalculable. If the PCs actually get to see the damaged pieces, feel free to drop in a few unusual additions: the Scream (with a thought balloon reading “I’d rather be in Oslo”), the Mona Lisa with a mustache, etc. Lydia will be evasive about how she acquired these pieces, although she will admit that they are genuine. In addition to the cosmetic damage, the paintings have been gouged, sprayed with acid or otherwise permanently marred.

Soup left few tracks, but it’s clear that there were about eight people involved, four on the inside and four out. They used a small van to get their sound equipment close to the house; the tracks of the equipment indicate professional amplifiers and lights, so people may assume that Soup is a band or a theatrical troupe. A sharp-eyed player character might find the lid to a can of spray paint— A brand unavailable in retail stores, but used by the D’Aubainne University drama department.

The Pieces of Summer’s dream

There are multiple elements which the players can use in Summer’s dream:

- **The Posters:** The Karla Sommers poster is from her *Wolves of Passion* world tour, and has no particular relevance. The “No Exit” poster is advertising the play. The last staging of “No Exit” was a one-man interpretation which ran for a week at Chambers Memorial Theater, on the DAU campus. The performance received wretched reviews. The student actor-director was Vijay Padavil, now a member of Soup — he is the Indian man seen briefly in the dream. If the PCs find out about the performance, they will learn that Chambers Theater has been closed for renovations for the last few months, but that it has been used recently, by a new Drama instructor — Stephen Grace, who’s been at the University for about a month. Clever digging or bribery can turn up a list of Grace’s recent students.
- **The Faces:** Carter, Grace and Kitleli are all ciphers. The two Soup members are another matter. As mentioned above, the Indian man is Vijay Padavil, a drama student. Vijay is also a member of the Delta Epsilon Theta fraternity, so PCs with any connections at DETH may have seen him around. The Martian woman is

Aniella Kjedsck, a painter and computer artist. PCs may have seen her around DAU, painting (bad) murals on the street, drinking at Sad Mary's, or somewhere else around town. A trip to the DETH house and inquiries around campus reveal that Vijay and Aniella haven't been seen recently, and that they've been very standoffish ever since they started taking those special classes with that Grace guy. You know, meeting in the Chambers theater?

- **Cerise:** The players may try to track down the red dog from the dreams. Cerise is busy tracking Soup, and she won't be easily found.

If the players get class lists and track down Grace's students, most are available — except for ten “special” students, who attended Grace's private classes in Chambers Theater. All agree that Grace seemed to be a genius, although he didn't seem well versed in the history of the theater.

Exploring Chambers Theater

Chambers Theater is old, spooky, and ultimately empty. You may want to play out the exploration, building the tension until the players realize that the birds have flown. After breaking into Summer's dream, Kitleli realized that the security of the location had been compromised, and Soup abandoned the theater. The PCs find some of the art supplies used in the vandalism raids, and they find the room seen in the dream. However, the stretchers and gear have been removed. Checking in the garbage, PCs can discover a small amount of medical supplies and used needles. In addition to sedatives and thorazine, there are traces of a complex chemical that defies simple analysis: an early form of Morphia-12.

By this point, the players should know who their opponents are, they just don't know where to find them. That information comes when the contact character goes to sleep...

Night Three — Last Dreams

A Visit From the Circle

As soon as the contact character falls asleep — provided it's at least early evening — he has a dream:

You are standing in an office, which seems strangely familiar — is it the Principal's office from high school? The Dean's office from College? The Peace Commissioner's office, from that time you were run in for arson? It's reminiscent of any number of offices you've been in, and it has that dry, stagnant air of authority. Odds and ends clutter the shelves — half-remembered toys from your childhood, bowling trophies, tuna casseroles. The lighting is dim, and there is a tall figure standing behind the ornate wooden desk. It's a woman with long, red hair, her face hidden by shadows. She is dressed in an expensive suit with a crimson noose, and she seems strangely familiar.

“I've been waiting for you,” she says. When she speaks, you finally catch the resemblance — the woman is clearly related to Summer, although she's much older. “We seem to have a mutual acquaintance, a young girl.” She takes a photograph out of her suit jacket and lays it on the desk; it's a picture of Summer, as she appeared in last night's dream. She continues. “I'm afraid that she's run into some trouble. As you may have noticed, she possesses unusual telepathic abilities. Those who have abducted her seek to steal her abilities and use them in unseemly ways.”

At this point, the dreamer probably has a million questions — who are you, what's your interest, where's the girl? The woman will answer only the questions she wishes to answer. If you want to keep things simple, the dreamer can find that he is frozen in place and unable to speak. In any case, use the following speech as a guideline. The woman will fill in any blanks in the player's knowledge: that Summer (always referred to as “the girl”) has been kidnapped by a group of rogue students calling themselves Soup, that Soup works for Grace and two others. She doesn't have details on these two (Kitleli and Carter).

“You can call me Winter, and I suggest that you think of me as a friend. The girl and I are closely linked; I am

using her power to speak to you. I am doing what I can to help a young lady in peril, and I hope that you will do the same. I cannot aid you in any concrete fashion, but I can direct you to her current location.” She pulls out another picture, of a run-down old building — a soup kitchen. “This building is in the area you know as Great Men. I don’t know the precise address, but I suspect you can find it. There are fourteen people in the building; the girl is being kept in the basement.” She pauses for a moment, her eyes still hidden in shadow. “One more thing. The girl has linked to your mind. If her captors are successful, it will be your mind they will enter. From what I know of them, I would advise you to put a stop to their research as quickly as possible.” She smiles slightly. “Take care.”

A sudden chill jolts you awake.

Winter is actually a façade, a disguised shaper from the Circle. She is probably Salome, although she could be Cerise. Throughout the dream, she tries to give the impression that she is a part of Summer. Her goal is for the dreamer to believe that the dream-touching ability is limited to Cerise and Summer.

Going after Soup

The players may decide to call in the Peace or otherwise delegate the dirty work. Unless they handle things personally, the Movers will escape with Summer, having been warned by contacts in other agencies. Soup will be apprehended and the Peace will be happy, but the contact character will have some sleepless nights ahead. The PCs may be able to gather a posse of disgruntled low-lives out to help Summer, if they think of it. Of course, that will throw any attempt at stealth out the window.

Soup is holed up in the Shining Redemption Soup Kitchen, an abandoned building in Great Men. The building has two stories and a basement; there are no windows in the basement, but there are two sets of stairs leading down from the first floor. Seven of the Soup artists are camped out on the first floor, plotting with Grace. Two are standing guard at the door to the boiler room,

where Summer is being held. In the boiler room, Inongé Kitleli and Randy Carter are experimenting on a sedated Summer and another Soup artist, who is testing the latest version of Morphia-12.

The PCs may try to fight their way in, especially if they have a mob of low-lives at their back. All of the artists have Stinger Juniors; a few have Stinger Mark V’s, tasers or knives. Five of the students have 3 dice of fighting skill, and the others may have talents with some combat application, like dancing. During the melee, Inongé and Carter will try to escape with Summer. Depending on the PCs’ preparations, they may succeed...only to have Summer assassinated outside the building. (See *Summer’s End*, below).

The better approach is stealth. Grace and the seven members of Soup are sitting in the central dining room, discussing their plans for the future. Some are concerned that they went too far with the Goodman raid. Grace tells them not to worry, they didn’t *steal* anything, the Peace aren’t interested. Not at all true, but he sure *sounds* convincing. Assuming that the players pause to eavesdrop, they can hear all sorts of wild schemes being proposed: “Let’s collapse the Brink into the ocean!” “Not enough explosives.” “Let’s burn down DETH!” “Hey, all my stuff is there, man!” Eventually, Grace reminds the group that the work with the girl is showing great progress. The discussion immediately turns to what Soup can do once it can beam its work directly into people’s minds. Needless to say, the artists are distracted; roll against a 2 dice difficulty check to sneak down the front hallway without being heard, giving the PCs bonus dice for clever preparation.

Downstairs, two Soup members guard the boiler room door. One — the burly Martian seen in Day One — is holding a Stinger Mark V. The other is Aniella Kjeds, who has a taser but no combat skill whatsoever (two dice plus penalty die). It’s dark, and two students are talking about the latest John Doe exhibition, so any attempt at stealth should work to the PCs’ advantage; they just have to deal with these guards quickly, before they can raise an alarm and call for the others.

The Boiler Room

The boiler room is a scene from the previous night’s dream. Two people are strapped down in stretchers, Summer and Vijay Padavil. The two are drugged and unconscious, connected to various

tubes and electrodes. Six tubes containing an amber liquid are carefully set aside on a small table, along with a case of empty syringes. A slight man in a lab coat — Randy Carter — is keeping track of a number of bleeping monitors. In the corner, a tall African woman — Inongé Kitleli — is slumped in a chair, apparently unconscious. Actually, she is psychically linked to Summer, monitoring her mental activities.

As soon as the PCs enter the room: Carter sees them and squeezes a button in his left palm. This is connected to a buzzer which wakes Inongé. Inongé opens her eyes and surveys the situation. In any case, she shouts a nonsense word which causes Carter to fall into a catatonic state, thanks to Vornite programming. If she thinks she can talk the PCs down, she pulls her CPC badge and shouts “What in the hell do you think you’re doing?” She tries to explain the whole operation as a CPC sting designed to track Grace to his “secret connections”. If the PCs let her, she’ll call in CPC reinforcements — more Vornites — to take Soup and Grace into custody. Soup will get turned over to the Peace, and Grace will disappear.

In all likelihood, the PCs won’t look that gullible. Inongé will pull her Rorschach disk and head for the door, keep the disk in clear line of sight between her and her opponents. If she makes it out of the room, she’ll shout for help, and then she and Grace will hit the street and call for back-up.

Summer’s End

Perhaps the PCs grab the drugged Summer and make a break for the streets. Perhaps Inongé gets her CPC backup and Summer is being carried to a CPC van. Perhaps Inongé and Carter have carried Summer outside during a crazed *mêlée*. In any case, once Summer is on the streets, a single shot rings out and a bullet takes her right through the brain. She dies instantly.

It’s possible that the PCs will use fringe powers to escape, or otherwise get away with Summer in some manner that would prevent her from being shot. In this case, she is assassinated the moment she is out of range of the PCs’ protection, though preferably still in their sight. The sooner this is done, the better. You want it to be very clear that Soup is not involved in her death.

The shot comes from a nearby building. If the PCs move to investigate, they find the corpse of an

old man, still holding a .45, an apparent suicide. The man was an ex-Peace Officer, who dropped into the gutter after a dishonorable discharge years ago. Salome pulled his strings, planting seeds in his dreams that lead him to “shoot the devil, to gain redemption.” Salome wanted to be sure that Summer could never be used against the Circle again. Of course, the PCs have no idea of the man’s motivations. Play on their paranoia. Perhaps they hear other people in building, others who might have been working with the man. Or is it just the wind?

Aftermath

Eventually, the Peace or the CPC show up to take control of the situation. If the PCs are still around, they will be questioned; the authorities may be grateful, suspicious or extremely unpleasant, depending on the circumstances. Soup will be taken into custody and tried. If questioned, the members of Soup know little about Kitleli or Carter; swept away by Grace’s charisma, they never thought to question the background of his friends or how he knew about dreamshaping. If Grace or Kitleli are take alive, they will fall into mysterious (self-induced) comas; they soon disappear from the hospital. After a little cosmetic surgery, they’ll be ready for another assignment. And Inongé had a good look at the PCs’ faces. The Vornites will want to find out exactly who the player characters are, and how they stumbled onto their plan.

Most of Carter’s research and equipment is useless, unless any of the PCs are fringe chemists. However, the six tubes of amber liquid contain test samples of Morphia-12. This drug allows a normal human do follow a shaper into dreams. The PCs might have trouble finding a shaper, except...

Summer isn’t really dead.

At the moment of her physical death, she successfully made the transition to Architect, and remains as a free spirit in the collective unconscious. In addition, freed from her schizophrenic brain and the confusion of living in two worlds, she will slowly become sane. It should be some time before she actually approaches the contact character again; she’s got a lot of exploring to do. But eventually, she will return. She may have useful information for the character — at the least, she can reveal that Winter was not part of her. And if he still has any Morphia-12, she can pull him along

into the dreams of others, along with any of the other PCs who take the drug. Like any Architect, Summer will be an unreliable ally, but she should give you some interesting options.

Finally, Salome and Cerise have links to the player characters. They’ll want to keep an eye on the PCs’ activities. Perhaps the PCs can be of additional use against the Vornites. They may try to use Winter again, or they may use other methods to manipulate the PCs.

The gateway to dreams is open. What happens now is in your hands. Pleasant dreams.

Morphia Soup GMCs

Summer

Friendly Lost One

Summer is a young schizophrenic whose powerful shaping abilities have shattered her tenuous grip on reality. She wanders about in her own little world, which is considerably more pleasant than her actual reality. Somehow she manages to survive, despite her utter lack of concern with life’s little necessities. She gets a helping hand from a few of the more sympathetic low-lives and from Cerise (pp. 74-75), who occasionally checks in on the shaper girl. No one knows her true history — except, perhaps, for Cerise and Salome. Summer herself cannot be convinced to say anything coherent about her past.

It’s hard to tell much of Summer’s actual appearance beneath the dirt and grime. She’s a Caucasian girl in her mid-teens, 140 cm, 40 kg. She has filthy red hair and shocking blue eyes, and speaks with a European accent...Irish or Welsh, perhaps. Despite her generally wretched condition, she radiates a feeling of joy and familiarity, as if anyone she talks to is her best friend. Her attention span is minimal and she has difficulty following any long conversations.

Languages: English.

Dreaming Pool: 3 shots

Traits

*Dreamshaping**, 4 dice — She has impressive mental abilities, but her schizophrenia prevents her from using them effectively. (Talks about your recent dreams after touching you)

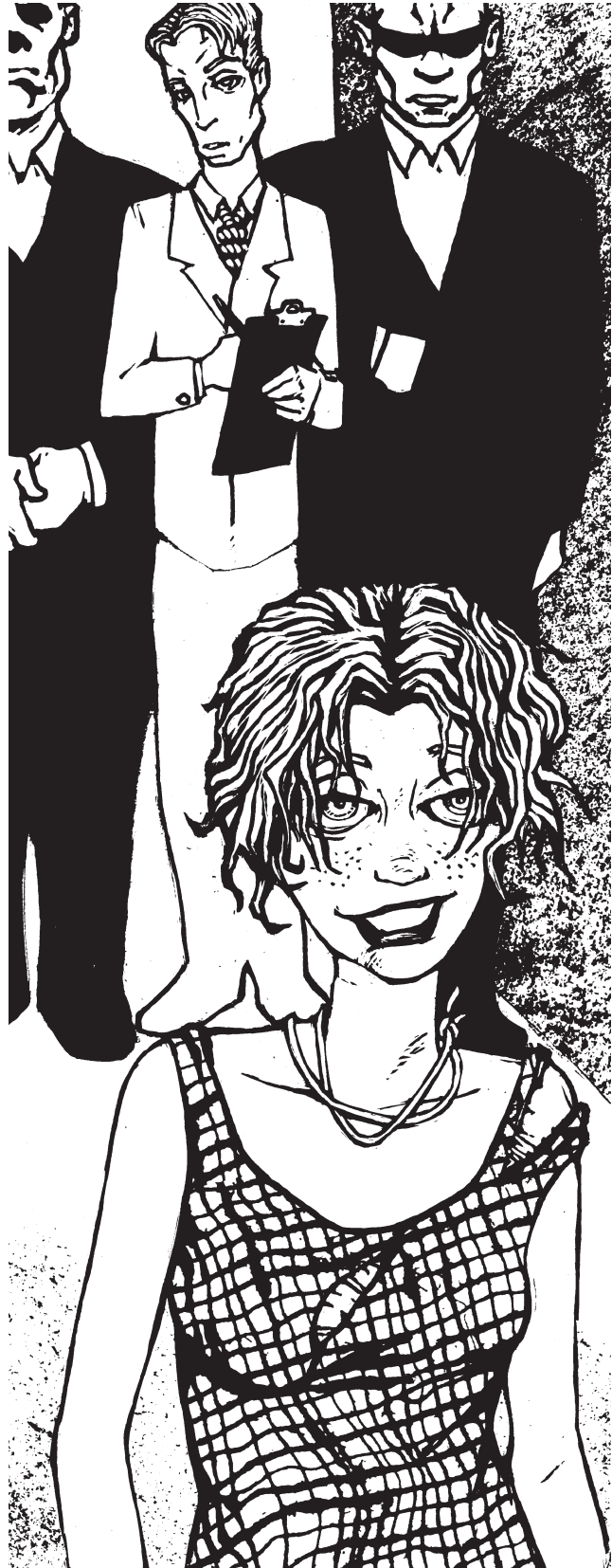


Illustration by Grey Thornberry

Survival, 3 dice — Despite her lack of concern with her own well-being, Summer somehow manages to find food and shelter. Other low-lives are moved to help her, since she seems so helpless. (Alive and in relatively good health despite her lack of concern about her condition)

Unobtrusive, 3 dice — People tend to ignore her. Or assume that she's harmless. This allows her to live in areas where low-lives might not be welcome, and to get close enough to touch one of the player characters. (Wanders around Sunken and Science without getting into trouble)

Reality-Impaired — Summer lives in her own world, and has difficulty communicating with others. This affects her shaping abilities, her conversational skills, and her general lack of concern with her own well-being. (Talks in sentence fragments, unconcerned when strange men drag her off)

Simon Grace

Vornite Troubleshooter

Grace is a high-ranking Vornite cloak who has been assigned to the shaper investigation. Following standard Vornite procedure, Grace creates Soup to serve as a cover for the operation. As far as the other members of Soup know, "Stephen" Grace is a new drama coach at DAU.

Grace is extremely slick; he changes roles like a chameleon. This natural talent is enhanced by a psychic ability he has developed under the guidance of Vornite Preceptors. Grace can drop subliminal cues, causing others to make false inferences about him. Using this ability, he projects the identity he wants the target to see, and if he is successful, the target provides the links to justify that identity. If he wanted a PC to think he was a Peace Officer, you might tell the player "his bearing and tone indicates some sort of military background... you'd guess he was in the Peace Force." This power has been one of the keys to his success steering Soup; the members all believe that Grace is an obscure artistic genius.

If he is captured, Grace can induce a coma by subvocalizing a complex series of syllables. He will remain in a comatose state until a second code phrase is spoken in his presence.

Simon's appearance can change rapidly. Most of the time, he seems to be a slim Englishman in his mid-thirties, 173 cm, 60 kg. He is clean-shaven, and has light brown hair and hazel eyes.

He is armed with a fighting knife and a micro-taser shaped like a fountain pen, which he picked up from a Gladstein associate. The taser holds a single charge, and recharges off house current.

Languages: English, German, French, Russian.

Attack: 4 dice (3 dice in a fair fight), X2 damage with knife, X4 stun damage with mini-taser

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 15 (reasonably athletic)

Psychic Pool: 4 shots

Traits

Covert Ops, 4 dice — He taught Soup all they know about covert operations, but he didn't teach them everything *he* knows. (Shifty eyes)

Moving, 4 dice — Simon is a master mover. (Seems extremely sincere and reasonable)

Dirty Fighting, 4 dice — Simon specializes in the knife in the back. His fighting ability stems from a highly developed knowledge of anatomy and skill with feints and deception. Since he doesn't have brawn to back up his talent, this trait does not enhance his hit points. He loses a die in any sort of fair fight. (Quick step, strikes nerve clusters in combat)

*Hunch-dropping**, 2 dice — By spending a shot from his psychic pool, Grace can cause his target to make false inferences about his identity. (Sign varies)

Inongé Kitleli

Vornite Observer

Inongé is a Vornite field researcher. Her paranormal powers compliment her knowledge of psychic phenomena, making her the ideal agent to investigate the shapers. She has worked with Simon Grace on numerous occasions. The two of them are quite comfortable together, and have worked out a series of nonverbal signals to communicate important messages. When she's not on assignment, Inongé works at the CPC think tank.

Inongé has the unique ability to "ride" another mind, experiencing the world through another person's senses. She can even read auras when using another person's eyes. It is her talents that have enabled the Vornites to locate the Lost Ones scattered among the zeroes and low-lives of Al Amarja. Like Grace, she can drop into a coma by subvocalizing a specific phrase.

African woman, age 30, 183 cm, 65 kg. Short black hair, brown eyes. She has a soothing voice, and she can seem friendly and caring or cold and threatening depending on her needs of the moment. She has three items of note:

- A CPC badge she keeps hidden away, identifying her as “Deka Afande.” Afande is an actual CPC investigator, also a Vornite mole. Background checks will register the ID as valid, but the Vornites can produce the real Deka if they need to deny any involvement with the PCs.
- A small crystal sphere which allows Inongé to channel her psychic powers, giving her a bonus die in their use. If she contacts a brain looper, this crystal will shatter and break the link between her and the looper. With time to attune to it, any psychic could use this device.
- A palm-sized plastic disk with a ring on the back. The face of the disk shows a strange pattern of lines and black blobs, a Rorschach blot gone bad. This image has a powerful effect on the subconscious mind. If anyone gets a look at the disk, roll 4 dice against their willpower (default 2 dice); failure causes an instinctive revulsion and a desire to stay away from the diskbearer. This effect lasts for 5 rounds. The disk only works *once* per person; once someone has gotten over the initial effect, it won't bother them to see it again. Inongé and Grace have seen the disk before.

Languages: Sesotho, English, French.

Psychic Pool: 6 shots

Traits

Psychic Theory, 4 dice — Inongé is an expert on psychic phenomena and psychic “technology.” She is extremely sensitive to the use of psychic powers in her presence; combined with her *Aura Sight*, she can usually determine the exact nature of paranormal effects used around or against her. In addition, she can use this skill to resist any sort of psychic attack. (Carries a deck of Rhine cards)

Moving, 4 dice — Inongé has the typical Vornite skill with manipulation. (Seems extremely sincere and reasonable)

*Psilink**, 2 dice — By touching a person and spending a psychic shot, Inongé can form a one-way link to that person's mind. She cannot read thoughts, but she can use all of the senses of the victim. While “riding” in another mind, Inongé falls into a comatose state. With a familiar mind,

like Grace, she can flip-flop between her body and the linked body at will. With strangers she loses the link when she returns to her body. She experiences any damage taken by her victim as shock damage; the link is broken if she is rendered unconscious or if she takes any physical damage herself.

(Sometimes faints after shaking hands)

*Aura Sight**, 2 dice — See OTE, p. 176, or OTE 2nd Ed., p. 184. (Piercing gaze)

Squeamish — Inongé is extremely sensitive to pain. She will often break a psychic link if she feels her subject is about to be seriously injured. If she is threatened with torture, she will immediately drop into a coma. (Winces when she sees an injury)

Dr. Randy Carter

Gladstein Dupe

Originally recruited by the Gladsteins, Randy was quickly diverted by Vornite infiltrators who recognized the value of his work. He has been subjected to intense conditioning to keep him from questioning his masters. After four years with the Vornite psi-wing, he still believes he's working for a branch of the Gladstein cell.

Like Grace and Kitleli, Randy has been programmed to fall into a coma if he hears a particular combination of syllables. Unlike the other agents, he doesn't know about it. Kitleli knows the trigger word and will use it if the situation seems hopeless.

Randy is a slight American man, age 44, 160 cm, 79 kg. He has short brown hair and a trim mustache, and gray eyes. He tends towards a forced joviality, much like that of a pediatric dentist (“Now, now, this won't hurt a bit.”). When faced with one of his secret masters, this cheerful façade vanishes and he shakes like a frightened rabbit. He is carrying a Gladstein science kit containing a complex mess of miniaturized chemistry and medical gear, about the size of a large suitcase.

Languages: English.

Traits

*Cerebral Chemistry**, 3 dice — Has an amazing grasp of the brain and what makes it tick. He's made great strides towards tracing the source of psychic powers and stimulating latent abilities through chemical means. (Examines the shape of strangers' heads with a thoughtful eye)

*Psychic Technology**, 2 dice — Very familiar with Brain Loopers, White Thought Generators,

and other forms of psychic technology. He is working on a screen against shaper intrusion, but has had little success. (Carries odd tools)

First Aid, 3 dice — Has a firm grasp of basic medicine. (Comfortable with needles)

Obeys Authority — Randy went through mental conditioning to keep him from questioning his “Gladstein” masters. He will instinctively obey the orders of anyone who acts in a firm, authoritative manner. (Snaps to attention when anyone speaks loudly)

Soup Artists

Angry young artists

The ten members of Soup are disgruntled art students with one major stumbling block: a depressing lack of talent. Simon Grace convinced them that the problem was not a lack of talent, it was the lack of a proper medium. They were destined to pioneer a new form or art: performance terrorism. They would destroy art, for art’s sake. After a few weeks of training and many readings of *The Anarchist’s Cookbook*, Soup was born.

In all likelihood, Soup will vanish at the end of this adventure. But if you like the idea, they can appear again. Perhaps some of the original members escape capture, or perhaps others are inspired to follow in their footsteps.

It’s up to you to come up with the details of the Soup characters, if it becomes necessary. Perhaps some are students the PCs already know through previous adventures. This could raise some interesting concerns at the end of the adventure, if the players want to help their friends avoid prosecution.

Traits

Covert Ops, 3 dice — Thanks to a quick course from Grace, all of the members of Soup are familiar with basic stealth, disarming security systems, using explosives, disguise, and other aspects of covert operations. (Soup members dress in black and read tattered copies of *The Anarchist’s Cookbook*)

Soup Specialty, 3 dice/1 die — Each student has a special focus. Five of the students have some sort of fighting skill. Other possible skills include computer intrusion (Aniella Kjeds), counterfeiting, manufacturing explosives or any other handy trait. (Sign varies)

Artistic Specialty, 3 dice — Writing, painting, modern dance, acting, whatever...just not especially well. (Members are constantly complaining about “The common man’s lack of vision”)

Intersections

“Deep Troubles” (in *The Myth of Self*): The idea of adventuring in the dreams of a Deep raises many possibilities. If you play with the “death in dreams equals death in reality” rule, Deeps may be particularly resilient; “death” would only kill one personality. When one personality is at the wheel, can others be dreaming? A Deep GMC could be a shaper: one of her personalities might be part of the Circle, another a sociopathic Lost One, and the rest completely unaware of her dreamshaping powers.

“The Dopplegänger Plague” (in *The Myth of Self*): Some of the members of Soup might have connections to Realism Banal or Tidjane Soubiega. Iraj Mehar would probably know Derrick Julien, and possibly Umayma Ahal (in “Deep Troubles”) as well.

“The Hive” (in *The Myth of Self*): Does the Hivemind dream?

House Call: Back doors to the house might exist in people’s dreams. Perhaps the House itself is a dream — the dream of Yuolandrlja — and shapers can cause minor changes in the fabric of the House using their powers.

Welcome to Sylvan Pines: A dangerous Lost One is committed to Sylvan Pines, and begins to prey on the staff and other patients. Perhaps the Lost One is a former patient who died while at Sylvan Pines, who returns as an Architect seeking vengeance.

Wildest Dreams: Links to this resource have been mentioned in the Circle and Lost One listings. It’s possible that Sandmen and shapers have some common roots or genetic similarities; Sandmen often have paranormal abilities dealing with dreams.

THE FÜRCHTEGOTT FILE

by Greg Stolze

Background

“As always, Destiny took its cut. When all seemed bleak and hopeless, when our Great Endeavor seemed doomed to failure, G. discovered a prodigy — a man in whom the blood’s fire burned bright and pure. This young doctor, Fürchtegott Nusbaum, must have been a throwback to the primal genius of the unsullied Aryan race, for he quickly solved the instability problem that had been plaguing us for so long. Thanks to his inestimable assistance, the clone of the Führer should be mature by 1986!”

— *Translated from the journals of
Gunter Schmidt, 1963.*

The journals of Gunter Schmidt, a wealthy German expatriate living in Brazil, seem to indicate that Fürchtegott Nusbaum, at the young age of 28, was working on cloning one of the most despised villains of the 20th century — Adolph Hitler.

Schmidt’s compound was destroyed by a team of MOSSAD agents guided in by Earthlings. One Earthling agent took Schmidt’s diary without appreciating the importance of its contents. She kept it as a trophy and had it for many years before she even heard of Al Amarja. It took her a long time to remember why the name “Nusbaum” was so familiar, but when she did, she immediately read the diary again and sent her superiors a message that she had crucial information about Monique D’Aubainne’s personal physician.

While she was travelling to Al Amarja, she was murdered by a grifter named Jethro Steele. Steele, in turn, died by the hand of Winston Twickerwell in 1992. Twickerwell currently has the genuine diary — the existence of which has leaked out of the Earthling network into the cloak community at large.

All anyone knows (besides Twickerwell) is that there’s some bad, bad dirt on Nusbaum out there. It’s considered the blackmailer’s El Dorado — the legendary Fürchtegott File.

Mr. LeThuy, upon learning that the Fürchtegott File exists, created a decent forgery

that indicates Nusbaum stood in for the coroner at JFK’s autopsy in order to steal his brain and destroy evidence pointing to the *real* killers. He has leaked out the information that Jane Do Kwan has the file.

His intention is to use the file as cheese to draw out conspiracy rats — anyone who tries to steal, buy or otherwise obtain the fictional file will be pegged as a cloak. The phony file is to serve as a McGuffin to get the conspiracies chasing each other’s tails. If they kill each other over it? Well, that’s fine. If the false info is made public? That’s OK too.

What Mr. LeThuy doesn’t know is that the owner of the *real* file is on the island — and is determined that if someone blackmails Nusbaum, it’s going to be *him*.

• • •

“The Fürchtegott File” is intended as a “quickie” adventure for *Over the Edge*. Four pre-generated characters with pre-set goals can be used as player characters for a one or two session game. Note that details of personal appearance, experience and motivation are lacking from the pre-generated characters. This is to allow the players more room to flesh them out.

These four characters can also be played by the moderator, with players using their own characters to help or hinder the file finders.

The Finders

The four Finders all have an interest in getting either the phony *or* genuine Fürchtegott File. Though they may work together for part of the time, in the end their purposes are mutually exclusive.

WINSTON TWICKERWELL is a con man and charlatan, but his diary is the real thing. He’s been sitting on it, considering how to blackmail the incredibly powerful Nusbaum without getting arrested and experimented on for his trouble.

(Continued on p. 101)

CHARACTER DOSSIER:

Winston Twickerwell, a.k.a. Jethro Steele *Second Rate Grifter*

Maybe I wasn't cut out for this life. But maybe I was — I'm not sure. On one hand, I think that the "excitement" of living on this island is giving me an ulcer. Some people love being in constant danger, but me? I'd rather be in a constant hot tub, with constant fabulous babes bringing me constant fabulous umbrella drinks.

On the other hand, I did kill off that Steele guy — but maybe I just got lucky or something... Still, no one's questioned me this whole time that I've been pretending to be him. And mummifying the body — what the hell was I thinking? Still, no one's thought to look for a murder victim at the Hall of History, exhibited as the corpse of John Wilkes Booth! Dumb as the average man is, half of 'em are dumber... can't believe I've gotten away with so much...

Still, could I get away with blackmailing Nusbaum? Yeesh, I remember what he did to that Nicholson character — and that wasn't even personal. I hear that he has specially trained fish that...no, I won't even think about it. He has money! MONEY MONEY MONEY! And I can get that money — if someone else doesn't get it first. I can't believe someone else has the diary... who could have copied it? What if he doesn't pay them, and they reveal that he was cloning Hitler? Jeez, who'd believe that? Even though I guess it's true, if it gets out my diary will be worthless.

Maybe I'm not cut out for this... but if I can fleece Nusbaum I can retire forever. Yeah. Hot tubs and umbrella drinks...

You've been a card shark since you dropped out of high school, and a con man almost as long. You got into a deal with a rough guy named Jethro Steele. One night he got drunk and showed you this crazy Nazi-doctor diary, saying that this was going to pay for his retirement one day.

Later on, and again after drinking, he tried to cut you out of the action — with a large hatchet. You jumped out of a window and he followed. You landed on your feet, he landed on the edge of a garbage dumpster. His mummified body is now on display in the Hall of History in the D'Aubainne Museum of Modern Life, bringing you some weekly chump change. You've taken on Jethro Steele's identity and are living on his checks and credit cards while you debate trying to take Nusbaum or not.

You've got dirt on one of the most powerful men on the island — an apparently genuine diary linking him with South American Nazi clone doctors. Now the rumor is that someone *else* is trying to fleece him

Illustration by Tonia Walden



as well.

Someone else is going to milk your cash cow.

English man, aged 31. Bright red-gold hair (possibly dyed now) and large, beaky nose.

Languages: English, German, Al Amarjan patois, some French and Italian.

Traits

Con Man and Impostor, 4 dice — central trait.

You can fast talk, change your appearance completely in 15 minutes, and lie so well that you wouldn't believe yourself even if you *swore* you were lying. (Always carries a deck of cards.)

Parrot Atavism, 3 dice — Though you don't know it, you were a parrot in a past life. This explains three things; why a generally unathletic man can jump extremely well and fall three storeys without harm; why you can mimic people's voices to an almost uncanny degree; and why you love crackers. (Red hair and beaky nose.)

Connections, 3 dice. You know people who know people who find things, know things, and get things done. You've done a few people favors, though you have no actual Bennies of your own. (Always has tickets to sold out events.)

CHARACTER DOSSIER:

Thuki Meringo

Salvaged Low-Life

I used to be dirty. I can't believe how dirty I was... hairy, smelly, living in filth under bridges, eating out of dumpsters... Thank god for the angel. Angel, if you can hear me, thank you for saving me.

"I hear you Thuki. You're welcome. You're good."

I try to be... like when you wanted me to get those Satanists. I got them good... and I would have done it for no reward, you didn't have to get me the apartment and all, I would have done it just 'cause it was right.

"You deserve your reward Thuki. You're good. Isn't it better to be clean than dirty?"

Sure is... all that hair, the lice, the filth. I'm glad it's all gone... I'm thinking of shaving my scalp, not just my face and chest.

"It would please me Thuki, but wait a while. You still have to move undetected among all those dirty people."

You have a mission for me?

"Soon, Thuki. Very soon."

I'll do anything to get rid of all the dirty people.

"You're good Thuki."

You used to be a bum — just another piece of human refuse clogging the streets of the Edge. You got by ok because dogs liked you. Then one day, a miracle happened; a voice in your head started telling you how to get things done. You went where it told you and did what it said, and you found money, clean clothes — and soap. About the time the voice started, you began to realize how dirty everything, and almost everybody is. You remember all the creepy crawlies that slept in *your* hair — but some people wear it long when they don't *have* to. People out there inject *ink* into their *skin*, and even punch pieces of *metal* through it.

It's not natural, and your angel voice is telling you all kinds of ways you can pave the way for a coming Age of Cleanliness.

Al Amarjan man, aged 21, clean shaven, short hair, shaven chest and armpits, no eyebrows. Scrupulously clean.

Angel Pool: 3 shots per day

Traits

Canine Atavism, 3 dice — central trait. In a previous life, you were the leader of a pack of wild dogs. Dogs still respond well to you and obey you, and you own a couple of short haired pit bulls (3 dice attack, X2 damage with jaws, 17 hit points). You also have a keen sense of smell — though not as keen as a your pet bloodhound (4 dice of scent observe, 1 dice attack, 8 hit points). (Not too picky about diet)

Angel Voice, 2* dice — fringe trait. Things go well for you, because your angel arranges them. You may not always know what's going to happen, but things turn out for the best. For example, when you were running away from some Dog Faces, you turned a corner and almost ran straight into some Aries Gangsters. They got mad, and

Illustration by Tonia Walden



were about to beat the hell out of you when the Dog Faces showed up. You escaped in the ensuing brawl, mostly unharmed.

You get lucky breaks all the time — but you know that if you stop doing what your angel tells you, you won't be lucky any more. (Hears the voice)

NOTE ON PLAY: You, the player, should cooperate with the GM in use of the Angel Voice trait. You can use it to create "coincidences" that are incredibly useful — but only with good rolls and GM permission. *Stay in character:* Thuki has no idea when his "angel power" is going to kick in.

Streetwise, 3 dice — You know how to find your way around town, but more than that you know how to find things; ten years spent going through a city's trash gives you an intimate knowledge of where things happen. (Instinctively glances at garbage heaps looking for "good stuff.")

Enemies, Flaw — For some reason, ever since you shaved off your eyebrows, different people suddenly seem to hate you on sight. Once an old guy with an eyepatch and a sword cane attacked you, yelling something about "I'll kill every *one* of you nobrow scum!" Another time it was a drag queen who apparently knew Tae Kwon Do. Then a pair of identical oriental twins with dragon tattoos and white hair.

Perhaps the dirty people can tell that you're pure. (Nervous.)

CHARACTER DOSSIER:

Shirley Tank

Next Generation Loyal Defender

I wonder what the real world will be like? It can't be that much different from television.

Your father was a test tube, your mother was a petri dish.

You were brought up by Dr. Nusbaum to be “the perfect Loyal Defender” — your noble purpose being to serve and protect the loyal citizens of Al Amarja, while swiftly bringing vengeance upon those who oppose Her Exaltedness, Monique D'Aubainne.

Now Dr. Nusbaum, the man responsible for your entire *existence*, is being threatened by black-mailers. They apparently have concocted some lie about his involvement in shady dealings. Your first mission, your maiden voyage as it were, is to recover these false documents and punish their fabricators.

Dr. Nusbaum has told you he's going to drop you off in the middle of the city with no weapons and little money. If you can complete your mission under these conditions, you should be prepared for anything.

Al Amarjan woman, about 20.

Attack: 4 dice

Defense: 4 dice

Hit Points: 28 (“I’ll be back”)

Armor: 1 die from ultra-high-tech armor

Traits

Biological Simulacrum, 4 dice — central trait. You're tremendously strong, swift, and have been trained since infancy in an array of martial arts that would bewilder a “normal” human. You know every law of the island by rote, though you've been told (somewhat ambiguously) that “not all of them are enforced all the time.” You're a crack shot with just about everything, and you're resistant to most toxins, diseases and biological agents. (Features are almost eerily symmetrical.)

Pretty, 3 dice — Dr. Nusbaum took some care with your physique while designing you. You have attractive features, but aren't really *beautiful* — mostly because you're socially awkward. Furthermore, while you're graceful and sure in combat, you lack any knowledge of how to carry

Illustration by Tonia Walden



and/or present yourself. Coquetry is an alien concept. (Never wears makeup.)

Free Will, 3 dice — This is actually a “glitch.” You're supposed to just do what you're told, but instead...well...you actually have *wants*, and the ability to *do what you want*. Dr. Nusbaum has kept you under tight surveillance for the first 20 years of your life. Now you're finally free to do what you want. (Constantly looking around.)

Terminally Naive, Flaw — Almost *everything* you know about the world outside the compound where you were raised comes from books and television. You've had very little contact with “unauthorized personnel” and consequently don't really “get” a lot of what goes on around you. You've never, to your knowledge, had anyone *lie* to you. You've never had a birthday party. You've never had a broken heart (though you have had a broken thigh bone).

In play, this means you roll only 1 die to recognize lies or when someone attempts to bamboozle, mislead or manipulate you. (Bright, attentive expression)

CHARACTER DOSSIER:

Dorcas Valley

Secret Agent and Cowgirl Wannabe

Most people are puppets, and here I thought I could see the strings. No such luck.

"Freemasons control the world." It seemed silly enough to be true. Turns out that people pretending to be Freemasons rule the world — though if I could catch them in the lie, how good can they be?

Incompetent people rule the world? That would explain a lot. I wonder...would they kill me if they knew that I know that they're not who they claim to be? Perhaps.

Still, whoever they are, they've taken pretty good care of me so far... never would have gotten out of that mess with the Osprey without their help... plus they know enough about me to get me locked up without parole in... what? Two, three countries?

Good enough for me, yippie yi yee.

Raised in the town of Nowhere, U.S.A., province of Nothing Much To Do, smack dab in the middle of the state of Boredom, you were always the wild card. The joker in the deck. When you found out that girls weren't really allowed to be cowboys, you split town and never looked back.

You've since learned that girls *are* allowed to be criminals, private eyes, and secret agents. For a while you thought you were working for a secret branch of the NSA, until you discovered they were *actually* Freemasons — only *that* turned out to be a lie as well. Now you have no *idea* who you're working for.

Whoever your mystery masters are, they want you to get your hands on something called the Fürchtegott File — apparently high potency blackmail material on one of the most powerful men on the island.

Dangerous? Sure. Beats living in Nowhere, U.S.A.? Equally sure.

American woman carrying a whip.

Languages: English American-style, Spanish.

Attack: 3 dice with whip, thrown knife or lasso. Lasso restrains, thrown knife does X1 damage, whip does X1 and can disarm or entangle.

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (true grit)

Traits

Shady Character, 4 dice — Central trait. Ever since you were sixteen you've been on your own, getting in scrapes, stirring up trouble, landing in danger — *and loving it*. You've been lucky enough to pick up some useful skills; shadowing people, picking locks, and being very, very observant. (Smokes. *Unfiltered*.)

Cowgirl Wannabe, 3 dice — As a young girl, you wanted nothing more than to be a female version of all those great Western heroes — Lash LaRue, Roy Rogers, the Lone Ranger and (especially) Clint Eastwood as *The*

Illustration by Tonia Walden



Man With No Name. Your riding skills are pretty rusty (not many horses on Al Amarja) but you can still throw a mean knife, whip a cigarette out of someone's mouth (well...OK, you came close once, and his nose healed just fine) and shoot tin cans out of the air at Blackfire Entertainment. (Wears a cowboy hat and listens to country music)

Time Bombs — Your bosses sent you six little packages of greyish powder and a very plain gold ring. You were told that if you were ever in trouble, rip open one of the bags. Next, you were told, "time would stop." Wearing the ring would exempt you from the effect.

You've never used one of the bags. You don't know what "time stopping" entails. You don't know how long it would "stop" for. You're also not sure you want to trust people to "stop time" who couldn't even size a ring right. (Sometimes fiddles with oversized gold ring)

Ugly American, flaw — You think that America is the greatest country in the world (even if you came from a lousy part of it) and if English is good enough for the U.S. of A., it ought to be good enough for everyone else. You'll never criticize the U.S. to a "foreigner" and have cruel contempt for American expatriates. For some reason, this annoys some people — but they're mostly foreign anyhow, so it doesn't really matter. (Believes that anyone can understand English if it's spoken loudly and clearly)

The rumors about someone *else* having the file annoy him; this operation will be complicated enough without competition.

THUKI MERINGO is a former low life, whose position in the world has improved considerably since he started listening to the voice in his head. He's never heard of the Fürchtegott File — but his voice will insist that he do certain things at certain times. He is, in fact, almost totally dominated by the Throckmorton Device, which is trying to obtain the *real* file.

SHIRLEY TANK is a biological simulacrum developed by Nusbaum as the next generation of Loyal Defender. A man in Nusbaum's position hears blackmail rumors every day — this one seems slightly more serious, but can't be confirmed. He's decided to kill two birds with one stone; investigate the blackmail rumor, and field test his prototype supercop.

DORCAS VALLEY is working for *someone*. She's discovered that the Freemasons she *thought* she was working for are a front, but she has no idea who is *really* behind it all. *C'est la vie*.

Each character sheet has a sample interior monologue from the character, followed by their traits and stats. Central traits (which define who a person is more than what they can do, and are often quite broad) are noted.

GM Notes on Characters

- “**Jethro Steele**” has a flaw that he is unaware of; he's being haunted by the ghost of the *real* Jethro Steele.

Steele the ghost has 3 shots in a 1* die fringe pool. He can use his fringe talent to make people hate Twickerwell. For every person who hates Twickerwell, Steele gets a little bit stronger. When Twickerwell has accumulated three more enemies (either through Steele's manipulations or otherwise), Steele will gain the ability to appear to Twickerwell — waking him up, taunting him, threatening him and generally scaring the bejabbers out of him.

Meringo is immune to Steele's manipulation; the “angel voice” would drown Steele out. Shirley Tank can resist with her free will, but Valley is fair game.

- **Thuki Meringo** is almost totally dominated by the Throckmorton Device. The

Throckmorton agenda would certainly be furthered if Nusbaum could end up in their pocket. The “angel voice” is how Meringo interprets the signals he receives from the Device. It will lead him to Twickerwell, but will not prejudice him one way or the other until the course that events would naturally take is determined.

- **Shirley Tank** is being followed by two people. One is an agent of Nusbaum who has 3 dice in Unseen Pursuit and is a 3 dice fighter. The other is a graduate student named Orville Stenger who, while working on the supercop program, has become enamoured of Shirley. He only rolls 2 dice in shadowing, and is trying to work up his courage to ask her out.
- **Dorcas Valley** could be *anybody's* agent. The “time stoppage” powder might be a Kergillian substance that paralyzes earth-bound life forms, or it might be a mystic potion brewed by Hermetic Movers, or it could be a weapon captured by the Pharaohs, or created by Compton... whatever the GM feels like.

The Other Interested Parties

Naturally, a cherry prize like the Fürchtegott file is going to draw out more than just the Throckmortonites, Nusbaum, and whoever Dorcas is working for. There are at least three other factions that would like to get their hands on it, including...

The Net

The Net has assigned one of their middle managers to investigate this rumor. His name is Phat “Fat Chance” Zhao. He, in turn, thinks he's assigned the Samoa twins, Huck and Chuck — which in a manner of speaking, he has.

The Samoa “Twins”

Net Muscle X2

Chuck Samoa was working in Corsica as a Net thug when he was contacted on the phone by someone who began telling him, in an oddly familiar

voice, all sorts of personal details no one else could know. The voice told him he should come to Al Amarja.

The voice belonged to... Chuck Samoa. Only, this was *another dimension's* Chuck Samoa. Chuck the second traveled to this dimension — no one's quite sure how (possibilities include: a favor or punishment from Chickutorpl; a weird interaction with the Terminal's coral entities; or getting lost in Omnimart). The two are closer than twins; they're identical down to the fingerprints.

Since they always think alike and react alike, they're a devastating combat combo. They've moved to Al Amarja, but kept the same bosses.

American men, age 30, 176 cm, 79 kg. Large, beefy men with identical suits, shaved heads and sunglasses.

Languages: American English, Al Amarjan patois, some Italian.

Attack: 4 dice + bonus if on Slo-Mo, X2 with knife or X5 (stun only) with taser

Defense: 2 dice + bonus if “other self” is in combat *or* if on Slo-Mo, 3 dice if both.

Hit Points: 28 (large and hard to move)

Armor: 1 point (reinforced suits)

Traits

Beef Gives Strength, 4 dice — Chuck and “Huck” were raised on generous portions of hard work and dead animal flesh. They are both big, solid, and capable of breaking the bones of others even when they're not particularly trying. (Sweat a lot)

Slo-Mo Fighters — Both Samoas have been trained to use Slo-Mo in combat, and both carry it at all times. (Occasionally forget obvious words)

“Twin-ness” — Since they are essentially the same person, each Samoa brother instinctively knows what the other will do in a fight. They have trained with this to the point that they unthinkingly cover each others' backs, giving them a defensive bonus when fighting together.

The Mutants

Bitter and Herb has heard from loose-lipped patrons that there's something afoot, and it involves Dr. Nusbaum. The local mutant support group, “Assistance for the Morphologically Challenged,” has been incredibly persistent in trying to call Dr.

Nusbaum for help with their “poorly adapted” members, but have gotten secretaries, answering machines, voice mail and empty promises. Hoping that the file will give them a lever with the good doctor (probably gratitude; the mutants know they're far too weak to try to blackmail him), Bitter and Herb has asked Slickstick and Joey the Dog Boy to look into obtaining the file.

Slickstick

Mutant on the Move

Slickstick is pretty close to the physical norms for a scrawny, 24 year old man — except for his nose. It's about seven inches long, and prehensile. Slickstick usually wears a bandanna over his face except when he needs to use his special nasal ability (see below.)

Slickstick is a tough customer; he was born on Al Amarja and promptly abandoned. He found a home, of sorts, in a circus, touring Italy in the freakshow. At age 16 he escaped with the help of another mutant, and came to Al Amarja, where he intended to hunt down his parents and kill them. He still has not been able to locate them, so he works as a bicycle messenger.

Mutant, age 24, 178 cm, 64 kg. Black skin and short, kinky black hair. Usually wears a bandanna over his trunklike snout. Often dressed in bicycle shorts.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, Italian.

Attack: 4 dice or 2 dice with knife, X2 damage, or 3 dice with nasal attack

Defense: 4 dice or 2 dice

Armor: 1 die on head (bicycle helmet) and 1 die against falling (knee and elbow pads.)

Mucus Pool: 10 shots per day

Traits

Hypermetabolism, 4 dice — Slickstick digests food at an incredible rate. As a consequence, drugs go into effect quicker, but also wear off faster. He recovers from damage at twice the normal rate, and moves with blinding speed. He can also eat incessantly and never gain any weight. (Goes to the bathroom frequently)

Mutant Mucus, 3 dice* — From his prehensile snout, Slickstick can fire large, loose blobs of superglue-like snot. Each blob will cover an area about 25 cm across. Anything that touches this discharge will be stuck fast — the bond has the



equivalent of 3 dice of strength.

Slickstick can exude an oil from his skin that dissolves the gluey goo. Otherwise it sticks for an hour.

In addition to sticking people to the floor or sticking their weapons to their holsters, Slickstick also uses his glue to stick to walls and climb them. (Large, prehensile snout)

Bicycle messenger, 3 dice — Slickstick knows his way around town and can peddle awfully damn fast. (Wears a bicycle helmet all the time)

Joey the Dog Boy

Joey is a pretty pathetic sight; his crippled legs and twisted pelvis prevent him from walking upright, requiring him to crawl on all fours like a dog. His nickname comes not only from his posture, but from his face which, though not mutated, still has a long “hangdog” expression. Nonetheless, Joey is at heart an optimist, usually friendly and

cheerful, always willing to lend a sympathetic ear to the troubles of others.

Joey makes a fair living as a beggar and “street entertainer.”

Al Amarjan mutant male, age 30, 113 cm, 38 kg. Walks on all fours, usually dressed in castoff clothes.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, Italian, German.

Attack: 3 dice with grappling or thrown knife (X1 damage with each)

Traits

Street Entertainer, 3 dice — Joey can juggle, play the harmonica, and tells good jokes. He can keep five razor sharp knives in the air at once, and is very accurate with his placement of them. (Always has a tin cup or a hat with him)

Powerful Arms, 3 dice — Pulling himself along all day has built up Joey’s arms and chest considerably. His lack of mobility only allows him to fight with this strength when wrestling, but he can climb

with surprising speed. (Barrel chest)

Understands Pity, 4 dice — If you start to tell Joey a sad story, pretty soon you’ll feel better. This is because Joey understands unhappiness intimately, and knows how to relieve it in others. He also knows how to play up his own pitifulness to full effect. (People frequently talk about what a good guy Joey is)

Crippled — Joey can’t move very fast on his tragically shortened legs. He is an object of pity and derision in many places. (Nicknamed “Dog Boy” even though he’s 30 years old)

Earthlings

The Earthlings have a deep interest in the Fürchtegott file, especially since it was originally theirs. They’ve dispatched one of their agents, Nick Mallet, to retrieve it.

Nick Mallet

Escaped TV Character.

(**Author’s note:** I swear to *God* that I have never even *seen* “The Last Action Hero,” and that I invented this character at least one full year before I ever heard of the film.)

Nick Mallet is yet another dimensional anomaly; he could have arrived by any of the routes described for the duplicate Samoa.

Nick comes from a TV dimension, a strange place where the men are all tough, the women all wear revealing dresses, everybody smokes but only bad guys die from cancer.

Like Shirley Tank, Nick’s expectations of people are largely TV stereotypes — specifically those from the “film noir” genre. He himself is the tough detective. He fully expects to run into sneering villains, breathless dames, and stupid gunsels. Unlike Shirley, Nick has a way of enforcing his expectations.

American man, age 35, 178 cm, 72 kg. Always has a half-smoked cigarette, wears a trench coat and slouch hat. Frequently calls women “schweet haht.”

Attack: 3 dice + possible bonus

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (rugged)

Genre Pool: 10 shots

Traits

Private Eye, 3 dice — central trait. Nick can shadow a suspect and interrogate one, knows how to pick a lock, is a decent brawler and is fairly observant. (Carries a magnifying glass)

Enforce Genre Expectations, 2 dice* — When Nick attempts to “generize” his surroundings, everyone rolls 2 dice, unless they have a trait like “Extraordinarily Ordinary.” If Nick rolls higher, people suddenly begin acting like their TV detective show equivalents. Villains, instead of just drilling Nick in the head, will suddenly be inspired to gloatingly tell him their plans while sticking him in some elaborate death trap. Women will become ditzzy. Large and aggressive men will take turns punching him instead of “ganging up.”

If Nick has “generized” someone, he gets a bonus die when attacking them, and takes half damage from all their attacks. (Never seems to get hurt, except for a little trickle of blood from the corner of his mouth)

Genre Expectations — Nick’s flaw is that he doesn’t quite get it when people *don’t* act like they’re in a detective TV show. (Expects women to be helpless and incompetent)

The LeThuy Gambit

Jane Do Kwan LeThuy

Nihilistic Agent Provocateur

Jane Kwan was born in Idaho, the daughter of Korean immigrants. Though poor, her family worked hard and prospered enough to send Jane to college, where she studied Romance Literature. There she met a handsome, brilliant grad student named Herschel Gugenheim. After some initial difficulty, Herschel won her parents over and Jane Kwan became Jane Gugenheim. Herschel got a high paid job in Switzerland, and Jane had twins, John and Janet.

One day, driving the twins home from soccer practice, Herschel was run off the road by a drunk driver. The drunk got minor injuries; Jane’s husband and beloved children were both killed.

Jane cracked.

She couldn’t bear to stay at the scene of so many painful memories, so she began travelling. She also began taking drugs to cope. This began a

downward slide into pharmaceutical abuse that ended (as so many downward slides do) in the Edge.

When she ran out of Herschel's insurance money, Jane became homeless. She was ready to end everything when she met a friendly newsstand owner named Tramh LeThuy.

Korean-American woman, age 48, 167 cm, 70 kg. Greying black hair, portly, plainly dressed, wearing glasses and carrying a large purse.

Attack: 2 dice + penalty, X1 with fists or X4 with 15 shot Beretta 9mm pistol

Defense: 2 dice + penalty

Hit Points: 21 (doesn't give a damn about pain.)

Traits

Nothing Is True, 5 dice — central trait. Jane Do believes in nihilism, totally and completely. To her, the difference between truth and lies is academic — so it's nearly impossible to tell if she's lying or not. (Dead look in eyes)

Doesn't Give A Damn, 3 dice — Jane Do's ability to be interested in anything other than obeying Mr. LeThuy to the best of her ability is *gone*. Eating steak is the same as eating paste to her. Getting a knife in the gut is the same as being handed a rose (only a little messier). Living is the same as dying. (Doesn't worry about being executed for carrying a gun)

Living Wreck — Jane has put her body through a pharmaceutical gauntlet that would leave the healthiest specimen a little peaked. She takes a penalty die on anything that requires strength, speed or coordination. (Shaky hands)

Failing Vision — Thanks to Mr. LeThuy's DNA, Jane's vision is steadily degenerating. It's not as bad as his yet; she only takes a penalty when her glasses are off. (Squint)

Jane's cover story is that when she was younger she was the lover of a KGB agent who had the file. The U.S.S.R. was holding it in reserve against Nusbaum in case they needed to reach Monique D'Aubainne through him, but inter- and intra-agency machinations left the agent "orphaned" — stranded on the island with his controller dead. He stashed the journal with Jane and fled — eventually to his doom. Jane didn't know the importance of the journal until recently, when her old lover's controller (now in business for himself) returned and demanded it. Jane will say that she sent him on a

fool's errand to Barcelona, while she decided to sell it for her own profit, rather than give it away for his.

While telling this pack of lies, Jane will attempt to feel out the listener to see what s/he plans to do with the file. If the listener intends to blackmail Nusbaum, Jane will sell the file. If Jane thinks the listener is *from* Nusbaum, she will attempt to lure the listener into a position where she (Jane) can shoot from surprise. If Jane thinks the listener is from the media, she'll give it away for free.

Who Does What to Whom

Naturally, when you have three teams of GMC investigators, four PCs and at least one agent provocateur, things can get a little sticky. To simplify, use the two charts below.

The first chart, "Rumor Mill" can be rolled whenever someone asks a knowledgeable person about the Fürchtegott file. (For example, whenever Twickerwell gets a good "Connections" roll.) The slots with the names of the four PCs are empty *until* they ask someone about the file. At that point, they too go on the chart. Note that while Shirley Tank won't be known by name, the other three probably will.

For the GMCs, roll once on the table per team per day, and then go to the "Offstage Clashes" table.

Rumor Mill

Roll Rumor

- | | |
|---|---|
| 2 | "Yeah, I heard some snouty kind of mutant was askin' about dat. Yeah, he had that dat doggy guy wif 'im." |
| 3 | "You ever hear about the Samoa brothers? Naw, they ain't Samoan — I think they got the name 'cause they're the <i>size</i> of Samoa. Yeah. They were asking." |
| 4 | "You know who's <i>really</i> got that file? It's... <i>Doctor Zilch!</i> " (<i>Friend or Foe?</i> , p. 58)* |
| 5 | Nothing / "I think that one guy... you know, the skinhead with the dogs? Lukey or something? He was asking." |
| 6 | Nothing / "You know a whacko American |

cowgirl named Dorcas Valley? She was shooting her mouth off about the file.”

- 7 Nothing / “I don’t know who she was, but I hear a real *fine* momma was asking someone about it...” (insert description of Shirley Tank.)
- 8 Nothing / “That one guy, Jethro Steele — you know, the guy who owns the famous corpse? He was asking and I hear he was *mad*.”
- 9 “You know that creepy guy who’s always hanging around the gallows at Justice? Has a big red ‘C’ on his jacket? Alex-something something... I hear he was asking.” (Aleksandr Rominosky, a bennie of Sir Arthur Compton) *
- 10 “It was that big Indian fellow — the one from the First School of True Sensation.” (Ben Feather-on-Wind) *
- 11 “Some burger guy I think was talking about that... you might know the one, detectivey lookin’ guy? Never see ‘im light up, but he’s always got a cigarette half smoked? Anyhow, it was him, I guess.”
- 12 “You didn’t hear it from me, but some chick in Great Men called Jane Do Kwan has it.”

* (Or insert GM’s choice of lie and/or disinformation.)

Offstage Clashes

This chart determines what happens when two GM controlled groups meet each other.

Roll Result of Meeting

- 1 Nothing happens — one side can’t find the other.
- 2 One side receives disinformation (randomly determine which.)
- 3 True intelligence is gained by one side, if any is to be had. If either side has a file, it changes hands.
- 4 Both sides disinformed.
- 5 A temporary alliance is struck to seek the file.
- 6 Someone on one side gets killed, all others involved slightly injured.

Grand Finale

The game ends when one of the agents (other than Jane Do) in question gets the file and can keep it for 24 hours, free and clear. The GM should throw everything (within reason) at the PC to prevent him or her from simply foisting it off on a superior; this should only be a problem with Shirley Tank and Dorcas Valley.

- If Twickerwell gets it, he has to hide it while he continues to dither about whether to try to blackmail Nusbaum or not.
- If Shirley Tank gets it, it’ll take her 24 hours to get to Nusbaum (he’s a notoriously busy man, and won’t want her to give it to *anyone* but his own, personal self). Once he receives it, he’ll be very pleased with her, possibly even granting her a greater measure of freedom (or maybe just another satellite dish full of TV channels).
- If Thuki gets it, he’ll have to keep it safe for 24 hours until another “angel-blessed” person comes to get it.
- If Dorcas Valley gets it, she’ll get an answering machine when she tries to call her controller, and will be unable to contact him/her/it/them for 24 hours.
- If the Samoa Twins get it, assume that inter-conspiracy finagling keeps it from going up the Net for 24 hours.
- If Slickstick and Joey get it, they’ll give it to Bitter and Herb right away, who will try to keep it safe at his bar.
- If Nick Mallet gets it, he’ll be entrusted with keeping it safe while the Earthlings decide what to do with it.

Any of the last three gives the PCs opportunities to continue to seek it — and the NPCs, if the GM wishes.

If the false journal is destroyed, Twickerwell is (once more) in his perilous catbird seat.

APPENDICES

Forgotten Lives is not merely a collection of adventures. For the enterprising game moderator, it is a reserve of characters and ideas to be mined and adapted to the ongoing series.

To help you in your prospecting, these appendices gather the characters of the book in one location. First is the Index of Characters, pointing your way to the new faces introduced in the various adventures. Next come the GMC Locations, “encounter charts” like those found in the back of *Friend or Foe?* These list GMCs in this book that could be encountered in various places around Al Amarja. There are no random rolls; whether or not any particular character is ever encountered is up to you.

With these lists, you can drop minor encounters with these GMCs into the series in advance of playing the actual adventures (or even if you never play the adventures). It should make “Misplaced Childhood” all the more interesting if a PC has already spent a night carousing with Matt Freeman’s friend, Ryan O’Seaban; or if Fr. Grierson is a Catholic player character’s confessor as well.

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GMC Locations

Anywhere

Bee-Zhou, *Freelancer*
Cerise, *The Dog of Your Dreams*
Finger, *Foul-Mouthed Punk*
Hank Garfield, *Peace Officer*
Joey the Dog Boy, *Mutant Beggar*
Jane Do Kwan LeThuy, *Nihilistic Agent Provocateur*
Nick Mallet, *Escaped TV Character*
Thuki Meringo, *Salvaged Low-Life*
Samoa Twins, *Net Muscle X2*
Slickstick, *Mutant on the Move*
Sussex, *Jaded Demigod*
Svieta, *Professional Bag Lady*
Shirley Tank, *Next Generation Loyal Defender*
Winston Twickerwell, *Second Rate Grifter*
Dorcas Valley, *Secret Agent and Cowgirl Wannabe*

Barrios

Arms

Bee-Zhou, *Freelancer*
Hank Garfield, *Peace Officer*
Inongé Kitleli, *Vornite Observer*
Adriana Ruiz, *Assistant Director of the DBI*
Shirley Tank, *Next Generation Loyal Defender*

Broken Wings

Matthew Freeman, *Confused Prototype*
Otto Krueger, *Rune Magician*

Ryan O'Seaban, *Unsuspecting Racquetball Partner*
Phil, *Socialite*
Rosa Sedano, *Housekeeper/Bodyguard*
Svieta, *Professional Bag Lady*
Tarent, *Trusted Quisling Thug*
Thuan Tram, *Quisling Coordinator*
Sydney J. Weeks, *Al Amarjan Senator*

Flowers

Jesus de la Playa, *Flaky Movie Director*
Shaquonda Ellers, *Suspicious Studio Manager*
René LaFayette, *Pube Actor*
Monica Lisbon, *Aspiring Actress*

Four Points

Summer, *Friendly Lost One*
Tarent, *Trusted Quisling Thug*
Earl Watkins, *Wannabe*

Golden

Nancy Fu, *Inspirational Speaker*
Ryan O'Seaban, *Unsuspecting Racquetball Partner*
Phil, *Socialite*
Sydney J. Weeks, *Al Amarjan Senator*

Great Men

Monica Lisbon, *Aspiring Actress*
Edmondo Roma, *Vornite Mover*
Winston Twickerwell, *Second Rate Grifter*

Justice

Joey the Dog Boy, *Mutant Beggar*
Slickstick, *Mutant on the Move*

Science

Dr. Randy Carter, *Gladstein Dupe*
Nancy Fu, *Inspirational Speaker*
Inongé Kitleli, *Vornite Observer*
Aniella Kjeds, *Soup Hacker*
Elwood “Woody” Light, *Paranoid Inventor*
Dr. Iraj Mehar, *Dream Cloak and Exalted Order Mole*
Simon Grace, *Vornite Troubleshooter*
Summer, *Friendly Lost One*

Sunken

Jacob Falstaff, *Nervous Actor*
Nancy Fu, *Inspirational Speaker*
Fr. Dennis Grierson, *Unpredictable Priest*
Summer, *Friendly Lost One*
Dorcas Valley, *Secret Agent and Cowgirl Wannabe*
Earl Watkins, *Wannabe*

Businesses & Buildings

AATV/AXTC

Jesus de la Playa, *Flaky Movie Director*
Shaquonda Ellers, *Suspicious Studio Manager*

Bitter & Herb’s

Joey the Dog Boy, *Mutant Beggar*
Salome, *Head Shaper*
Slickstick, *Mutant on the Move*

Blackfire Entertainment

Dorcas Valley, *Secret Agent and Cowgirl Wannabe*

Cesar’s Hotel

Nancy Fu, *Inspirational Speaker* (staying here)

CPC Headquarters

Inongé Kitleli, *Vornite Observer*
Adriana Ruiz, *Assistant Director of the DBI*

Darkling Bros. Diversions & House of Grotesques

Salome, *Head Shaper*

D’Aubainne Museum of Modern Life

Winston Twickerwell, *Second Rate Grifter*

D’Aubainne University

Aniella Kjeds, *Soup Hacker*
Simon Grace, *Vornite Troubleshooter*

LeThuy’s Newsstand

Jane Do Kwan LeThuy, *Nihilistic Agent Provocateur*

Peace Force Headquarters

Bee-Zhou, *Freelancer*
Hank Garfield, *Peace Officer*

Sad Mary’s

Monica Lisbon, *Aspiring Actress*
Ryan O’Searan, *Unsuspecting Racquetball Partner*

Sequins

Matthew Freeman, *Confused Prototype*

Phil, *Socialite*
Sydney J. Weeks, *Al Amarjan Senator*

Sleep Disorders Clinic

Dr. Iraj Mehar, *Dream Cloak and Exalted Order Mole*

Temple of the Divine Experience

Matthew Freeman, *Confused Prototype*
(Sundays)
Fr. Dennis Grierson, *Unpredictable Priest*

General Locations

Audition

Jacob Falstaff, *Nervous Actor*
Aniella Kjeds, *Soup Hacker*
René LaFayette, *Pube Actor*
Monica Lisbon, *Aspiring Actress*

Gymnasium/Health Club

Matthew Freeman, *Confused Prototype*
Hank Garfield, *Peace Officer*
Bruce Kowalski, *Ex-Linebacker Doorman*
Ryan O'Seaban, *Unsuspecting Racquetball Partner*
Samoa Twins, *Net Muscle X2*

Intellectual Event

Jesus de la Playa, *Flaky Movie Director*
Nancy Fu, *Inspirational Speaker* (giving a talk)
Fr. Dennis Grierson, *Unpredictable Priest*
Aniella Kjeds, *Soup Hacker*

“New Age” Event

Nancy Fu, *Inspirational Speaker*

Night Club

Aniella Kjeds, *Soup Hacker*
Bruce Kowalski, *Ex-Linebacker Doorman*
Ryan O'Seaban, *Unsuspecting Racquetball Partner*
Earl Watkins, *Wannabe*
Dorcas Valley, *Secret Agent and Cowgirl Wannabe*

Party

Shaquonda Ellers, *Suspicious Studio Manager*
Finger, *Foul-Mouthed Punk* (crasher)
Aniella Kjeds, *Soup Hacker*
Sophie L'Musaraigne, *Sadistic Cartoonist*
Ryan O'Seaban, *Unsuspecting Racquetball Partner*
Phil, *Socialite* (only upscale parties)

Scientific Event

Dr. Randy Carter, *Gladstein Dupe*
Elwood “Woody” Light, *Paranoid Inventor*
Dr. Iraj Mehar, *Dream Cloak and Exalted Order Mole*

Other Locations

Freedom City

Edmondo Roma, *Vornite Mover*
Adriana Ruiz, *Assistant Director of the DBI*
Shirley Tank, *Next Generation Loyal Defender*
Sydney J. Weeks, *Al Amarjan Senator*