

OVER THE EDGE



Wildest Dreams

THE SOURCEBOOK OF NIGHTMARE
by Robin Laws, Greg Stolze and John Tynes

Wildest Dreams

THE SOURCEBOOK OF NIGHTMARE

Department of Socio-Chemical Research
D'Aubainne University

May 5, 1993

Dr. Fürchtegott Nusbaum, Director
D'Aubainne Hospital and Trauma Center
271 D'Aubainne Avenue
Justice Barrio, the Edge
Al Amarja

Dear Dr. Nusbaum:

Enclosed is the final report of our findings concerning the drug Nightmare and its attendant subculture.

We have found solid basis for Her Exaltedness's concern over the proliferation of this narcotic. For years Nightmare was the purview of only the wealthiest of the decadent. Increasing use is seen in other demographic groups -- most alarmingly, among the island's adolescents and university-aged thrill-seekers.

We have researched these matters as thoroughly as possible. However, we regret that much of this information remains speculative, based on hearsay and incomplete data. We trust that Her Exaltedness will keep this in mind for the purpose of policy decisions and implementation.

On behalf of my colleagues, I remain,

Sincerely yours,

Stan Nyb
Report Editor

cc: Dr. F. Nusbaum

ADVISORY

This game product includes language and descriptions that may be considered inappropriate for younger readers.

Discretion is advised.



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The Sourcebook of Nightmare *Over the Edge*™

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Preface

Welcome to *Wildest Dreams*, a major sourcebook for the *Over the Edge*™ role-playing game. Most of this material was pirated from a series of reports to Dr. Nusbaum (concerning the drug Nightmare, as a public health issue) and the Democratic Bureau of Investigation (which takes an interest in the activities of drug dealers and covert organizations on Al Amarja).

Since Al Amarja does not recognize international copyright law, the authors feel no guilt in ascribing this information to themselves. If, in the course of your own adventures on the island, you should find any data misleading, I have been asked to direct you to the original sources of the data. (They'll be closer targets for retribution, anyhow.) *Caveat emptor*, as they say.

Speaking of which: This volume is not for everyone. It touches on material and themes which may be offensive, disturbing or inappropriate for some readers. If you suspect you might be such a person, do everyone a favor and just don't buy this book. That's the idea of a free market.

John A. Nephew
Publisher

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Tulpas

"To thine own self be true,
And it must follow, as night the day
Thou canst not then be false to any man"

—spoken by Polonius in *William Shakespeare's Hamlet*

For basic information on tulpas, start with pp. 166-167 of OTE.

Studying the Tulpas

The foremost student of tulpas — if one believes that they exist — is Wanda Mikuc, formerly of the physics department of D'Aubainne University. Mikuc, currently between positions, still staunchly defends her several papers on tulpas, though academics from around the world continue to assail her research and methodology. Although some criticisms of her work arguably seem persuasive, it should be noted that few scholarly papers could withstand the withering scrutiny given to Mikuc's. We would suggest a conspiracy to suppress her discoveries, if we had the evidence to do so. Unless otherwise noted, the following material treats Mikuc's material at face value, as if true.

As you are no doubt aware if you followed the controversy, Mikuc was accused of poor research for accepting as true information passed along to her by informants with whom she had no personal contact. Mikuc was contacted by electronic mail by at least two individuals claiming to be tulpas. They contacted her after she began a discussion of psychic thought-forms. She continued a lengthy correspondence with them over the Internet computer network but never met them face-to-face. Mikuc argued that she could not confirm the identities of the informants in person, since — due to the unique psychic makeup of the alleged tulpas — such contact would obliterate those very identities. (The

tulpas she spoke with used the pseudonyms Lon Chaney and Chauncey Gardner; Mikuc has refused to release the e-mail addresses they were using during their communication with her.) This irony will no doubt plague tulpa research for a long time to come — tulpas cannot come forward as such without literally committing suicide.

The authors of this book would like to thank Mikuc for giving them full access to her papers, notes, and e-mail correspondence. We wish her well in her future endeavors and are sure that there is an institution somewhere wise enough to hire a scholar of her dedication and intellectual tenacity; although perhaps she should look to parapsychology rather than physics as her primary field of enquiry.

Where Do Tulpas Come From?

Tulpas have been recognized in psychic research circles for many years. The name is Tibetan; in Buddhist circles there it was considered possible to summon up a pseudo-being created by intensity of desire. The controversial Fortean investigator John A. Keel cited a case in which a shadowy phantom was seen in and around the former residence of writer Maxwell Grant, writer of the series of pulp novels featuring the famous Shadow character. Keel theorized that the author had been concentrating so fully on his creation while writing that he permanently imprinted a psychic image in the area.

One famous experiment in tulpa research took place in Toronto in 1972. Known as the Philip Phenomenon, the experiment was carried out by eight members of the Society of Psychical Research. The experimenters claimed no particular fringe powers and operated in brightly-lit rooms without the usual props of mediumship. Originally they intended to summon a ghost or spirit through typical séance procedures, but no noncorporeal



entities obliged them. So they invented their own spirit, concocting a lengthy fictional biography of one Philip of Diddington Manor, supposedly a 17th century English Cavalier. They then continued with their séances, which continued to be unsuccessful until they changed their attitude from solemn to joking. Then a cavalcade of séance manifestations occurred, including table-turning and other psychokinetic events. The spirit responded to questions by rapping, giving responses as Philip that matched his fake history. The SPR members concluded that mediumship was merely a focus mechanism for human psi powers, and that no actual spirits were required to explain PK phenomena at séances.

When Mikuc sent this account to her tulpa informants, they disagreed with the SPR's thesis.

LC: "Had to be one of us. Eight people like that, all concentrating away on someone they really, really wanted to come into their lives. No question. Either a new tulpa coalesced right then and there — statistically unlikely — or they didn't notice that somebody else in the building vanished about the same time Philip appeared. A security guard or some office temp. I've felt that tug before. That tug

of desire — longing for a missing someone. Could have been me if I'd been in the building that day. I'm shuddering just thinking of it. That temp probably liked her persona just fine, thank you. And suddenly she's a transparent spirit, reduced to table knocking and parlor tricks. And then they decide it's all their doing and just throw their precious Philip away like yesterday's news! That poor tulpa must have been devastated."

CG: "I have not experienced anything of that vein, but I would say it makes me think of funeral homes. Those are the worst and I don't ever go close to them. There's always so much grief and focus on the deceased that you can end up turning into them and rushing right in for a joyous reunion. Quite a few heart attacks have been caused that way, and it's very hard on the tulpa as well as the family."

Some Fortean researchers use the term tulpa to describe other thoughts made visual; Dwight Whalen reported a personal experience in which he and a family member separated in space both saw a nonexistent hot air balloon. For the purposes of this discussion, we will not consider this a true tulpa.

LC: “Nope. We don’t do balloons. No inanimate objects.”

Mikuc speculated that the use of psi powers depends on — or at least interacts with — an energy field which is present all around us. When psychically active beings draw on this field, it leads to disturbances or unusual wave patterns. Certain of these wave patterns, once set in motion, can resolve into a particular ripple pattern which then coalesces into our physical reality. These wave patterns are nascent tulpas, ready to be imprinted with their first projections from other sentient minds.

LC: “Could be true. I’m no expert on that. Do you remember being born? I don’t. Did you know the facts of human reproduction before someone told you? I bet not. All I know is what people around me expect me to know. And nobody here knows what a tulpa is. So I can’t help you. We exist, that’s all I can tell you.”

Mutable Personas

Mikuc asked her informants to describe the experience of changing personality when others project their expectations on the subject. She asked both what it felt like and how the process operated. Her theory was that the tulpas radiate a passive detecting field which picks up information from other sentient minds within a given radius.

LC: “Again, who knows? Sounds reasonable enough. I don’t know how we pick up projections from others — it isn’t conscious. You don’t bump into somebody in an alley and think ‘Hey, this guy wants me to be a Russian diplomat, guess I’ll make him happy, let’s scan him for information on Yeltsin’s reform proposals.’ It’s just one minute you’re minding your own business and the next thing you’re shaking the guy’s hand and talking knowledgeably about privatizing the industrial economy. You might remember your last persona — details of its life and so forth — but there’s a distance. Like it was a dream that’s faded away. You might think it was a sweet dream or a bad one. But it will be gone. You’ll be a new person.”

Mikuc asked them about reports that tulpas sometimes seek out other tulpas to “shave off” unwanted personality traits and revert to an earlier state.

CG: “First of all, this is very dangerous. I would strongly not recommend it. And it is evil, because you are imposing your own desires to change on another tulpa who probably does not want to. One tulpa’s rights end where another’s begin.”

LC: “No question it’s dangerous. But it’s less dangerous than telling a real person you’re a tulpa. If they believe you — big if — chances are you won’t be able to retreat from them in time, and you’ll dissipate forever. If you are going to be a selfish s.o.b. and look for another tulpa, at least you can be sure the other guy knows enough to pull out in time.”

CG: “The persona I have right now is first of all content with herself but she is also too moral to do such a thing. I can imagine some of my old personas being selfish enough to do it, however.”

LC: “Mainly this stems from the old tulpa thing of always wanting to please others, to be the perfect companion. Let’s say you’ve found a stable long-term persona. With people around you who love you and so on. And something happens — you get separated from them for some reason. Stupid mistake. And you get into a situation where you’re alone with a total stranger. Even though you immediately try to get away, the stranger imprints some new projections on you. Not enough to totally shift you, just partial changes. Because you were high-tailing it out of there at top speed. You make your way back to your loved ones. But they notice you’re different now. You start smoking. Or you become snarky when you used to be nice. You start to show a sudden interest in synchronized swimming, whatever.

“Your loved ones are now upset — they tell you you’re different. And because they’re thinking this, they end up solidifying the differences. So a perfect marriage goes sour. You start to quarrel with your parents, or you become a surly, troubled teenager. Whatever. So you’re filled with self-loathing, now that you’re not satisfying the people around you. That’s what makes you go search for another tulpa. Hoping you can shave off the bad stuff and get back to where you once belonged.”

CG: “I believe that this is a trap. You can’t go back. You can never go back. It never works out. But you have to understand the desperation of being in a situation where you’re failing to please.”

Dopplegangers

One function of tulpas is duplication. It might very well be that the second Dr. Nusbaum is in fact a tulpa who materialized in front of someone who was being stood up by the “original” Dr. Nusbaum. The Tulpa-Nusbaum reads the mind of the human Nusbaum to find out how to perform surgery and other feats, and takes from those around him impressions of how he should act. His reading of Nusbaum’s mind is ignored by brain loopers because it is subconscious, by psychovores because it is almost indistinguishable from the real Nusbaum, and white thought generators because they are tuned to the wavelength of human telepathy. Most duplicate tulpas are quickly discovered: the Nusbaum tulpa has remained in place so long because the original Nusbaum is absent-minded.

LC: “If someone expected me to be a doctor, would I be able to perform surgery? I suppose I do get lots of knowledge I didn’t have before when I become a new person. But I don’t actively scan anybody’s brain, if that’s what you mean. Maybe we just draw the information from this psychic energy field, as you call it, as a whole. Let’s say everybody’s thoughts and memories go into this field and get stuck on it like it’s flypaper. Well, think of us as picking off the flies.”

(It should be stated for legal reasons that Dr. Nusbaum has officially refuted Mikuc’s allegation that there are two of him, one possibly a tulpa. Curiously, however, he issued two separate, differently worded denials to that effect, each bearing the same date.)

CG: “Right now I’m mother to three children. How could that be, you ask, when I’m just a quasi-real psychic energy being? Well, the real mother ran off with a cigarette salesman. And the husband and kids just sat around moping in their trailer, sure she’d be back. And I got caught around them, and shifted into becoming Heidi [name changed] — the Heidi they wanted, the Heidi who was sorry she’d ever left them and promised to be with them forever. The actual Heidi’s never coming back, I’m sure of it. At least she’d better not come back. I’d have to do something to her I don’t like to think about. But I’d have to. I’m a much better Heidi to them than Heidi could ever be. And I love them so much. I have to protect them from her.”

Remaining Stable

A large family of Japanese people, from toddlers to grandparents, poses for a family portrait at a wedding. The bride is dressed in a formal, highly decorated kimono, but everyone else is duded up in spiffy Western clothing. Which one’s the tulpa? Who can tell?

CG: “The most important thing to a tulpa is making the people you’re with totally happy, being the perfect version of who it is they want you to be. That’s everything, that’s bliss.”

LC: “Whatever your current persona, you’re always a divided soul. There’s your persona, and then there’s the underlying knowledge that you’re an imposter, you’re not real.”

CG: “I remember reading a poll of Americans who were asked to list their biggest fears. I expected heights or spiders to be the top on the list. But the number one fear was that seventy-five percent of people were afraid that other people would find out that they were imposters, that they weren’t really like the images they were projecting to the world. So this isn’t just a tulpa thing. This is a human thing. Maybe we pick it up from you. Maybe you’re projecting that at us too.”

LC: “So you’ve always got to be on your guard against unwanted projections. Assuming you’re happy with your current persona. That you’re pleasing people and fulfilling yourself. I mean, sometimes the person projecting things onto you is on some self-loathing trip himself. Then he wants you to be unhappy so you make him unhappy, which he feels he deserves. I mean, that’s a conundrum. Are you pleasing him by torturing him, or what?”

“Anyway, the thing is to arrange your life to protect yourself from outside projections. This means, number one, trying to remain at all times with people who know you. Number two, stay in groups. If you have a fairly stable persona and you’re with a large number of people who know you, any new projections one of them might have will be cancelled by the same old projections of the others. You can even go out in public, into crowds of strangers, if you’re with enough people who know you and will maintain your persona for you. At all costs, avoid strangers. Especially avoid being caught in a one-on-one with a stranger. That’s a one-way ticket to new personaville, no question.”

CG: "Small towns are better than big cities. The point I'm at now, I'm in a small town, and everybody here knows Heidi. I can safely go shopping on my own, because the shopkeepers know Heidi — she grew up here all her life — and everybody has a pretty good consensus on who Heidi is. I don't have to worry about being changed. But in a big anonymous city, I'd have to stick to my family like glue — otherwise I could walk through a mall and go through a hundred different personas by the time I got to the other side. The trouble is, almost all of us seem to appear originally in cities. Guess there are more of your thought-waves there or something."

LC: "I have to say it isn't like that for all of us. I don't always want to be stable. I guess that partly depends on your persona. But I think hidden down somewhere deep inside of me there's a tulpa personality too. Something I always have with me. Maybe that's a delusion that comes from my current persona, I don't know. But I remember in the past that there have been times when I've deliberately cruised through big city spaces full of people, popping from persona to persona like there was no tomorrow. It can be a rush, being a different person every hour. But you can't do it forever. It's like a drug binge; do it for too long and it drains you physically, spiritually — every possible way, it drains you."

"I hear the ultimate high is appearing before a dying human. The psychic energy they release as they expire is supposed to be so great that it's like an apotheosis. You can even pick up fringe powers, and maintain this new super persona for a couple of years before it runs out of steam. I've heard rumors that tulpas who've picked up psychopathic traits sometimes murder just to transform themselves into super tulpas."

Hazards of Tulpahood

CG: "I don't like to talk about Sandmen. You've got me shaking just typing in the word. They can make themselves invisible, silent, unfeelable — and where they want to be with you when you — I'm sorry, I don't have much to say about this. It's just the ultimate terror. They could be watching me



now, as I'm working at the computer. Staring at me as my husband and I — and they kill, too. If one found me, they might do, well, very bad things to my children. I mean, in a small town like this I feel reasonably safe, they stick to places with high populations, but still... Paranoia is nothing compared to this. I'd better stop. I'm starting to cry and — Chet might wonder what's up, he's in the other room. I must go now."

LC: "Have I ever encountered a Sandman? I wouldn't know, would I? I just refuse to think about them. Period."

CG: "I always avoid psychics, faith healers — I won't even go near the palm reader's booth when the fair comes to town. If they scan you with any depth, they'll spot your double mind — your persona and the tulpa inside. And if anyone knows you're a tulpa, you become a tulpa — that is, you're nothing. You turn back into thought. I've heard it isn't pretty."

LC: "There's a secret tulpa message base on one of the big commercial computer on-line services in the States. It's the only way tulpas can form a sense of community, anonymously and over a distance. I'd love to go on Oprah and tell those whiners with all their stupid problems what a real self-esteem crisis is like."

"But anyway, there's a folder in the tulpa message center devoted to news accounts of weird, grisly deaths that are probably tulpas being dissipated. Spontaneous human combustion. Implosion into cellular goo. Melting like wax. Fading away like a polaroid in reverse. Flesh falling away in chunks. I don't know how many of them to accept. I think most of them. I don't know how old I am. We're potentially immortal. But I have a feeling not many of us last even a couple of decades."

GMC

Lieutenant Noska van der Keuken

Tulpa Cop

After a rash of gruesome rape/torture cases rocked the Edge several years back, Monique D'Aubainne bowed to the fears of tourist-dependent businesses and reorganized the Peace Force to

create a czar to centrally investigate all such cases. Tough-minded, incorruptible officer Noska van der Keuken was tapped for the post. (He was causing too much trouble for friends of the government in his old fraud squad assignment anyway.)

Van der Keuken quickly narrowed his list of suspects to two — both Sandmen. Unfortunately, a third Sandman, Armivrek Kazandijan (see p. 47) got ahold of van der Keuken before he could share his information with the rest of his squad. Van der Keuken remained alive for a surprising six hours under Kazandijan's knife.

Kazandijan then found and captured a tulpa and snuck into Peace Force Headquarters. He knew van der Keuken had scheduled a staff meeting for a certain time. He stripped the tulpa and then pushed him into the meeting room. As the assembled cops were expecting van der Keuken, they got him. The new van der Keuken had little to report about the murders.

The tulpa copy of Noska is still a hard-nosed cop with a motivating hatred for human predators. However, he knows that Kazandijan knows his secret and will dissipate him if he ever moves against the Sandmen. So when a case comes up that points to them, he'll railroad a garbage man or zero into a conviction. His record remains spotless, and the Sandmen maintain a free hand to pursue their drug murders and extracurricular violations.

Dutch man, apparent age 48 years, 174 cm, 78 kg, walrus moustache, bulbous nose, hard grey eyes.

Languages: Dutch, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Attack and Defense: 3 dice, X2 damage (nightstick)

Hit Points: 30 (refuses to acknowledge pain)

Traits

Getting Convictions, 4 dice — Knows how to use police procedures and team leadership to get evidence and make it stick. Suffers a penalty die when trying to railroad an innocent man. (No-non-sense style.)

Tough Guy, 3 dice — His fighting style isn't much on technique, but he wades into fights like a bear and won't back down. (Intimidating manner.)

Tulpa — His secret puts him in Kazandijan's pocket. (Always travels with a group of his men.)

Sandmen

"We are born into a world where alienation awaits us."

—R. D. Laing

Type: Mysterious pushers of a mysterious drug

Rep: Creepy

Brief: Very creepy

Allies: Exalted Order — for now

Enemies: Tulpas, Peace Force, the Net, humanity in general; Exalted Order — maybe soon

Studying the Sandmen

The foremost expert on the Sandmen was the late Professor Ameyaltzin Guzman of the Sociology Department of D'Aubainne University. Guzman spent many years exploring both the rumors and urban legends surrounding this unique criminal subculture before he gained the confidence of an actual Sandman and gained access to their ways. Guzman managed to convince his informant to record an oral biography. The Sandman in question, one Martin Morris, recorded hours of taped material for Guzman — but refused to give him access to it until after his death. Morris placed the tape with a lawyer, with instructions to release it to Guzman if Morris failed to contact the lawyer's office on a quarterly basis. Several years later, six consecutive months passed with no word from Morris. Accordingly, the lawyer assumed he had been killed and passed the tape along.

Guzman rhapsodized to colleagues about the richness of the material in the tapes. He told one friend that his only difficulty in assembling a paper to present it in was the infinite number of sociological theories it engendered. Unfortunately, the state of Guzman's papers after the tragic incident in May of 1990 did not suggest such progress. Large portions of them had been removed, and the rest were

either puerile nonsense and embarrassing sadomasochistic fantasy written by Guzman, or were in a code his colleagues in the faculty have been unable to decipher. The Morris tapes themselves were also gone — the burned contents of the wastebasket in his office suggest that he destroyed them before his fatal trip to the Messner Dining Hall.

However, partial transcripts of those tapes were present in notes left in a safety deposit box off-campus. These portions are quoted extensively in the following material. The present work owes a great deal to Guzman's notes, or rather reconstructions thereof. In a way, it is his final legacy. We mean no disrespect to the families of his victims when we say that he was not only a well-respected scholar but a warm personal friend to many before his final breakdown. In a way, even this was a direct consequence of his dedication to new fields of awareness — those of you who followed the inquest will know of the large quantities of Nightmare he ingested in order to maintain his ties to the Sandman community. With this catastrophe, our sole window into the world of this intriguing subgroup has been painted over — perhaps forever.

Born Wrong

Martin Morris: "I always knew I was different, that there was something wrong with me. I was born wrong."

Sandmanism is a genetic condition, passed on by parents who never know their children. To be born a Sandman is to be born alone in the world, an outsider in a culture one can learn about but never believe in. Sandmen report feelings of alienation, of separateness, which they recall as dating back to their first moments of consciousness. They never develop the capacity to bond emotionally with others. They typically show little feeling even for their own mothers. This incapacity stays with them throughout their lives. Whether they behave violently or not (and all of those interviewed by

Guzman admitted to participating in acts of violence) every Sandman meets the technical definition of psychopathology.

Due to their profound anti-social attitudes, Sandmen do not form family units. Sandmen are usually born into unfortunate emotional situations. They are often the children of rape victims, or are abandoned by their birth mothers. Many are unwanted children; the lucky ones end up as adoptees. Although adoptive parents are in general no less loving than natural ones, the bonding process even in normal cases can be a difficult one. When the child is a Sandman, a lasting bond seems impossible. Something in the gene for Sandmanism precludes it.

Male Sandmen have a propensity towards rape. There are three possible reasons for this: they do so as a reproductive strategy, to release sexual tension, or simply as an expression of contempt for the vulnerable. Guzman quizzed many Sandmen of both genders; all disdainfully dismissed any suggestion that they would wish to continue their lineage. But they do reproduce, albeit in small numbers; perhaps the Darwinian mechanism to ensure genetic continuance is unconscious. Some of the Sandmen interviewed — almost all nonchalantly admitted to being serial rapists — described the act as nothing more than a physical release. Others, appallingly, likened it to an unpleasant practical joke on the victim. In all cases, their understanding of and interest in the consequences to the victim was severely stunted. Although Guzman attempted to draw them into a discussion of this, they apparently lacked even the vocabulary to address the question.

Female Sandmen profess a complete disinterest in sexual contact of any kind. A few conceded, when pressed, to occasional bursts of libidinal frenzy, which they would satisfy in a manner similar to that of their male counterparts — they would find likely victims, threaten them with a weapon, and force them to gratify their urges. (Neither gender claims to consider attractiveness an issue in selecting victims, leading one to conclude that they value the power trip over the gratification.) Birth control does not seem to be an issue when female Sandmen mate. If impregnated, they generally secure quick abortions. If abortion is unavailable, they carry the child to term and abandon it. Sandmen whose mothers carried the mutant genetic

material are accordingly rarer than the children of rapes by males. (Guzman's notepad contained a note to himself, in which he wondered if Sandmen were more numerous in countries that outlaw or heavily restrict abortion. Although this stands to reason, there is no sign that he was able to prove it before he died.)

Sexual orientation means little in the Sandman context; it's most accurate to consider them asexuals who stray from type on occasion. Most Sandman rapists reported victimizing both sexes. Some specialized almost exclusively in same-sex attacks because the victims suffered much more dramatic shame and horror, intensifying their enjoyment of their crimes. Martin Morris is quoted at one point in Guzman's notes as saying that his primary sexual organ is his fishing knife.

At any rate, none of them report happy childhoods. Those born and raised by rape victims tend to have the worst time of it — their mothers treat them either overtly or unconsciously as reminders of a horrific, dehumanizing experience. But even those adopted by ostensibly loving families find themselves obsessed by the idea that they are different from those around them. Such feelings lead to self-fulfilling episodes of bad treatment, if not from parents then from siblings and peers. As children, Sandmen seem to arouse visceral feelings of dislike from their peers and therefore become targets for abuse.

One philosophical Sandman theorized that his kind were growing more common as society became more "civilized"; primitive cultures would feel no compunction in killing someone who seemed different and refused to participate in society. "Tolerance is breeding monsters," he told Guzman.

Waking Up

Since Sandmen, like cuckoos, are never raised by their own parents, they must discover their true nature accidentally. The primary difference between a human and a Sandman is the latter's ability to detect tulpas. It is an irony that without tulpas — pathetic creatures who lack a stable identity — the Sandmen would never discover their own identities. Sandmen are dependent on them for more than just a livelihood.



Sandmen refer to the moment they spot their first tulpa as “waking up.” This is when things click for them, when they realize why they feel different than their peers — they can perceive things that others can’t. Suddenly a random and unpleasant life has meaning sharp enough to taste. Newly awakened Sandmen seem to instinctively understand their ability to terrorize the tulpa. Since their social impulses are already deadened by feelings of alienation, they rarely if ever feel any compunction towards mercy for it. Many Sandmen have described this moment as more potent than their first sexual experience. This is when they realize they were born to prey on others. They smell the fear of their prey for the first time; this is sufficiently intoxicating to hook them into a lifetime’s pursuit of more. Sandmen are great drug peddlers because they themselves are addicted to the domination of their quarry.

From the Martin Morris tapes:

“It was Grade Four when I woke up. I remember it like it was yesterday. No, I remember it like it’s happening right now again. I’m getting hard just thinking about it. It’s better than a porn tape, this memory. It’s the last thing I see in my head every night before I fall asleep. This is so, so sweet, a sweetness you barfy little humans will never know.

“Okay, so I’m in Grade Four, wedged in my little desk. I was a fat little screwhead back then, filling my face with anything I could get my hands on, just to get some sensation going, some feeling. Taste was the only sense I was into. My mom could hug me, I couldn’t care less. Just felt like I was being smothered. TV and the world outside and anything else I could see with my eyes just bored the snot outta me. Anyway, you get the point.

“So — Grade Four. It’s a hot day, the first really hot day of the year, and the windows are all open but it’s still stuffy, humid, choking. One’a those days when it’s so hot time seems to stop, to be measured by the slow collection of sweat in your pores, from its tick-tock dribbling down your face. We’ve only been sitting down for a few minutes, first thing of the day, but already we’re dying like pigs. No teacher there yet. Normally the little rat bastards in my class woulda been charging around like freaks, hollering and screaming in my ear, making me wish I had a gun and I could spray its

discharge all over ‘em. But it’s so hot we can hardly move.

“Cept for Livesey. Gary Livesey. He was already twice the size of anybody in the grade, and he already thought like a donut-eating bad-ass cop. He comes waddling over to me with a couple of his scumbag little buddies and starts poking me with a ruler. Everybody laughs. He calls me Porker. He thoughta the name. Everybody called me Porker then. My butt crack is hangin’ outta my pants, as usual — my Mom didn’t exactly care about keeping me up to date in clothes. So he’s about to thwack my overhang with the ruler when this substitute teacher comes in.

“They all scatter. I don’t hardly care. I’m in my own little world. Or tryin’ to be. I’ve spent years trying to think up this imaginary place I can escape to, but I can’t seem to get the hang of just makin’ stuff up. All I got is this stone pathway up to this sorta half-tower kinda thing, but it sucks. It isn’t real. I got no talent for escape. Anyway, the point is I’m not lookin’ up at the teacher. Whaddoo I care? Like she’s really gonna have anything to say to me.

“So I just go all blank, and who knows how much time passes, and there she is, loomin’ over me, squawkin’. So I look up. She’s like the ultimate sub: cat’s-eye glasses, hair all up in a bun, blue polyester skirt, blue polyester jacket, blue polyester blouse. Bad lipstick. A mole on her upper lip. And she’s all quivering and nervous. And she’s decided to pick on me because the class has gotten all freaky even with the heat. But she can’t single out Livesey, cause he might smart-ass her back. So she picks a quiet one, the fat boy, one she can scare.

“Her last mistake. ‘Cause I look up at her, our eyes meet, and we both know. End of statement. I know she’s not human. I know I’m not human. I know I was born to hunt her. I am a beast, and she is my meat. She knows what I am — and that I know who she is. Or isn’t.

“She shrinks two inches in height and her eyes drain from the blue of her jacket to the color of water. She turns and runs outta the room, nearly tripping on her clunky pumps. Of course immediately the rest of the class turns into the monkey house, so I just quietly get up and walk slowly outta the room, after her. I bet nobody even noticed me go.

“There’s two ways she coulda gone down the hallway, and even though she’s outta sight, I know which one she took. I can feel where she is. The hairs on my little prepubescent body are all standing up on end. The heat doesn’t touch me any more — I’m ice, I’m a skating rink. She’s in the furnace room. And she’s afraid. Afraid beyond measure. Of me.

“I walk slowly, ever so slowly, towards the boiler room. This is before I learned how to mask myself so the tulpas can’t feel you coming. But I wouldn’t have masked myself anyway. I wanted her to feel me coming. I was teasing her. I was coming real slow.

“So finally I get to the furnace room, and I gently tip the door open. It arcs in towards her, achingly slow like. I smile for the first time in my whole life. She’s fallen onto her knees. She starts to beg me, to plead with me to go away, to leave her alone. But in her colorless eyes I can see she knows there’s no prayer. I say one word — ‘good-bye.’

“Every tulpa goes different. Some blow up in a really cool reverse vortex of prismatic light. Others fade like an image of the sun burned into your retinas. This one melted great, like candle wax. First her arms went, then her legs turned into a puddle, then the rest of her skin melted off, and for a moment I think you could see her bones and organs all spilling out and then she was gone. All’at was left was the polyester clothes, the brown pumps, the cat’s-eye glasses, her undies. It was great.

“But there was this one thing left. She must’a been so scared she let go before I killed her. There was this stuff, shaped like a turd. I bent over it and pushed it with my fingers. Felt like a turd. Didn’t smell like a turd, though. And it was grey. I tasted it — didn’t taste like nothin’ — like over-cooked mash potatoes, maybe.

“I looked around and found this jar with nails in it. I dumped them out and put the turd in it to come back for later. There was something I needed to know about it — I needed to save it, didn’t know why at the time.

“So I walk back to class, sit down, look around me. Everybody looks different to me now. I’m not afraid no more. They’re just stinking humans — me, I’m a different breed, I’m a hunter. It took

half an hour for another teacher to finally figure out that the racket the little apes were making meant something was screwy. The principal hadda come down and babysit us.

“After school I looked for Gary Livesey and his weasels. I started hangin’ around them, tellin’ them about this other quiet kid they could pick on. I even gave ‘em a nasty name to call the puke — ‘Warthog.’ I helped them knock him down and kick him. That was okay, y’know? Not anything like stripping that tulpa, but it did for then. Soon I was in charge, and Livesey was following orders. He was my doggie for a couple years. But I never forgot. I had this plan to drown him in a duck pond, but he moved away before I could do it. Anyway, that’s getting ahead of myself.

“Couple nights later, there was an appeal in the newspaper to find this sub teacher who had walked outta her classroom and into thin air. But of course nobody ever found her, not even a fingerbone of her. These days of course I know better than to strip a tulpa, but every so often I wanna do it anyway, just to be a kid again. But it would never be the same, would it?”

The Inhuman Gene

Although not a geneticist, Ameyaltzin Guzman spend a great deal of time trying to pin down the various effects of the gene for Sandmanism. These were as follows:

An inability to feel empathy for others or participate in social structures: The disinclination to identify with others continues after the subject “wakes up.” Although the Sandman now sees his life as having meaning and purpose, and understands that there is a reason for his previously unexplainable feelings of difference from others around him, the new insight does not change his behavior. The opposite is true — the Sandman sees himself as confirmed in his belief that he is unlike others. He now, however, feels himself justified in scorning them.

Even when the Sandman realizes that there are others like him in the world, the condition of Sandmanism allows him little sense of community. Used to considering themselves uniquely superior beings, with their solitary habits already well-established,

they show little tolerance for each other’s company. Relationships between Sandmen are of a business-like nature, centering around the acquisition and distillation of Dreamweb. Their drug networks are informally structured, which makes them hard to crack. Sandmen like to work separately; if a group effort is needed it will be structured in such a way that one individual completes a task to a certain stage, passes it off to another, who in turn passes it to a third party when his segment of the job is done. Ideally, each Sandman prefers to find, distill and retail his own supply of Nightmare. The only time that Sandmen seem to work well together is when a competitor or nosy law enforcement officer needs to be captured and executed. Cruelty and torture are one thing they can all agree on.

The ability to spot tulpas: Tulpas emit a constant psychic detection field which they have no power to consciously control. They are receivers who are always turned to on, constantly receiving the projections of others (see p. 5). Sandmen have the ability to sense these fields, and thus identify tulpas.

“You don’t see no aura around them or nothin’,” Martin Morris explained. “It’s not like a visual thing, it’s like you just *know*. I guess the field sends a message to your brain... Well I guess the tulpa’s not sending nothin’, he wouldn’t wanna do that, it’s more like there’s a little trigger in your brain that goes off when you’re around ‘em, I guess. Y’know, like a geiger counter in your brain, but it picks up tulpas, not radiation. You just *know*. It’s hard to explain.”

The ability to block out the psychic detection field of tulpas: A tulpa can’t produce Dreamweb if it’s completely stripped. If a tulpa were to detect someone who knew its true nature — Sandman or otherwise — it would rapidly begin to dissipate back into thought energy. Without a means of blocking the tulpa’s perception of them, the Sandmen would be nowhere. (Though, unlike the poor tulpas, this would be metaphorical.) Fortunately, they are able to jam the tulpa’s detecting field. Or, more precisely, to send it false information. The tulpa reads the Sandman as not being present at all. This false reading is so strong that the tulpa’s sensory input is altered to gibe with it. The tulpa can’t see, smell, hear, or touch these merciless stalkers of their excrement. They instinctively know about Sandmen, and are terrified by the

thought of them. What they don't know is that they have no way of knowing when one is around. (For more on tulpa fear of Sandmen, see pp. 7-8.)

The remote detection of tulpas: A Sandman needn't see a tulpa for his detection ability to kick in. If a tulpa is nearby, he'll know, even if it's on another floor of a building or behind a wall. (There is no set radius for this ability, which varies from Sandman to Sandman depending on the number of dice in his Sandman Powers trait and from incident to incident depending on the die roll.) This ability is only roughly directional.

Martin Morris explains: "It's not like, you're walking home from the comic book store and — bing — a little voice comes on in your head sayin' there's a tulpa loading cartons at the loading dock behind the buildin'. You just know there's one around. Again, it's just like a feelin' you have, an instinct. Then you play hotter-hotter-colder-colder till you find the little excreter. You walk one way, and you feel you've gone further away from it, so you walk the opposite way and you feel closer, so you keep going and the feeling gets bigger when you're closer and smaller when you make a wrong turn. It's all trial and error, and eventually you narrow in on the little turdmaker. Then all you gotta do is follow 'im till he goes to the can, slip into the stall with him, and get ready to do some quick fishing."

Aura of creepiness: Normal humans unconsciously pick up signals of threatening alien-ness from a Sandman. Young and vulnerable Sandmen are targeted for abuse by their peers due to this subtle aura. Older, more confident ones project an uncanny air of intimidation, which, due to its fringe nature, can alarm even an experienced, cold-blooded mob hitman. Guzman reported a feeling of mild nausea in the presence of Morris and the other Sandmen he was introduced to. This never abated, even after he had spent considerable time with them. He says in one of his final notes that he was picking up the knack of identifying Sandmen previously unknown to him through the churning they produced in his gut.

The ability to spot Sandmen: Whatever center in the brain detects tulpas also instantly identifies fellow Sandmen, picking up on their tulpa-sensing field. This is useful; imposters are not uncommon. Because their product and name

are all that are popularly known about Sandmen, there are many pretenders who either who claim to be Sandmen or think there's a way to become one. These wannabees are usually considered fair game for exercises in sadism.

(On their first meeting, Roderick Reis's Eye of Chulka — see p. 26 — registered on Armivrek Kazandijan's Sandman detection ability, if in a funny way. Kazandijan's curiosity about this strange response led him to let Reis live — and keep talking. By the time Kazandijan figured out that it was the device and not Reis who detected as a Sandman, Reis had sold him on his plan, thus becoming the first known human to network with them.)

In game terms, a Sandman always has a fringe power which can be described as follows:

Sandman Powers, X* dice — Can mentally detect tulpas and Sandman, even from a distance; can mask his presence so he's utterly undetectable by tulpas. Normal humans unconsciously pick up an aura of menace from them. (Very creepy, though it's hard to say why.)

This is invariably accompanied by a flaw:

Anti-Social Psychopath — Congenitally incapable of forming attachments to others or feeling empathy for them. Suffers a penalty die when trying to work in groups or navigate through normal social situations. Enjoys inflicting cruelty and suffering. (Contemptuous.)

Many Sandmen also have other fringe powers, all of which are psychic in nature. For example, Kazandijan — see p. 47 — is so non-descript witnesses find him hard to remember; this is a modified extension of his invisibility to tulpas. The most common ancillary powers relate to dreams and dreaming: Martin Morris was able to tell what people had dreamed the night before just by touching them. Guzman theorized that these secondary psychic powers were not carried on the Sandmanism gene, but were an indirect result of it. He figured that the gene allows Sandmen to access the psychic realm. With this access, some of them spontaneously learn different ways of manipulating psychic energy, in addition to their inborn abilities. Others do not. Guzman relates this to the inquisitiveness and drive of the individual Sandman.

The Fraternity of Loners

Tulpas are very rare, thus explaining why it takes a long time for many Sandmen to “wake up.” Undoubtedly some never run across a tulpa, going to their graves wondering why the world is such a lonely and stupid place.

As they reproduce only by accident, Sandmen turn out to be even rarer than tulpas. (Perhaps this is necessary. One possibility Guzman does not appear to have contemplated in his discussion of the apparent lack of basic Darwinian impulse in Sandmen is their need to maintain a sustainable prey-to-predator ratio.) To learn about Dreamweb and the possibility of making a living off it by making it into Nightmare and selling it, the awakened individual must then stumble upon an active Sandman. Sandmen refer to this first encounter as “the initiation.”

Given their anti-social natures, a question arises: why do Sandmen clue in their recently awakened but inexperienced fellows instead of just killing them? If they’re concerned about competition, this would appear to make good business sense, at least from a psychopathic point of view.

Martin Morris: “Well, the son of a bitch who gave me the low-down on how to make Nightmare and so forth wanted me to give him a cut and stuff. And since I didn’t know Freud, I did give him a cut for a while. He made a bundle offa me till I ran into this other Sandman and he laughed his guts out when I tole him how much I was givin’ the first guy. So then this second guy offers to just take halfa that to let me stay in business. So I said I’d cut the nuts off both of ‘em if they tried anything, and I got left alone after that.”

Morris glosses it over in his account, but it seems that the price exacted by the experienced Sandman in these transactions is more than financial. The newcomer is forced to submit to a masochistic apprenticeship, in which sexual relations, if any, take a back seat to psychological and physical torture. For a while, the novice goes through a period of virtual enslavement to his new master. This usually ends after the newcomer learns all there is to know about the distillation of Dreamweb into Nightmare, and becomes confident enough to con-

vincingly threaten the master with death. Then he strikes out on his own. As the psychology of abusive domination is cyclical, he no doubt looks forward to finding an apprentice of his own on which to exorcise his feelings of powerlessness and humiliation.

Guzman did not speak to a bona fide Sandman who knew of a case of one Sandman murdering another, even as hearsay. Because they have no organized hierarchy, there are no power positions to compete and kill over. Standard mobsters marketing common narcotics like heroin and cocaine need to fight to maintain their monopoly, because these substances are in fact plentiful — their prohibition makes them profitable but only rarely makes the drug trade a seller’s market. Nightmare is so rare that it is always a seller’s market — Sandmen don’t have to fight over customers.

(This is why Reis has made a potentially fatal mistake by attaching a conventional power hierarchy to the unstructured Sandman culture — he has created something worth the trouble to destroy.)

They will, however, fiercely resist attempts on the part of the Net or other operators to get involved in the Nightmare trade. It is well known in the wider criminal subculture that it is death even to resell a quantity of Nightmare. This fear tactic works, on the whole. Amongst the common gangster, terrifying tales of the Sandmen are many — see chapter seven of Guzman’s 1983 book, *Semiotics of the Brass Knuckle: Cultures of Criminality*. Now and then this is reinforced with the spectacularly gruesome find of the remains of a would-be independent Nightmare dealer too skeptical to believe the rumors.

Daily Life

The Edge has more Sandmen per capita than any other place in the world. This is because Al Amarja produces more tulpas than any other area. Guzman estimated that there were about a score of them operating in the city at the time of his research, but neither Morris nor the others he introduced Guzman to would confirm or deny his guess. One would assume that the number of Sandmen would depend on the supply of tulpas — if their population were to increase, the ranks of the Sandmen could grow accordingly. And vice versa.



Guzman met several Sandmen who were visiting Al Amarja but were based elsewhere — one in Beijing, another in Santiago, Chile. They were here to trade doses of Nightmare imprinted by their own Little Nemos (see Slang, below) for high-quality Al Amarjan product. The Sandman appears to be an urban creature — he needs to be in a population base wide enough to produce high enough number of both tulpas and sufficiently depraved customers. (The Chinese Sandman claimed a clientele composed exclusively of high-level Party members.)

Detachment from society brings with it a streak of laziness. Sandmen reject any goal but their own gratification; workaholism is not a problem for them. The world-spanning ambitions of a man like Roderick Reis are a joke to the typical Sandman. With even the crummiest, boring doses going for \$30 a hit (primo quality hits from a Little Nemo with a track record go for closer to \$100), it doesn't require much labor to make a living as a pusher of Nightmare; especially since Sandmen don't give a fig about the status symbols treasured by the culture at large. (Except that they go out of their way to make people think that being a Sandman is hard work. This may be an atypical eruption of pride or a tactic to discourage wannabes. Of course, Dreamweb harvesting is phenomenally unpleasant work, so they're only exaggerating in the strictest sense of the word.)

A Sandman is usually content with the poorest of living conditions. As a group they're indifferent to cleanliness. Guzman visited Morris' apartment and reported a thick growth of mold on the dirty dishes in his sink being picked over by a well-fed colony of cockroaches. His wardrobe consisted of ill-fitting cast-offs, mostly t-shirts and polyester pants. Morris showed a childlike pride in how little he had paid for his clothing. What he hadn't fished out of dumpsters was purchased at junk stores. The concept of frequent laundering had passed by Morris and many of his colleagues unnoticed. Guzman never saw a Sandman wearing an unstained garment. He also noted a curious attachment to long raincoats and goggles, seeing them on one informant after another. He once asked Morris about this, and reported the conversation as follows:

MM: Why do I wear goggles? I just like 'em, that's all. You got a problem with that, vanilla?

AG: No, no, I am just an observer, I do not judge. But many of your friends —

MM: They're not friends.

AG: Many of the other Sandmen you introduced me to — they all wear goggles as well. They don't seem functional —

MM: Well sometimes you get splashed when you're in a public stall with one'a these digestive processes and you gotta — I dunno. I never noticed anybody else wore 'em. I just like 'em.

The one expense Sandmen seem to indulge in is a mania for collecting. Despite the awfulness of his apartment, Morris had a comic book collection worth many thousands of dollars, each meticulously stored in its own mylar bag, filed with anal retentive devotion to detail. Other Sandmen collected stamps, coins, classical music on vintage vinyl LPs, porn videos, first edition books, political memorabilia, Japanese *netsuke* (miniature sculpture), lobby cards for classic films, or militaria.

Other solitary pursuits dominate a Sandman's schedule. Guzman mentions computer and play-by-mail strategy games, scratch-building model trains, crossword puzzles, and the breeding of tropical fish, among others. But the Sandman's primary passion is invariably television. Morris was an obsessive watcher of various home shopping networks — three hours of his oral biography is devoted to a detailed comparative analysis of different services — but he apparently never once bought a product from them. Others were variously addicted to soaps, old movies, game shows, or news programming.

Sandmen take the characteristic crazed loner's approach to cuisine — they subsist pretty much exclusively on lousy take-out and pre-packaged junk food. Many of them are smokers. Paradoxically, most of them are in top fighting shape, lithe and fast. Guzman could only attribute this, along with so many other anomalous things about the Sandmen, to their mutant genes. Apparently Sandmen die young, though, mostly as the result of sudden heart attacks. Without exception the victims remain at peak physical efficiency until the moment their aortas explode.

Guzman was unable to find evidence of any Sandmen addicted to any substance stronger than nicotine or caffeine.

Morris: "Nope, I never seen another Sandman take a drink, and I sure don't care for it myself.

Just makes me feel edgy. Hey, we're the pushers, not the junkies. Save that crap for the vanillas."

Slang

Like any subculture, Sandmen have developed their own special jargon to demarcate their differences from society at large. Due to their pathological disdain for others, and the unpleasantness of their work, their slang is strongly scatological and scornful to the point of depravity.

Here is a partial list of slang terms reported by Guzman in the course of his field work. Like any body of colloquialisms, this is highly local and subject to constant revision. These terms were used in the Edge; it is unclear how many of them Sandmen in South Dakota would be familiar with. This list, made prior to 1990, is probably already slightly out of date, as new terms are adopted and old ones become passé. But it should serve to give the flavor of Sandman English:

accountant — member of standard organized crime group like the Net or Mafia

Canadian — partially stripped, but not yet dissipated, tulpa

Dick Van Patten — the murder and mutilation of a human would-be competitor or law enforcement officer

digestive process — tulpa

Dreamweb — tulpa excrement

dung beetle — human who wants to become a Sandman

excreter — tulpa

Francis Ford — a former Little Nemo (q.v.), one whose dreams are becoming less interesting or valuable

Freud — male sexual organ, also used as an insult — i.e., "You don't know Freud," or "You total Freudhead."

fugu fish — deadbeat customer

gaiman — dreamer who has vivid nightmares

hobby — a rape/torture victim attacked more than one time by the same Sandman

initiate — to tell an awakened Sandman about Dreamweb and Nightmare

Jung — female sexual organs

Little Nemo — a star dreamer, one whose nightmares have a proven demand in the marketplace

mint condition — potential rape/torture victim

odor — pusher of drugs other than Nightmare

party favor — a human would-be competitor

passenger — Sandman who has had to leave the area because of police heat after an assault or murder

paté goose — psychologically addicted customer

pea soup — rich customer

pool toe — potential customer

post — process of distilling imprinted Dreamweb into Nightmare

preproduction — process of imprinting Dreamweb with dream material

product — Nightmare

scat singer — Sandman

slate — customer

smoke — addict of drug other than Nightmare

soap dropper — a Sandman with an apprentice (sometimes shortened to “dropper”)

soap retriever — an apprenticed initiate (sometimes shortened to “retriever”)

stool pigeon — tulpa

tapeworm — a bribe-seeking law enforcement officer

train set — rape/torture victim

train ticket — a poorly chosen victim for rape/torture, one who will either report to the police, or an accidentally-killed victim prominent enough to warrant a major investigation. Indicates that the Sandman will have to go underground or leave immediately for another jurisdiction.

turdmaker — tulpa

turd farmer — Sandman

vanilla — normal human

waking up — discovering that one is a Sandman

wave — a tulpa dissipated into nothingness

weeper — police officer assigned to rape/assault cases

wiltshire — an honest drug enforcement officer

GMC

Irene Barth

Newly Independent Sandman

Irene Barth is the most recent addition to the Edge's anti-social fraternity. Raised in the Australian outback, Irene ran away from home at age fourteen to escape an abusive stepfather and indifferent birth mother. It wasn't until she reached Melbourne that she discovered her first tulpa — a singer in an up-and-coming rock band — and began to clue in. She served her apprenticeship in Melbourne, following her cruel mentor on an exchange trip to Al Amarja. She declared herself free upon arrival, and is now building a client base amongst the bohemian crowd in the Plaza of Flowers.

Irene is tight-lipped and bitter. Having been abused for most of her life, first by her stepfather and then by her soap dropper, she's conditioned herself towards introversion, protecting herself by keeping all of her feelings inside. She was considering suicide but is feeling better now that she's contributing to the mental deterioration of others. She's thinking of starting a belt-buckle collection.

Australian woman, age 23, 158 cm, 65 kg.
Wears t-shirts and tights, usually in drab colors.
Lifeless dark brown hair, dull brown eyes.

Languages: English

Attacks: 3 dice, X2 damage (knife)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 29 (Sandman physique)

Traits

Sandman Powers, 2* dice. (Creepy.)

Knife Fighting, 3 dice — Her mentor taught her the basics of slice 'n' dice. Her ferocious anger at the world supplies the passion to drive the blade in that little bit extra. (“Don't @#&\$ with me” posture.)

Anti-Social Psychopath, penalty die in social situations. (Something empty in her stare.)

The Exalted Order of Dream Kings

"Sleep. Little slices of death. How I hate it..."

— Edgar Allan Poe

Type: Secret society.

Rep: "Sandmen"; altogether creepy.

Brief: An elaborate organization combining bizarre rituals with practical procedures to get its drug on the street.

Allies: Roderick Reis (secret); have business relations with most street level gangs and with the Peace Force. Uneasy truce with true Sandmen.

Enemies: Earthlings, many individual Sandmen.

The Exalted Order is a front organization that Reis has set up to produce and distribute Nightmare. It is a secret society, complete with ceremonies, initiations, passwords and secret handshakes. While some of its leaders find it all a bit overblown, it nonetheless serves their purpose of recruiting people.

Many people on the street confuse the Dream Kings with the Sandmen themselves — a confusion that the Order often finds advantageous, since it appropriates for them the mystique and fear associated with the real Sandmen.

The Ranks

There are nine levels of initiation, beginning with Pawn and working the way up to Supreme Invisible Nightlord. Needless to say, the way to the top is not without peril and sacrifice.

Pawn (or Acolyte)

These are people who aren't even trusted with knowing what conspiracy they've joined. They're dupes and they know it. Their tasks usually include running errands, picking up packages and delivering them, occasionally the odd spot of violence.

The pawns' initiation ceremony consists of being offered a ritual drink (which is laced with stimulants) and then being isolated in a small, dark room with the other acolytes in their "cell" (usually 3-5) for five hours. During this time the initiates are told to "become as one mind" and to "meditate on the darkness." The stimulants are to prevent them from simply snoozing. Sometimes one member of the cell is unknowingly drugged with LSD (in order to possibly provide either a binding spiritual crisis between them, or a transcendent mystic revelation). Another frequent practice is to sneak in a higher level initiate to "guide" them.

After the five hours, the initiates are separated and led out, one by one, to a dimly lit chamber with a low altar at one end. Standing behind the altar is a figure in a hooded robe with a sword. The hands of the pawn are tied (sometimes forcefully) and his head is forced down on the altar, face up. The hooded figure strikes down with the sword, but is blocked at the last moment by a figure in a darker robe, who lunges out of the shadows. The acolyte is then led off to a feast, where he is introduced to his Worthy. After the first acolyte, fake blood is spilled on the altar.

At this point pawns are generally started training in a martial art, if they don't know one already. If they do know one, they're encouraged to continue with it.

Pawns will recognize the other pawns they were initiated with, and possibly their worthy (some worthies remain incognito, some don't).

Worthy Ones

After three months to a year of loyal service as a Pawn, an initiate can be promoted to the level of being a "Worthy." This ceremony is done very simply, and is only done to one at a time. It consists of answering riddles and questions asked by a panel of hooded figured while buck naked. At the end of the questions, the questioners throw back their hoods, give the new Worthy a medal in the shape of a seven pointed star, and go off to have a feast. A Worthy still doesn't know what or who he's working for, but usually serves as a "straw boss" for a cell of pawns. He'll also have a means to contact a superior.

At the level of Worthy, Dream Kings are taught an elaborate mythology and history (all bullshit) of this ancient and powerful order. Furthermore (and more importantly) they begin a series of meditations and mental exercises to work them towards Zen.

Master of Sleep

After a time of service as a Worthy, initiates can become elevated to the level of Master of Sleep. There's a big build-up to this; the worthy is told that at the new level he will learn deep secrets, and receive great rewards. The initiation for this is a big party; the initiate is well rewarded for his service. The capper is that he's told "the great ones" have summoned a creature of pleasure for him, waiting for him in the next room. It is, of course, a blank tulpa. From this point onward, Masters of Sleep are occasionally rewarded with return visits to this fabulous creature, who is always just as beautiful and erotic as the Master remembers him/her/it.

It is also at this level that Dream Kings learn they're selling Nightmare. They still don't know anything about how it's produced, but they at least know what they're doing now.

Exalted Master of Sleep

Another small promotion, the ceremony is completely casual, no special robes or anything. Supe-



riors casually tell the new Exalted Master that all the history and mythology was a lie. Zen training is accelerated.

Prince of Dreams

This is a big one. It usually comes about two years after initiation as a Pawn. The build-up to this is immense and eerie. Months of hinting at perils to come and the need to be spiritually strong and resolute are capped at the night of this initiation. Dressed in ceremonial robes, the candidate for Princehood is told he will have to face his deepest fear. If he has learned his lessons well, he will be able to overcome it. If not, it will destroy him, for he is unworthy. The candidate is free to turn down this promotion and remain an Exalted Master as long as he likes, but he'll know the *real* power lies beyond this step. Once he's good and scared, he'll be introduced to a room with a raw tulpa.

The purpose of this is to test how much faith the candidate has in himself and his training — the tulpa is of course shaped into precisely what the initiate fears most. If he believes he can overcome his fear, he will. If not, the Order doesn't want him knowing the deep secrets anyhow.

If the candidate does survive the encounter, he'll learn that nightmares are, in fact, *recorded* to produce the hallucinations — but still won't know how or why.

At this stage, Dream Kings are qualified to do the initiations for the lowest levels.

Imperial Prince of Dreams

After loyal service as a Prince, a Dream King may be promoted to Imperial Prince. He'll just be called before one of his superiors, who will say "You're an Imperial Prince now. You can be trusted with the secret of Dreamweb." He'll be told about Dreamweb (though not where it's from) and may possibly be trusted with imprinting.

Nightlord

After a year or more as an Imperial Prince, if the candidate is good enough and smart enough,

he can be promoted to Nightlord. The initiation for this is that the candidate is told he must wear a black robe, take a sword, and kill someone he loves. The sacrificial victim has been chosen and taken by their superiors, and awaits them in another room. When the initiate enters the chamber, his beloved is tied up and waiting for the blade. Sometimes the Nightlord can see the beloved's eyes and hear his voice, sometimes not; it all depends on what the initiate is expecting, because it's all done with tulpas. After the "murder," the initiate is led away in silence and pointed away from the building where the ceremony took place. He is followed and watched, and when he sees that his loved one is alive and well, he is brought back in and told of tulpas.

They are now told why they've been studying Zen, and are entrusted with collecting Dreamweb, as well as with more initiation duties.

Supreme Nightlord

A promotion taking place before a large group of assembled initiates (less Pawns and Worthies), this is full of pomp and grandeur, offering of gifts, drugs, sex with tulpas, etc., etc. At this point Dream Kings are given more training in how to recognize tulpas (though they still don't know that the "hot babes" they've been with all this time *are* tulpas). The tulpa-spotting methods they're taught are all based on deduction and observation rather than any psychic ability. For example, they're told to watch for people who are too willing to please, who are always found with groups of others who know them already, and so forth. (See "Recognizing Molded Tulpas," p. 22.)

Supreme Invisible Nightlord

The highest point. At this point the initiate is asked if he's willing to forgo the greatest pleasure in his life for power. If he answers "yes," he's told that the great sex he's had has been with tulpas, and that since he knows their true nature he can never form them again.

Skills of the Order

Zen

Reis theorized that, since Tulpas are molded by expectation, someone in a state of *mugu-mushin* or “no-mind” would be able to handle them without erasing them. He has had little success with this idea, but learning to truly evacuate one’s mind of all thought takes a *lot* of training, and he has high hopes.

Recognizing Molded Tulpas

Also not very successful. The biggest clue, “Look for people who never do anything unexpected,” is usually so subtle (especially in an environment like the Edge, where people have many different expectations, both native and chemically altered) that it does little good. Currently Reis has hired hackers and researchers all over the world to try and find people who seemed to just “appear” from nowhere (no birth certificate, credit or bank records, etc.). He’s also trying to develop some sort of device to detect them, but has had no luck. He’s leery of getting other fringe scientists to help him, because he’d have to tell them what to look for. He has succeeded in recruiting a couple of promising scientists to the Exalted Order: Dr. Djibo Lliam, a fringe neurologist at D’Aubainne U., has attained the rank of Worthy; and Dr. Trudy Clay, a respected parapsychologist, is an Exalted Master.

The Functions

There are many tasks involved in the operation, and these functions have ritual names. Note that getting a higher rank does not necessarily mean a change of function; for example, someone who is particularly good at sales will stay an Extoller for as long as he wishes.

Extollers

Usually Pawns in the Order, Extollers work the street selling drugs and raising money. They

don’t exclusively sell Nightmare; they carry a wide variety of narcotics.

Guardians of Ultimate Night

Thugs and assassins. Sometimes Pawns, more frequently Worthies or Masters.

Keepers of the Key

These people carry bulk shipments of completed Nightmare to distribution centers on the island, and smugglers in Skylla. They have to be Masters or higher, and usually have some Guardians along who don’t know what’s being delivered.

Masters of Secrets

Money launderers. Usually only an Exalted Master is trusted with collecting shipments of cash, but a lower level might be trusted with moving it electronically, or disguising where it came from.

Guides to the Gateway

Those who are sent to find those with vivid nightmares for imprinting. A Guide must be at least a Prince of Dreams.

Royal Makers

The Royal Makers supervise the imprinting of Dreamweb with nightmares, and must be at least the rank of Imperial Prince. Also included in this department are those Nightlords who have the job of collecting Dreamweb.

Diviners

This department is primarily charged with finding shaped tulpas at large, but it also carries out whatever other investigations Reis feels are necessary. Those who are trying to find shaped tulpas must be at least Supreme Nightlords. There are Diviners of lesser rank who investigate other individuals and groups.

Signs

Though they may seem hokey, many people just won't accept a secret cabal without passwords and secret handshakes.

To Show You're In the Conspiracy

Yawn, covering the mouth with left fist. Left thumb is held between first and middle fingers.

Proper Response to the Yawn

Put your left hand under chin, palm up, with middle finger curled in against jaw. Say, "Insomniac? Or just nocturnal?"

Secret Handshake

As a normal handshake, but tighten pinkie finger, middle finger, and third finger in that order while rotating wrist clockwise.

Locations

The initiations for the first two levels are done in an abandoned church in Great Men. The next four promotions are done at a warehouse in Skylla. The final three are done in the private homes of one of the Supreme Invisible Nightlords. All these places are referred to as "Temples" and have secret basements decorated with mystic and Masonic paraphernalia.

THE LEGEND OF CHULKA

In daes ancien, there was an Ethiopie sorcerer, hight Chulka. With ys power he could dry rivers, and draw men up out of mud, and when he spoke it was as a burning coal. Many savages tribes knelt and called him king, yea and GOD as well, for he was heathen, and surely now brews in the pit of hell.

Mark ye well, for herein ys secret is revealed. Ys secret lay in ys weapon of sorcery, which is said to have come from the DEVIL, himself. This weapon was the Eye of Chulka, and with it he could render a man unto nothing and reform him in the image he chose. With ys Eye, he created slaves and warriors fierce, and monstrosities such as never were born of woman or beast. None could stand before the power of ys monsters, yet he was not content, for he had no

Now hearken on how hubris and evil contain the seeds of their own undoing, for this he then declared that no woman born of womb was sufficient for him, but that he would forge a woman for himself, as he did with his slaves and beasts. Yet when he did form her, lo, so sicken was he with passion that he could not bear the thought that one day she would die. Thus he gave her the Eye of Chulka, that she might live forever. Without it he could not master his slaves and beasts, and they rose up and slew him. Yet the woman lived.

Yea, for two hundred and thirty years the Church of Satan and man's pride walked the earth, and tempted men, and

NOTE: CHULKA COULD OBVIOUSLY MOLD THINGS CONSCIOUSLY AND PREVENT THE SORCERER EFFECT CAUSED BY KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATURE. WORD IS UNSURE HOW IT WAS ACHIEVED, BY POWER OF HIS OWN OR THROUGH SOME UNSTATED POWER OF THE EYE. POSSIBLY SOME VERSION OF THE "CHULKA'S VEIL".

Real History of the Exalted Order

Once upon a time there was a parapsychology student of rather modest skills and disproportionately large ambitions. He was doing a postgraduate research project at the University of Michigan on spontaneous human combustion. (This was before the creation of blue shock, and the phenomenon was still uncommon.) Several of the case histories he read noted that the victims were consumed so quickly that they left no burns on the floor they'd been standing on, though the body and sometimes the clothes were completely consumed. He didn't think much of it until there was a case of "spon com" right on his own campus. Investigation revealed that the victim, Ben Jensen, had seemed like "a regular guy — last person you'd expect anything weird to happen to." The sole witness, a lonely and surly sophomore named Andrew Olker, responded very poorly to Reis's investigations.

Then one night, Reis's life changed completely. Olker came after him with a fire axe in the parking lot, and Reis shot him. At that moment, Reis had to choose between telling the authorities and having his investigation of the combustion halted by police barriers, or hiding evidence of justifiable homicide.

Reis decided he was bigger than the law. Olker wound up in an abandoned quarry, and Olker's room keys wound up in Reis's pocket. In Olker's room (a single) he found a strange journal, recounting Olker's stalking of Jensen. In it, Jensen was referred to as "a phony." Olker had also been doing research of his own — including the charred fragment on page 23.

This fragment put Reis on the trail of both tulpas and the Eye. Through steady research, he learned that a necklace "Bearing a gem rumored to be the notorious Eye of Tchulca" was for sale in an estate auction. At the auction, the highest bidder was one Josef Schwarz, but Schwarz didn't get the Eye. Reis had learned the Eye could change form at the whim of the owner. Counting on this, he had a duplicate necklace made. Before the auction he asked to examine the real necklace, distracted his watcher, transformed the Eye into a ring on his finger, and dropped the fake into the box.

Remolding the Eye into a pair of glasses, he wore them constantly, and eventually captured his first tulpa. After pimping the creature to raise some capital, Reis did two things. First he hired a P.I. to investigate Schwarz, and second he moved to Al Amarja. (This was *after* blue shock was invented; he assumed the large number of spontaneous combustions was due to more tulpas. It seems to be some sort of bizarre coincidence that there really *were* more tulpas on the island — exactly as Reis expected.)

The P.I. resigned after reporting that Schwarz had "blown a guy up." Reis immediately contacted Schwarz and told him of the large number of tulpas on the island. The two met and began an uneasy partnership.

Reis's prestige grew steadily, in proportion to his wealth. Eventually he hired Karl Kramer to help him run a "real" brothel.

One day he and a Sandman wound up stalking the same tulpa. Reis barely escaped with his life, and a P.I. named Paula Elweiss was hired to follow the Sandman. When she reported her findings, Reis realized he had yet another avenue of profit open to him. Quietly he began recruiting toughs and loners to a fake organization called The Exalted Order of Dream Kings. They were able to produce Nightmare for quite a while without the original Sandmen catching on — after all, Sandmen rarely get together to systematically compare notes. When the Sandmen did find out, things got ugly very quickly (it's known in Exalted Order history as "The Night of Sixty Knives") with a group of vengeful psychic sociopaths against a numerically superior and better organized group of normals. After some inconclusive exchanges of violence, Reis talked the Sandmen into an alliance, with which they're still not satisfied.

GMCS

Typical Member of the Exalted Order

Attack: 3 dice.

Defense: 3 dice.

Hit Points: 21 (tough)

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice — Usually a martial art, but there are some who learned from the street. (Confident and/or scarred.)

Loyal, Variable — The higher in the order they are, the more loyal they'll be. Pawns and worthies lack this particular skill. Masters and Princes will have 3 dice. Anyone of Nightlord level or above will have 4 dice. This skill will help them keep their mouths shut about the order, even if they're naturally blabbermouths. It can be used to resist torture as well, and can lead to uncharacteristic behavior such as enduring personal discomfort for the good of the organization. (Resolute set to jaw when questioned.)

Functional Skill — This will vary depending on what department the Dream King works in. A high level Extoller might have a skill in Rich Image, which allows her to hobnob with wealthy idiots without being looked down on. A Keeper of the Key might be a Good Driver, while a Master of Secrets might have a skill in Business or Computer Operation. While most initiates can fight, a high level Guardian of Ultimate Night might have Strong Stomach in order to make gruesome examples of those who betray the Order. Someone who was a Guide to the Gateway might be a Good Listener, or Observant. As for the Diviners, they could have any investigative skill; Tailing, Phone Tapping, even fringe talents.

This skill could be 3 or (very rarely) 4 dice, and the sign will vary, of course.

Roderick Reis, *aka "Doctor" Roderick Reis*

Fringe pimp

Reis never keeps tulpas or Dreamweb at his house. His wife is the same age as he is, and a very plain woman. Her name is Lois. They have a ten year old daughter named Cynthia. Lois knows all about his business, but Cynthia has been kept ignorant, and is usually away at a private school in Switzerland. Reis often flies her home for weekends. He loves both deeply; witness the fact that he has never cheated on his wife, despite his line of business. Neither has any exceptional survival skills, except that Cynthia is a 3 die horseback rider. She receives a bonus if riding her favorite horse.

If his actions are called into question, Reis will defend them thus: "Tulpas have no real personalities, they are just perfect mimics. Though they can fool you, it makes no sense for them to have real comprehension or intelligence — otherwise they would have goals of their own and not be susceptible to the will of others. To say a tulpa feels pain is like saying my mirror feels it when I cut myself shaving."

As for his actions as a pimp, Reis tries to distance himself from the day to day workings of his business as much as possible. He is in deep denial of the pain he causes, and rationalizes that "it's just a job, and they make good money."

In addition to the Eye and his pistol, Reis also has a crystal trap. One-die white thought generators protect his home, his car, his yacht and the Scarlet Palace.

Reis's home is generally protected by one or two Guardians, as well as other, more mundane security people. His home is moderately large, and a fine example of Art Deco design. He has a stables on his large estate, and his home is tastefully decorated with works of abstract art.

A stout, middle-aged American man with grey hair, devastatingly expensive (though conservative) suits, and a monocle. Age 51, 86 kg and 177 cm

Attack: 2 dice X1 with fists, or 3 dice X4 with handgun

Defense: 2 dice

Hit Points: 16 (Bulk)

Traits

Magical Artifact — Reis carries an artifact called the Eye of Chulka (see below), currently disguised as his monocle. (Cool designer glasses.)

Psychology and Parapsychology, 3 dice — Though he never got his doctorate, his investigations of the "tulpa" legend got him something much more lucrative: the Eye of Chulka. In addition to his paranormal knowledge (general and sometimes outdated), he understands motivations. He's a Freudian. (Uses psychobabble.)

Rich and Well Connected — Not only the Order, but also his influential and wealthy customers. (Expensive suits.)

Good Shot, 3 dice — It's a measure of his connections that the Peace Chief turns a blind eye to

Reis's 9mm Beretta. (Wears suits large to conceal a shoulder holster.)

The Eye of Chulka

It has the following powers:

- ❑ *Reveal Tulpas.* Any tulpa seen through the Eye appears to have a red nimbus around it. Note that as soon as the tulpa's nature is known to the Eye's wielder, layers of persona will begin to vanish. This will *not* happen if someone ignorant of tulpa nature sees someone with a nimbus through it. It'll just be "a person with a red glow around him."
- ❑ *Capture Tulpas.* Any tulpa, once totally stripped to nonmaterial form, can be sucked into the Eye, to be released at the discretion of the wielder. It only holds one.
- ❑ *"Lock Down" a Tulpa.* Should a Tulpa actually come into possession of the Eye, it will permanently become the person it is at that point. Other tulpas won't strip it, nor will those who know its nature. The tulpa will become "real" — except that it will never age.
- ❑ *Change shape.* The Eye itself will become anything that its owner desires, within three parameters: it must have a clear portion, like a lens or a gem in it; it must be solid; and it can only weigh 60-340 grams. In the past, one owner transformed it and swallowed it when imprisoned, turned it into a tiny dagger to defend himself, and later a lockpick to escape.

Josef Schwarz

Sorcerer and Invisible Nightlord

Josef is a sorcerer who has spent much of his life developing magical means to manipulate tulpas. He wants nothing so much as to possess the Eye of Chulka. With it, he believes he could transform *himself* into a tulpa and live forever. Reis knows nothing of this. Though he suspects Josef wants the Eye, he knows that the interests of the Order are better served with Josef on its side. Josef works with Reis, and is in a bad enough position that he won't betray him unless he's *sure* he can get away with it. He knows Reis would never let him screw up twice.

Josef usually has a Guardian or two with him for protection.



German man, age 66, 165 cm, 50 kg, skinny, wrinkled, large nose, bald, piercing gaze.

Languages: English, German, Yiddish, some ancient Aztec, Greek and Latin with horrible pronunciation.

Attack: 2 dice, X2 with knife.

Defense: 2 dice.

Hit Points: 12 (scrawny)

Magic Pool: 6 shots; always has one spent on The Blade Gaze of Olampitchu. Also generally has one or two on Morpheus' Inexorable Cage of Night.

Traits

Sorcerer — The spells Schwarz knows are listed below. (Piercing gaze.)

Captured elemental — Josef has a minor fire elemental captured in a ring. He is leery of using it, since that would mean its loss, but will use it if threatened. The elemental looks like a flaming comet about the size of a baseball. It moves very rapidly, and could transport itself through the astral plane to find someone attacking from a distance. Otherwise, it can only attack someone if Josef can visualize where the target is (or, of course, if the target is in his presence). The elemental defends with 3 dice, takes 20 hit points to destroy, and always hits with its attacks, doing 3 points of damage. Its attack method is to swarm all over the body of the victim at high speed. It can be destroyed by immersion in water. A squirtgun does one point of damage to it, a bucket does 1 die, a firehose does X3 damage if it hits, a garden hose does X2. If it's swarming over someone it only rolls one die to defend from attacks by water. (Wears a large sapphire ring with a Seal of Solomon on it.)

Socially awkward, penalty die — Josef spent most of his youth studying magic, and was never handsome or well spoken. He's ill at ease in social situations, blunt and inarticulate in speech. (Commits frequent *faux pas*.)

Addicted to sex — Reis keeps Schwarz well-supplied with "freebies" at the Scarlet Palace, and Josef has become accustomed to high class prostitutes. (Leers.)

Spells

The Blade Gaze of Olampitchu (Level 10) — An Aztec spell that lasts for 12 hours, and reveals the true nature of anything concealed or disguised by

any form of magic, mental projection or energy field. Note that plain old greasepaint and wigs are not penetrated, but holographic projections, The Ring of Gyges, or fringe mind clouding are all cast aside. This spell also reveals the true nature of magical beings such as werewolves, vampires and — you guessed it — tulpas. It does not reveal the presence of Kergillians. (Piercing stare.)

Morpheus' Inexorable Cage of Night (Level 9) — This Greek spell puts one person or animal to sleep for half an hour. Once "loaded," it's ready for six hours. After that time it dissipates. The caster makes some cool looking arcane hand gestures to release and aim it, and the range is 10 meters. If external circumstances are inimical to sleep (such as fire, buckets of water, loud noises, kicks) the sleeper gets another roll to try and overcome the spell. (Smells faintly of burnt herbs.)

Solomon's Seal of Spiritual Domination (Level 14) — A Cabalistic incantation that imprisons incorporeal beings in a physical object. The object must have a Seal of Solomon on it somewhere, somehow. If this seal is broken, the being can escape. This can work on a tulpa, but only within the few seconds between its being stripped of its identity and its total dissipation. It would also work against psychovores. If used on an astrally projecting human, it would force him to roll against it. A roll of 14 or lower would force the person to return to his body. A botch would give the caster control over the projectionist. If a being is captured by Solomon's Seal, it will be stuck until released, and when released will have to complete one task to be named by the sorcerer. (Carries a keychain with Seal of Solomon on it.)

Chulka's Veil of Undetectable Expectations (Level 10) — This spell has two effects. It makes ones opinions and expectations cloudy to tulpas, thus defending them from stripping or molding, and it makes the recipient hard to describe or remember by anybody. He becomes "dim" and forgettable. It lasts 6 hours. (All other signs become forgettable.)

Karl Kramer

Lodgemaster of the Exalted Order

Karl was originally hired to run the Scarlet Palace, but has gained Reis's trust and now manages the Exalted Order. Before that he had interesting and varied careers ranging from gun runner to

firefighter to CIA informant to currency speculator. Rumor has it that he had part in destroying a white slavery ring, but considering his current employer, this is unlikely.

German man, age 42, 167cm, 70kg, stocky, scar under left eye, gold tooth.

Languages: English, German, Italian, Spanish.

Attack: 3 dice, X3 damage with sword cane

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (Keeps coming)

Traits

Fighting, 3 dice — There are few moves that haven't been thrown at Karl Kramer. He's confident with almost any weapon, from knives and bottles to guns to artillery pieces. (Carries a sword cane.)

Criminal Mastermind, 4 dice — Karl has a great gift for organization — establishing it, insuring that people stay in their places in it, and milking it for all it's worth. (Pager constantly going off.)

Pulling Strings, 3 dice — Karl knows what makes people tick, and what makes them go boom. Though he generally favors terror as insurance of loyalty, he understands the carrot as well as the stick. (Can come across as a sweet, kind old guy or a ruthless fearsome thug — or anything else he wants.)

Paula Elweiss

Zen Archer and Invisible Nightlord

After seeing her performance during the Night of Sixty Knives, Reis decided that Paula was his kind of employee. She's been a part of the Exalted Order from the very beginning.

No one really knows much about Paula. She remains distant from almost everyone. Schwarz once commented that "She seems to have a score to settle with the world" — but not to her face. Reis secretly suspects she may develop her psychic powers to the point where she has all of the inborn abilities of a genuine Sandman.

American woman, 173cm, 70kg. Lanky, straight brown hair, weak chin, never smiles.

Attack: 3 dice X2 with knife or crossbow

Defense: 3 dice.

Hit Points: 25 (Inexorable)

Traits

Zen, 3* dice — As a part of her martial arts training, Paula learned about No-Mind as a way of life, but she has not perfected it. She can make herself invisible to tulpas on rare occasion, but not reliably — assess two penalty dice when she attempts this. Regardless, this trait can also be used to resist coercion, manipulation, psychic invasions and torture. (Empty eyes.)

Martial Arts, 3 dice — Paula has studied several martial arts, but specializes in archery and an obscure type of Kung Fu called Shadow Water. (Wears loose clothes so she can move freely.)

Sleuthing, 3 dice — She was a P.I. before she was in the Order, and does a lot of work with the Diviners now. She can tail a car, pick up clues, pick a lock and sweat a suspect. (Carries handcuffs as a habit.)

Rodney "Hot Rod" Serengeti

Exalted Order Cop

Rodney thought being a Peace Force officer would be a pretty cushy job — and it is, but not quite cushy enough for Rod. Assigned to Burger Patrol, he hasn't had the chances to pick up freebies from the various pushers, bartenders, prostitutes and donut merchants that cops on regular beats take advantage of. When he found out about a secret society, he decided to join. He couldn't conceal his Peace Force job from them (he's just a lowly Blue) and is pretty sure they suspect him of being a plant. He hopes that if he is found out by his superiors in the Peace Force he'll be able to play off both sides against the middle. A hazardous position, and he knows it, but he's got a touch of the Al Amarjan national disease: lust for power.

He's good friends with Maggie Kopek (see below) though he thinks she needs to be protected because "She just isn't hard enough, *mean* enough to make it on *this* island."

Al Amarjan man, age 29, 185cm, 92kg. Short kinky hair, petulant lips, short vertical scar on his forehead.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 (nightstick) or X4 (SMG)

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (tough)

Armor: 1 die

Traits

Peace Force, 3 dice — Standard training as described on page 146 of OTE. (Arrogant)

Exalted Order — A nice padding to his Peace Force salary and standard bribes, he also works as an Extoller and Keeper of the Key. He is at the level of Master of Sleep, and is unlikely to rise higher unless he betrays the Peace Force to the Order so firmly that they know he'll never betray them to the Peace. Nonetheless, he can call on the Order if he gets in trouble that his buddies on the Force can't get him out of (unlikely as that is). (Acts like he knows a secret in a very obvious way.)

Malleable and Power-Mad, penalty die — Rod wants badly to be in charge of things, but he's far too easy to manipulate. Easy to convince, easy to confuse, easy to lure with his own greed. Rod is the perfect catspaw. Those with any ability to manipulate people will see Rod as having "Play With Me" written all over him. (Blusters and whines alternately.)

Maggie Kopek

Mover in the Order

Maggie was initiated into the Movers by her parents when she was just sixteen. They hoped to make her the ultimate Mover, but unfortunately their machinations eventually drove them apart until they divorced. The custody battle was of legendary proportions. Her father ended up dead from an exotic Papuan tapeworm that got into his bloodstream and stopped his heart, while her mother wound up hopelessly insane in the D'Aubainne Asylum, babbling about "Twenty-three couches on the dark side of the Moon," over and over. Maggie has decided it's a good idea to take it slow and be non-threatening in the Movers, but she's still a manipulator at heart.

Her mother was in the Gladstein cell, while her father claimed to be Hermetic (though he may actually have been a Vornite). Maggie herself is pretty sure she's in Cell Z.

Maggie is "good friends" with Rod (see above).

Irish/German woman, 180cm, 65kg, rust-red hair, freckles, nice smile. Age 20.

Languages: English, Italian, Japanese, Spanish.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 with knife

Defense: 3 dice

Hit Points: 21 (Healthy)

Traits

Moving, 3 dice — Very persuasive and sweet. Convincing without being arrogant. (Sweet smile.)

Exalted Order — Though young, she's risen through the ranks surprisingly fast and is already an Exalted Master of Sleep. She works as a Master of Secrets. (Wears a seven pointed star inside her shirt.)

Computer (ab)user, 3 dice — Not only can she access a wide amount of data through phone networks, she is also an adequate hacker and programmer. She works at a bank, where she launders money for the Order (among others). (Short fingernails.)

Secret Personality, 4 dice — Thanks to the manipulations of her parents, Maggie has a secret personality, but it's identical to her "normal" one. It's somewhat similar to having a backup copy of a computer program; if something goes wrong with her other personality (brainwashing, psychic damage), the ur-persona (or parts thereof) can be "copied over" the damaged areas. The "public" personality has no knowledge of being an Order member, a Mover or a money launderer. Knowledge of these is all kept in the "secret" persona, and can be "loaded" and "unloaded" at will. When she needs to deal with the Order, she loads up her knowledge of them. When scheming for herself, she can load up everything. If interrogated, tortured or mind-read, she can erase the knowledge of her activities and "hide." In this mode she will truly appear to know nothing at all about what she isn't supposed to, because the personality in charge genuinely *won't* know it. (Every once in a long while she'll have a facial tic.)

Fighting, 3 dice — Her parents started her on a bewildering array of different martial arts when she was quite young. Though she never much cared for it, the training stuck. (Carries a knife disguised as a hairbrush.)

Story Ideas

- ❑ The player characters are in (minor) trouble with the Peace Force, and the Peace agree to drop the matter if the PCs will see just where it is that Rod Serengeti goes periodically.
- ❑ The PCs are chasing the Movers (or *are* Movers, or are being manipulated by Movers) and get sidetracked investigating Maggie Kopek.
- ❑ The PCs witness someone who's just gone through the initiation for Nightlord running into the loved one he *thought* he killed. They see the new Nightlord's disbelief, then gratitude, and then he gets hauled off by some secretive weirdos.
- ❑ In a case of mistaken identity, the characters are delivered a large shipment of Nightmare, and the Guardians of Ultimate Night come after them, thinking the PCs have stolen it.
- ❑ A fringe scientist PC, or a PC with fringe perception, or a fringe scientist the PCs know, gets invited to join the order. Reis hopes they will be able to build a "tulpa detector."
- ❑ A parapsychologist's lab gets broken into by Diviners who hope to be able to apply his research to their own. The characters investigate.
- ❑ The characters meet a Zen Master who was brought to the island as part of Reis's investigation of this avenue of control, and he leads them to Reis.
- ❑ The PCs get hassled by a cop who's even *more* arrogant and abusive than the usual cop, bad enough for them to plot revenge. The cop is Rod Serengeti.
- ❑ The Diviners suspect that one of the PCs is an unawakened Sandman, and the Order tests him by getting him in close proximity to a molded tulpa. If he passes the test, they'll recruit him.
- ❑ A magician hires the PCs to track down and retrieve a "gem" called the Eye of Chulka.
- ❑ A fringe scientist hires the characters to track down the source of Nightmare because she wants to know how a drug can produce such specifically identical hallucinations in totally different subjects.

Word on the Street: Sandmen

"Eyes don't come out all that easy, but when 'Milky' Farquahr stole a load of Nightmare he was found with 'em pulled out. I hear they strangled him with 'em, but that ain't really possible...is it?"

— *conversation overheard in Great Men*

"Don't fuck with 'em. *Just...don't...fuck with 'em.* OK?"

— *mobster to underlings*

"Well, I've heard they're just running on momentum — the upper ranks were all wiped out by some cartel from Mali."

— *a Glorious Lord*

"Rumor has it that there's some sort of secret society behind them — a group called the Supreme Masters or something."

— *low-level Mover*

"Don't they sell that weird drug that makes you scared?"

— *burger in the Den of Thieves*

"I hear they secretly run Total Taxi and the newspaper."

— *a pube in Science*

"Listen man, how is it possible for two different users to have the same hallucination? Any chemical that can do that, it could do...anything, *anything*. Personally, I think that *all* the weird drugs floating around — 'shock, 'cube, zorro — I think they're all the *same*, one master drug that can influence the brain in *any* fashion. They sell 'em at different prices and under different names as a smokescreen. Somewhere on this island is someone is controlling it *all*."

— *a nervous-looking stranger making hushed conversation in a bar*

"I have it on good authority that they're funding a group of rebels called RSR3 to overthrow the D'Aubainnes."

— *a blond with curiously Asian features*

"I hear if you leave a tooth under your pillow, they'll replace it with a hit of Nightmare.' Shit, what's the big deal? They're just some freaky pushers and that's *all*."

— *a normal who has obviously never met a real Sandman*

The Fearmasters

"I will show you fear in a handful of dust..."

— T.S. Eliot, *"The Wasteland"*

Type: Small Secret Society.

Rep: None.

Brief: A group of hardcore Nightmare users who use it to understand and control Fear itself.

Allies: The Exalted Order, tangentially.

Enemies: None yet.

All her life, Charlotte Ritelli lived in fear. Despite a strong will, Charlotte was physically frail, and was deprived of her parents in an early accident. As an adult she attempted to confront her fears in a direct and scientific manner; she wrote down everything that scared her and why. She researched the sources and archetypes of fear. And she took frequent doses of Nightmare.

As her research progressed, a pattern seemed to be just beyond her reach. One night she put *Jacob's Ladder* on the VCR, played her *Carmina Burana* album, and shot three different batches of Nightmare simultaneously. In the dark epiphany that followed she went to the center of human fear in her own mind, and passed through it. She has not only transcended fear, she knows it on intimate terms. How to avoid it, how to alleviate it...and how to create it from nothing.

Charlotte has instructed a few of her friends in the art of commanding fear, though none are as good at it as she is. Currently there are about seven Fearmasters, including Charlotte. They're all women. She is considering teaching an open class in Fearmastery, but hasn't decided yet.

Applying Fearmastery consists of calling up the root of fear in one's own mind, and then using it as a pattern to either invoke or dissipate fear in another or oneself. A Fearmaster can still be scared, but if she uses a shot from her Fear Pool she can overcome her anxiety — the shot from her pool is added to whatever she would normally roll to resist.

If a Fearmaster attempts to scare more than one person at a time, she suffers a penalty die. A Fearmaster can only scare those who can clearly see and hear her.

The results of having fear invoked by a Fearmaster will vary, though it will always have *some* effect. The victim rolls 2 dice against the 1 or 2 of the Fearmaster, unless he has a skill that would make sense as a defense, such as "Strong Will" or "Fearless" or "Too Dumb to Know When To Quit." If the defender rolls higher than the Fearmaster, he only takes a penalty die on his next roll. If the Fearmaster beats him, he takes a penalty die on all rolls for mental or physical action until he leaves the Fearmaster's presence. If the Fearmaster rolls more than double her victim's roll, he is paralyzed with terror, wetting his pants, begging for mercy, *et cetera*.

GMCS

Charlotte Ritelli

Fearmaster supreme

Charlotte has a master's degree in Psychology, and currently works as an assistant instructor at D.A.U.

Al Amarjan woman of mostly Italian descent, age 26, 150cm, 41kg. Long dark hair, with a 3cm wide arc shaved on the left side, about 2cm above the ear. The hair below this arc is tightly braided. Brown eyes, with lines of suspicion between them.

Languages: English, Italian.

Attack: 3 dice + penalty (Karate)

Defense: 3 dice + penalty (Karate)

Hit Points: 21 (Fearless)

Fear Pool: 6 shots of 2 dice each.

Traits

Fearmastery, 2* dice (fringe trait) — Charlotte understands fear and has moved completely beyond

it. She knows what causes it and what stops it, and this understanding is completely pre-rational. She can terrify a man two feet taller than her carrying a chainsaw just by giving him a certain look, muttering a bit and waving her hand at him. The causes of fear are deep and difficult to analyze; her understanding has become instinctive. She can also nullify fear; she knows exactly the thing to say or do to break tension, though it may appear illogical or even insane at the time. Furthermore, she can overcome her own fear and behave rationally, even when there are excellent *reasons* to be scared. (Fearless)

Karate, 3 dice — In an early attempt to conquer her fears of personal harm she studied karate. (Fights in stylized stances).

Psychology, 3 dice — She knows what makes people tick, with a specialty in phobias and “the archetypes of fear.” (Will either look right through you or never meet your eye, whichever makes you more uncomfortable.)

Frail, penalty die — Charlotte has always been spindly and will take a penalty on any physical action. (Her high hit points represent a combination of her karate toughness and her utter fearlessness.) (Scrawny)

Marie Hizrad

Fearmaster and Member of the Exalted Order

Marie has been a Nightmare user for a long time, and through her purchases she was recruited to the Exalted Order. She was Charlotte’s pusher, and (unlikely as it was) the two became friends. Marie isn’t sure whether she should tell her superiors about the Fearmasters, though her successes with their techniques will probably lead her to do so eventually.

Al Amarjan woman of Sri Lankan descent, age 31, 158cm, 49 kg. Olive complexion, coarse, short hair, mole on neck, diamond stud in nose.

Languages: Al Amarjan patois, Tamil

Attack: 3 dice (Kung Fu)

Defense: 3 dice (Kung Fu)

Hit Points: 21 (Resilient)

Fear Pool: 3 shots of 1 die each.

Traits

Kung Fu, 3 dice — When initiated to the Exalted Order, she began training in White Crane Kung Fu. (Graceful moves.)

Exalted Order — Marie is an Exalted Master of Sleep, as well as a Keeper of the Key. If she needs to, she can call on the Order for information, backup muscle, or to bail her out of trouble. Her Order activities also keep her fairly well-off, financially. She is the Order’s liaison with the Delta Epsilon Theta fraternity. (Wears a small seven pointed star inside her shirt.)

Dark Humor, 3 dice — Tells great jokes, though usually they’re a bit morbid. Has very good deadpan comic timing. (Says outrageous things with a perfectly straight face.)

Fearmastery, 1* die (fringe trait) — She’s been taking instruction from Charlotte, and has been a Nightmare user for quite a while. (Steely gaze.)

Plot Hooks

- ❑ Charlotte opens a school of “Psychic Self Defense” and the player characters decide to take classes.
- ❑ The characters see someone mess with a Fearmaster in a bar (or, if they’re drunk, stoned or obnoxious enough, *they* mess with a Fearmaster in a bar) and see (or experience) Fearmastery.
- ❑ Charlotte needs large quantities of Nightmare for training. Perhaps she hires some characters to make a pickup she doesn’t have the muscle for.
- ❑ Marie Hizrad is one of John Doe’s victims, and Charlotte wants to know what’s going on. Either she hires the PCs, or they run across her while investigating Hizrad’s death.
- ❑ Hizrad suspects she may be John Doe’s next target, and hires the PCs to protect her when the Order leaves her high and dry.
- ❑ Someone gets victimized in some fashion by a Fearmaster and hires the PCs to find out what the hell happened.
- ❑ A Diviner in the Exalted Order gets suspicious about the large quantities of Nightmare being sold in a particular area, and wants investiga-



tors from outside the Order (reasoning that if there's treachery going on, an internal investigator might be a traitor).

- ❑ The PCs hear a gothic rock band called "Scarecrow." Lima Eury, their lead singer, is a Fearmaster, and has been experimenting with applying her skills through music. She gets a bonus die while singing (instead of the penalty for group effect) because the band is already using subsonics and visual effects to make people uneasy.
- ❑ Charlotte has finally overcome her fear of dating. She meets one of the PCs and romance blossoms.

Word on the Street

"Charlotte Ritelli? Dude, she proctored my rat lab at the U. She was pretty hot lookin'."

— *Antoine Maribella*

"I hear she's, like, a lesbian, and her and a bunch of her dyke pals get together, shoot drugs and, like, *do it*."

— *Jennifer Jackson*

"Charlotte Ritelli? Oh yeah, she has that stripe in her hair. I talked with her at a party once. She told me that at the end of *Psycho*, Hitchcock superimposed a skull over Norman Bates's face. She seemed OK."

— *a member of the Black Death Theater Troupe*

"There's something really creepy about that chick."

— *Geoffrey Dirktongue, satanist*

"I've seen her over at Kuan Tun's."

— *Tae Kwon Do blackbelt*

"She hangs out with the DETHs sometimes, but not all that often."

— *Rigor Kwasek*

"I hear she's secretly dating Sir Arthur Compton."

— *Sammy She-mei, gossip columnist*

"She's pals with that Eury chick from Scarecrow. They're a pretty bitchin' band, man!"

— *a skinhead in Flowers*

The Scarlet Palace

The Scarlet Palace in Broken Wings is Al Am-arja's most expensive brothel. Its owner, Roderick Reis, claims to be part of an international organization that can find *the* perfect mate for *anyone*. Actually, it's all done with tulpas.

Reis has captured three of the unfortunate creatures. They are held prisoner and periodically reset to be re-printed with new desires.

How Reis Pimps Tulpas

He keeps it secret from the masses, but Reis has made it known that, for those who can afford an incredibly high price, he can find the perfect prostitute for them. He calls the system the Reis Index of Compatibility, or RIC for short. He has prospective customers come in and take an exhaustive psychological test. (Their answers have little, if anything, to do with the process — it's all part of building their confidence.) He then has a personal interview with the client to "evaluate" him or her (actually to get their hopes and confidence up). Then, he simply introduces a customer to a darkened room with a lone tulpa in it. As the client can't see the tulpa's previous form too well, he projects his own desires onto it, remolding it completely. The next client goes through the same process, creating his own "dream date", as does the next, and so on. The tulpas don't mind the time with their clients so much — the clients passionately want to believe in them, making the relationship between hooker and john almost symbiotic. It's Reis and his minions, who know they're imposters, that the tulpas fear and loathe.

The rules of RIC are as follows: The client will pay \$10,000 for the first day of availability, \$5,000 for every 24 hours thereafter. The number of days that "the girl (or boy) will be on the island" will never exceed 14 — a security precaution to prevent tulpa escape or kidnapping. (One tulpa got away

in the early days of Reis's operation, and even learned how to make Dreamweb from a foolish, now deceased, lackey. Reis still bitterly curses the loss, but doesn't realize just how disastrous it will be — this is the tulpa who becomes Tulpa-Trent — see p. 43.) The client and the tulpa will only meet in the Scarlet Palace or on Reis's yacht, *La Grande Fraise*. It's explained to clients that this is to protect the girls (or boys), which is true in a way. It is also to insure that the Order doesn't miss an ounce of precious Dreamweb.

Reis currently has three tulpas. He usually keeps one imprisoned on *La Grande Fraise*, the other two locked up in the Scarlet Palace. Even when they're imprinted, they're not permitted contact with anyone else, for fear that they might "pick up" something that will help them escape. The only other place the tulpas go is to the home of one of the Invisible Nightlords when needed for an initiation, and then they have Schwarz riding shotgun.

The Scarlet Palace is four stories high. Each of the top three floors has six rooms in it. These are "playgrounds," except for the one on the top floor which is an industrial-sized laundry operation in constant use. The rooms vary in decor from the standard (a bed, a lamp and a stereo) to the bizarre (Inga's Dungeon of Desire; a playground with a swingset, see-saw and sandbox; "The Jungle Room"; or an office for those who wish to live out their fantasies with their secretaries).

The first floor has a lobby with a cute young receptionist, Cindy Favorite (see GMCs). She keeps the appointment book ("Very well Mr. Clark; we'll have Lisa ready for the 'Cramming for LSATs' scenario on Friday"), takes the money, and tells people not to go down the hall to Mr. Reis's office. In actual fact, she's much more than a mere receptionist; as Karl Kramer got more and more involved with the Exalted Order, his secretary took on more and more responsibility for the Scarlet Palace. However, Cindy has no connection to the Exalted Order, thinks "tulpa" is the name of some sort of weird Tibetan sexual position, and has never taken Nightmare in her life. She knows the cover

story about the RIC, but thinks it's pretty much as described. She's not sure what the hell is going on in the basement — but suspects necrophilia.

Reis's office is where the secret door to the basement (where the tulpas are imprisoned) is concealed. The rest of the first floor consists of two play rooms and a large bar where the workers hang out between jobs. It's in this bar that the employees are "browsed" by their johns.

Reis runs his brothel carefully. He has a core group of prostitutes, but mostly he exchanges with pimps in other lands. There will be 30 "foreign exchange" prostitutes of all ages, descriptions and talents at any time — everything from lithe Brazilian boys with no English to California coeds with boob jobs and college degrees, to Japanese geishas and Indian Kama Sutra experts. He rotates them frequently, just in case one of them might discover the secret basement. His usual rate is \$1,000 a night, \$5,000 to deflower a virgin, damage charges assessed if anything disfiguring is done in the course of a "session."

Note that even though these women are nominally "voluntary" participants, experts at giving pleasure — few actually enjoy their job. The clients at the Scarlet Palace are usually men who can't get laid even though they're very rich, and the enjoyment of their partner is generally the last thing on their minds. These women are physical commodities, and they know it. Generally they feel that they have no other recourse — their attitude is one of apathy and cynicism. Others may know no other life. Girls as young as nine years are prostituted in the brothels of Thailand and the Philippines, and while Reis would *never* take advantage of someone below the age of consent, he has no problem with employing these sexual casualties once they're sixteen or so. Other women employed there may simply *believe* that the only thing they're good for is to be used and cast aside by men. With a few notable exceptions (such as Inga, below) the "working girls" are unlikely to assist the PCs or hinder them. Their attitude will most likely be apathy or paralyzed fear of both the PCs and their guards.

Some of Reis's regulars include:

Natalie — specialist in "trashy" encounters. She's just plain enough, just slightly smelly

enough, just common and cheap enough to drive certain rich folk wild with lust. Even though she isn't replaceable (and Roderick has checked), no one outside certain very rich people find her attractive. No one in Flowers, Justice or even Great Men would give her a second glance.

Rhonda — a mutant with extremely pliant bones. She's moderately good looking, but seems to appeal to those with a tactile fixation. She takes great care to keep her skin soft.

In addition there are **Inga** and **Russ** (see GMCs, below).

For hardcore security, there are never any fewer than 3 guys from Dunkelberg Security (4 on weekends) with access to bull beaters (see OTE, p. 99-100) in addition to their usual equipment.

Finally, in the basement are three members of the Exalted Order. One will be a Supreme Nightlord, able to force the tulpas to remain in their chambers, lest they encounter his deadly knowledge of their true nature. In addition to swords, they are armed with Nightmare darts. A Nightmare dart is prepared with Dreamweb that has something so nasty in it that it can't even be sold to the decadent — for example, catatonia or a psychotic episode. The dart will do negligible damage, but will give the victim an overlay of something indescribably hideous. This could have permanent psychological repercussions (or physical, if the victim runs into a tulpa while under the influence of it...).

(In a similar vein, Reis has been experimenting with a new marketing method for Nightmare, selling it in aerosol sprayers for use as a Mace-like offensive weapon. They sell for \$500 apiece at Gun Metal, where they're kept under the counter for preferred customers only. Reis is at present producing 6 cannisters of offensive Nightmare a month; if the prototypes sell well he'll make more. These carry less debilitating images than the darts he arms his guards with — typical nightmares like having one's brain eaten out by giant centipedes or being attacked by dogs. They're intended to distract and demoralize only — Reis wants to keep the *truly* potent version for his personal use and protection.)

The Sleep Disorders Clinic

Reis has set up a phony sleep research clinic to provide him with nightmares. There are some genuine scientists working here, but mostly he wants to locate people with vivid nightmares to steal.

When a patient continually complains of nightmares and shows signs of having them while asleep there, a Royal Maker from the Order will smear “saline paste” (actually Dreamweb) on his forehead, and hook him up to a bogus machine. If his nightmares are of insufficient quality, Reis might allow him to be cured with psychotherapy so that the clinic will have a good reputation and others with better nightmares will come in. If his nightmares are very good, the Dream Kings might reveal their true motives and put the “patient” on the payroll. Or they might continue to deceive him, depending on the character of the dreamer.

Reis has carefully hidden his connection to the clinic. The only way it can be traced to him is through the Order, or possibly through “anonymous contributions” he’s made. Someone who the Order trusts to produce nightmares could possibly connect the clinic with *them*. Only the Royal Makers are allowed to handle Dreamweb, and if the clinic is attacked, they will try to escape with it, rather than defend.

There are usually 2-3 Dream Kings at the clinic, as well as seven researchers and employees of a more mundane nature.

La Grande Fraise

Reis’s yacht is his favorite possession. The name means “The Big Strawberry” in French. It’s 20m long and built for luxury. Often he’ll ship a tulpa out to the boat and use this as a trysting place for someone who’s taken the RIC, since it’s easy to keep track of the Dreamweb produced, and there’s a large distance to swim should the tulpa undergo a “dangerous transformation” and try to escape. Rarely he will have two onboard. There will never be any fewer than two Nightlords protecting any single tulpa on the boat. If two tulpas

are on board, there will be three Nightlords. Furthermore, Reis always hires a typical three dice fighter as a waiter and busboy, as well as supervising on board himself. The spaces on the boat map are described below.

1. Main Deck

This is an open space with a meter-high rail going around it. People come up here to sunbathe or get into the bridge. If the boat isn’t under attack, there’s usually someone from the Order stationed here on lookout. On the port side (left when facing the front of the ship) is a stairway that leads up to the top of the bridge.

2. Bridge

The boat is controlled from here, and this is the center of communications. The forward walls are all glass, and there are a few chairs bolted to the floor here, as well as panels of motor controls, radios, navigational equipment and such. On the roof of the bridge (which has no rails around it) is a high power searchlight and the radio antennas. The searchlight cannot face the rear thirty degrees of the boat.

3. Reis’s Cabin

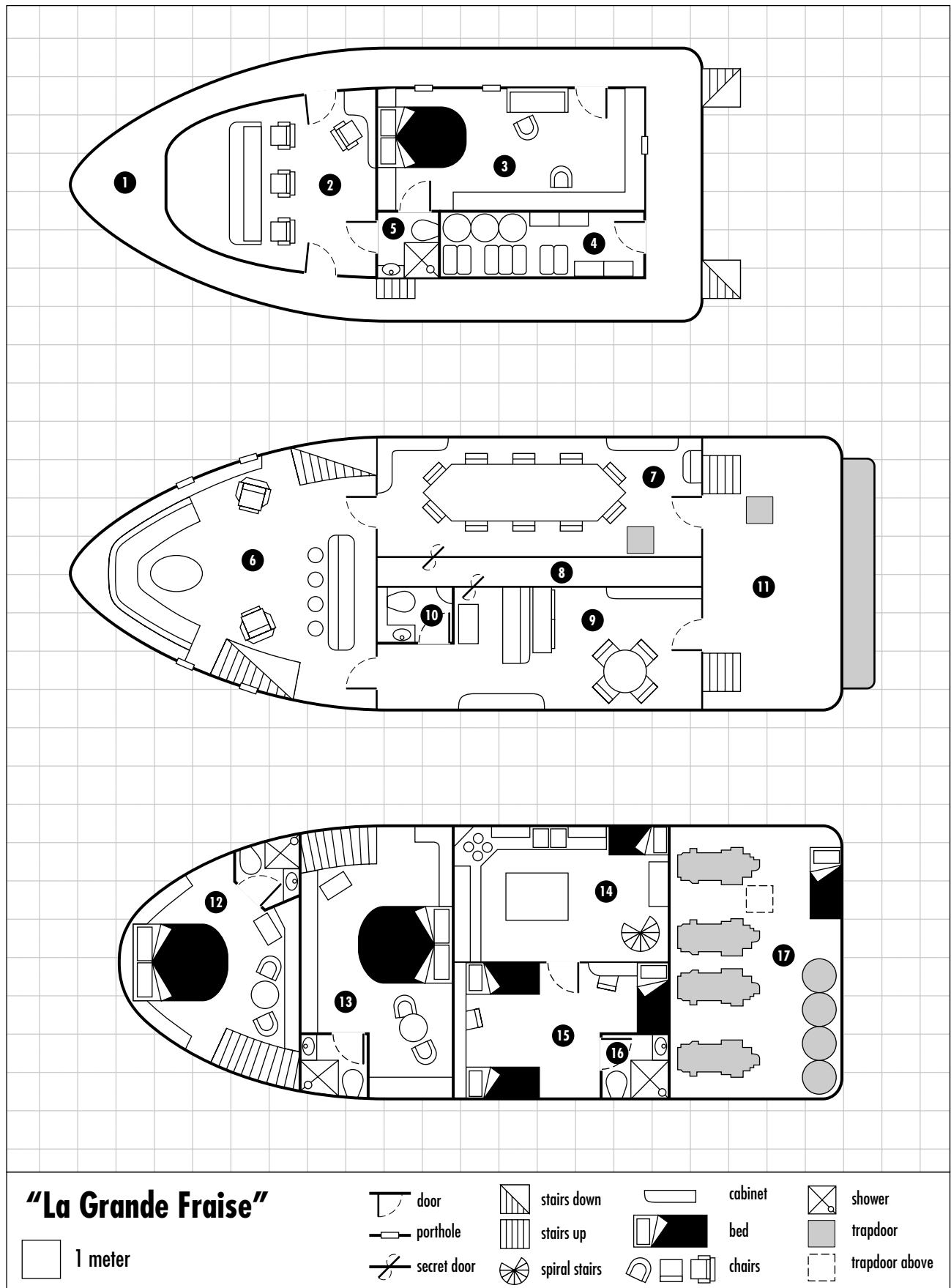
This is where Reis stays when on board. There’s a double bed, a dresser with a mirror, a large rolltop desk (all bolted to the floor) as well as a couple of chairs. There is an abstract work of modern art on the wall. It’s an original, and might bring up to \$15,000 from an interested collector, despite the fact that (let’s be honest) it might better serve as a necktie pattern. The walls are oak paneled, with three portholes on the outside walls.

4. Storage

Food supplies, life vests, umbrellas for drinks, batteries, gasoline, vats of purified water, lubricating jelly...everything the voyage could need.

5. Head

A head is a ship’s bathroom, which means it’s cramped, hard to turn around in, and has weird blue stuff in the toilet. This one is especially bad, since it has two doors.



6. Lounge

Large and luxurious, with recliners, sofas (safely bolted down, of course) and an amazingly well stocked wet bar. The room has numerous portholes, and the walls are hung with original paintings. (Nudes; worth about \$5,000 each. Reis hates them.)

7. Dining Room

Gracious dining is hard on a ship, but Reis tries. The food is well prepared, the silver is tastefully minimalist, the napkins are linen, and the tables have mahogany inlay. There's an antique jukebox against the forward wall, with a wide selection of songs on it. The trapdoor in the floor leads down a steep stair to the galley, and a secret door on the interior wall leads to a service corridor.

8. Service Corridor

A cramped and narrow passage, there are additional supplies here, as well spare weapons for the fighters on board. This is where the Dreamweb is stored.

9. Game Room

A room for various entertainments, there's a card table bolted to the floor, a stereo system, a video game system, and a cabinet with standard board games in it (checkers, chess, backgammon — all high quality, of course).

10. Head

A much less cramped bathroom, but still a head.

11. Open Air Deck

As with the deck on the top floor, this open area has a meter high railing around it, as well as a few lounge chairs for sunbathing. There's a gate in the deck that leads to a wooden swimming platform in back. The trapdoor down to the engine room is under a coil of rope, but a perceptive person might notice it.

12. Guest Room

Large (for a boat) and luxurious, most of the room is taken up by a waterbed. The decor varies by customer request; large bearskin rugs, huge silk cushions, black rubber sheets...any kink can be accommodated.

13. Guest Room

As with room 12, only with a standard bed instead of a waterbed.

14. Galley

A cramped kitchen, with a large refrigerator, freezer, and gas-powered stove. The cook sleeps here.

15. Crew Quarters

There are usually two or three crewmen on board; an engineer, a pilot, and a cook. The pilot sleeps here, as well as the bellboy/bruiser and the Order members. If there are two tulpas on board, one of the Order members will serve as bellboy.

16. Engine Room

This is the guts of the ship — tubes, valves, oil and gauges. The engineer sleeps here.

GMCS

Cindy Favorite

Receptionist with a heart of steel

If the PCs are investigating the Scarlet Palace, the most obvious point to start at is with Cindy Favorite. Unfortunately for them, she's a pretty tough nut to crack. She works from nine in the morning until five at night. After work she usually dines at home, occasionally meeting some girlfriends for a drink, dinner or a movie. She has no current romantic attachment, nor does she feel the need for one. Twice a week she goes to a health club for an evening of aerobics and moderate weight lifting, and she's taking a course in Thai cooking on Sundays. She sometimes attends the Sommerite services at the Temple of the Divine

Experience, but isn't really a member. She has no emotional crutches, no addictions, and no evil deeds that she's ashamed to admit.

Euro-American woman, age 24, 156cm, 56kg. Blue eyes, button nose, perky and cute. Usually wearing a moderately tight, knee length skirt and medium high heels.

Traits

Receptionist, 3 dice — She's organized, has a good phone voice, types quickly and knows how to briskly get rid of people without causing a scene. (Short fingernails, and files them a lot.)

Perky Sexuality, 3 or 4 dice — She's good looking in a general way, but some men find her very attractive. This is because she has perfected the "look but don't touch" attitude of professional frigidity. She's so innocent looking, so completely businesslike and uninterested that men who like the feeling of pursuing immediately perceive her as a challenge. Unbeknownst to her, several ultra-wealthy clients believe they *have* had sex with her, when in fact it was a tulpa. They're even more excited that she "pretends" that nothing's happened. (Wears businesslike clothes.)

Self Absorbed (Upside), 3 dice — She really never stops to think about how her actions will affect other people, except inasmuch as they will then affect her. She's immune to the pain of others and takes flattery as her due. This emotional distance enables her to shamelessly manipulate others for her own benefit. (Impassive in the face of complaints, threats and sob stories.)

Self Absorbed (Downside), penalty die — She's not loyal to anyone or anything other than her own sweet self. There are several people around, both in and outside of the Scarlet Palace who would love to do her one dirty, but generally the people she's snubbed are those who ordinarily have no power to harm her. Foremost among these are: Ferule Clete, a janitor at the Palace who asked her out and was coldly rebuffed; Lane Ulaki (see below); Minda Wallerby, who used to date Mitch Van Hatte; and Mitch Van Hatte himself (see below).

Lane Ulaki

Reporter down on his luck

Lane worked for small island tabloid called *Dirt* and was doing a story on the Scarlet Palace. He paid Cindy for information on the Palace and was told a pack of lies that got him sued into bankruptcy and beaten up (luckily for him, he decided not to print the stuff about Monique D'Aubainne). *Dirt* avoided a lawsuit by agreeing to fire him. Currently he's living in Great Men, sometimes working as a spy or P.I. and barely getting by. He'd *love* a chance to get even with Cindy, or (by extension) the Scarlet Palace.

Al Amarjan man, scrawny, unkempt hair, usually wears a dirty brown trenchcoat. Age 27 but looks older.

Traits

Investigation, 3 dice — Lane is a competent reporter who made one bad error in trusting Cindy. (Nosy.)

Mitch Van Hatte

Businessman and victim of love

Mitch is a moderately successful businessman who broke up with his girlfriend of five years, Minda Wallerby, to date Cindy; found out she was cheating on him with Russ; tried to keep it together after she begged for forgiveness; nearly had a nervous breakdown when Cindy kept calling him "Russ" during moments of intimacy; and was finally hospitalized for 2 weeks with severe depression after she dumped him. If anyone cares to listen he'll go on for hours complaining about her, how she betrayed and victimized him, etc. Any halfway decent listener can get a lot about her out of him. Directly confronted with Cindy, he might either break down in tears and beg her to take him back, or try and murder her with his bare hands.

Al Amarjan man, 180cm, 72kg, deeply bitten fingernails, haunted look in his eyes. Jittery.

Attack: 3 dice + penalty

Defense: 3 dice + penalty

Hit Points: 17 (fit)

Traits

Businessman, 3 dice — Mitch runs a small but fairly successful shoe repair business that special-

izes in rush jobs for the wealthy. If you just *have* to have a certain pair of shoes ready for that big event, one of Mitch's boys can run out to your estate, repair them on the spot and give them a nice shine. They also do more mundane repair work. (Wears suits.)

Tae Kwon Do, 3 dice — In order to work out his frustration and anger towards Cindy, Mitch took up this Korean martial art. (Good stamina.)

Emotionally Unstable, Penalty die — Mitch's ego is still in a very fragile state. Frequently depressed, he often takes penalties on activities because "they just don't seem worth doing." This is reflected in his combat score. If pushed, however, there's a 50% chance that he'll go berserk, lose the penalty die on fighting and gain 5 extra hit points of adrenaline. (Obvious mood swings.)

Inga

Dominatrix from HELL

Often asks Russ in to harangue her clients while she works them over. A blonde bombshell, generally dressed in fetishist bondage gear: straps, buckles, spikes, fishnets, leather nun's habits, chains, Peace Force uniforms, etc. Carries a whip and speaks with a Northern European accent (even though she was born in Brooklyn). 185 cm, 75 kg, American (but acts German).

Languages: English, German.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 with whip or hot poker.

Defense: 3 dice.

Hit Points: 21 (unstoppably bitchy)

Traits

Sadistic, 3 dice — She genuinely loves to cause pain to others — but not so much so that she permanently injures people. (That would give her 4 dice — and she'd be employed by the Ministry of Justice.) It is her viciousness and knowledge of human weakness that gives her 3 dice in combat. (Carries a whip.)

Athletic, 3 dice — Works out frequently, for that body that makes the decadent rich grovel. (Well defined muscles.)

Beautiful, 4 dice — Has a pure, "Aryan" look that Hitler would have died for. (Short-cropped blonde hair.)

Russ

Multi-talented bouncer

A beach bum Greek god — blonde, tanned and immaculately muscled. Nice smile, good personality, can throw people out so politely that they don't get offended. 185 cm, 95 kg, American.

Languages: English, some Spanish.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 2 dice

Hit points: 23 (brawn)

Traits

Fun to be with, 3 dice — Easygoing, tells good jokes, dances well and is good in bed. (Broad smile.)

Strong, 3 dice — He didn't get that body with silicone. (Rippling muscles.)

Dyslexic — Suffers a penalty die on reading. (Doesn't read much, talkative.)

Dought Marsallas

Nightmare artist

His first name is pronounced "Dote." He lives in the Flowers Barrio, and is trying to make a name for himself (not to mention a career) as a potter. Dought's major source of income at this point is producing nightmares.

Black Jamaican man, age 26, 178 cm, 63 kg. Lean, wears dreadlocks and wire rim glasses. Dresses in thrift store clothes which are frequently spattered with glaze or smeared with clay.

Traits

Self-induced Nightmares — Dought has a sensitive stomach, and whenever he eats lots of spicy food before bedtime, he has bad dreams. Not just your run of the mill pizza dreams either; we're talking serious night sweat material, the sort of dream where time stretches out to decades of sorrow and you're still tired the next morning. He's had his best successes from spicy beef pizza with red peppers, green peppers, onions, sauerkraut and extra cheese, washed down with beer. His nightmares are known to produce the highest quality Nightmare. Still, he is very reluctant to induce them except when he has to, and the Extollers know his reluctance pushes the price of "his" Nightmare up. (Bags under eyes, eats bland food.)

Nightlifer, 3 dice — Knows where the hot parties are, tells good jokes, dances well, has a great capacity for alcohol. (Dreadlocks.)

Bad with money — When he's got it, he spends it. Couldn't balance a checkbook to save the world. Forgets bills and debts and just generally seems to be trapped in an unending cycle of poverty, broken only by those spicy pizzas. (Is an artist.)

Mario Cassetti

Publishing magnate

Mario fell in love with a woman, only to later have her undergo a peculiar personality change. After asking one of his best reporters to investigate her, he learned about tulpas, and that she was one. This stripped her the next time they met; he believes it destroyed her. Realizing that if knowledge of the tulpas became common, they would be in much greater danger, he has dedicated himself to keeping the tulpas secret.

Italian man, age 65, 175 cm, 86 kg. Thick, grey, wiry hair and a handlebar moustache. Pudgy and conservatively dressed. Smokes cigars and comes across as a regular guy.

Traits

Good Newspaperman, 4 dice — Plays hard, but with just enough ethics that he is trusted (and can sleep at night). He's persuasive and can inspire people to work hard. Furthermore, he has good judgement: he can tell which stories are worth following, and which crises in his business are real. He therefore owns a great many of the radio, TV and newsprint media on the island, as well as being heavily invested overseas. (Slightly overweight.)

Well Connected, 4 dice — Since he always portrays the D'Aubainnes in a good light, he has substantial protection by the Peace Force. His money and organizational skills have placed his bennies in communications all over the world, to suppress any mention of free floating psychic mimics. He is on good terms with the Neutralizers. (Confident.)

Story Ideas

- ❑ One of the PCs is looking for someone, and overhears that someone of that description is at the Scarlet Palace. This could be especially amusing if the PC thinks he's found the person, when in fact he's only kidnapped a tulpa (which the Order is anxious to retrieve).
- ❑ The PCs befriend someone, only to see him (apparently) completely burned up by an instantaneous fire blast from Reis's monocle.
- ❑ Dought meets and befriends the characters at a bar or a party, and through him they learn of the Exalted Order. Or, someone might hire the characters to collect a debt from him, and the Order shows up to protect their Little Nemo.
- ❑ The Dream Kings begin imprinting Dreamweb with the orgasms of women having their first rush from a combination of MDA-cubed, blue shock and slo-mo. They then sell it as "Triple-X," the new, non-addictive superaphrodisiac.
- ❑ If one of the characters has terrible nightmares (from some previous experience, curse, psychic attack or drug abuse), he might answer an ad for the "Sleep Disorder Clinic."
- ❑ A friend tells the PCs about a horrible Nightmare he had. Later they hear someone else talking about what a "great" Nightmare trip she had — with identical details. This might come as a shock to the original dreamer, who is embarrassed to admit he is receiving (confidential) treatment at the Sleep Disorders Clinic.
- ❑ A top-notch sleep researcher gets fired from the Sleep Disorder Clinic for curing people's nightmares, and wants to find out why.
- ❑ When they catch wind of the Scarlet Palace, some PCs might want to take out Reis and his mob — no simple task, but wouldn't it feel good to rid the world of such degenerates? You may want to guide it all toward a rousing climax (so to speak) on *La Grande Fraise*. If you like the Ian Fleming approach, go ahead and let the Dreamweb hit the fan — perhaps in a rousing firefight (guns being quite possible for both sides in international waters). If moral ambiguity is your style, let Reis try to portray himself as a loyal husband and devoted father — plead-



ing in his daughter's name until he can get close enough to a trigger...

Rumors on the Street About the Scarlet Palace

"Dude, I won a night there in a raffle. It was *incredible!* If I had the dough, I'd go right back."

— *drunk Sigma Om guy at a frat party*

"I hear they have a secret room in the basement where people go to, like, screw sheep and dead people and stuff. That's just what I hear though."

— *wide-eyed burger*

"I went in their 'parlor' once — the women are truly works of art. Never have I seen since so much feminine grace in one place. Unfortunately, I couldn't afford them."

— *anonymous D.A.U. professor (male)*

"It's *quite* overrated."

— *Arthur Compton, who doesn't think much of the Palace's "shallow depravity"*

"I hear it's run by a psychic. All he does all day is sit in there and mentally spy on people, grooving off on their borrowed orgasms. Like a contact high, see? Pretty sick, huh? Wish I could do it."

— *stoned Delta Ep guy at a frat party*

"What goes on there? Come up to my place and I'll show you, for \$500. I used to work there. No really, I did."

— *a streetwalker*

"Man, I hear it's all hypnotism. They get you in and hypnotize you, and you think you're doing it with some lovehot sex machine, but who knows what it is? maybe even some other customer, or a sheep or something."

— *a normie at a pub in the 'Burbs*

"That place is the most disgusting, bloated pimple on the face of the Edge."

— *an Alpha Rho sorority sister*

Kill John Doe

Al Amarjan art student Trent Fresno was in love. He'd found the perfect mate: a Sandman, who would turn Trent's fevered, inspired dreams into a drug, a work of art, called *Nightmare*. But his lover wasn't really a Sandman—he was a tulpa. Then a *real* Sandman came with some Exalted Order goons, and they put Trent to sleep for good. Now he's back from the dead, on a mission of horrific vengeance against his killers. Or is he?

Introduction

"Kill John Doe" is an *Over the Edge* scenario for virtually any group of characters. The text is set up as a resource, containing background information, dramatic scenes, and an overview of events as they would progress without interference from the characters. Your job will be to draw the characters into the story, and then turn them loose; much of this story involves investigation and deduction that will be directed by the players, but this is set against the background of a horrific killing machine and the victims it claims. The key word for this scenario is *Pressure*: keep the buzz saw roaring against the players' brains. Keep them disoriented, confused, chasing after shadows in the night. When they find the right shadow you must be merciless. It will be up to them to survive.

This story is almost completely lacking in humor. Depending on how your OTE series is going, this may represent a real change-of-pace or be business as usual. If it's the former, look on this as a chance to remind the players that life in Al Amarja isn't all ha-ha strangeness and oddball characters. The Edge has a bite to it. Emphasize the night scenes; the horrific violence; the numbing feeling of always being one step behind, one minute too late. On the other hand, if this scenario strikes the same mood that your series normally aims for, you can trip the players up. They'll feel like they're on familiar ground, until the change-ups come too fast and too hard for them to handle. It should be

an overdose of violence and mayhem that will leave them shocked and stunned until the resolution.

Overview

Here's the full story.

Trent Fresno had big dreams. In fact, he had big nightmares, nightmares that — in his humble opinion — were far more interesting than any available in the *Nightmare* drug form. Trent wanted to be in pictures, in the pictures *Nightmare* users see in their heads. Much like star-struck movie fans everywhere who want to be in Hollywood, Trent wanted to be in the land of the Sandmen.

A month ago, Trent found it. A young man named Darrio Brazilio held the key — boyishly handsome, exotic, loving, Darrio was also what Trent wanted more than anything else: a Sandman. They met, fell in love, moved in together, and two weeks later Trent had his first batch of personal *Nightmare*, with his nightmares distilled into a form purer than any of his second-rate paintings — even the "John Doe" ones, which were actually going to be exhibited! — could ever be.

But he couldn't keep it to himself. Trent had to show the world what his dreams were like. His form of *Nightmare* was soon all over campus, the latest cool deal. Screw virtual reality! This was the real thing. Nobody had ever made artwork this interactive before.

Problem was, nobody makes *Nightmare* but the Sandmen, or their Exalted Order allies. Nobody. And wonderful Darrio Brazilio was no Sandman — he was a tulpa, drawn to Trent and re-made into Trent's perfect lover. The Darrio-Tulpa made Trent's *Nightmare* from his own Dreamweb, using knowledge it had gained from a period of imprisonment under Roderick Reis.

The night of the "John Doe" exhibit's opening (see below), the Sandmen track down Trent during the after-show party at the Temple of the Divine

Experience and leave him gutted in a toilet stall, his innards shoved into the bowl and flushed partway through the pipes. What little Nightmare he has left they take.

Then the killings start. Exalted Order members turning up dead, left in very public places in very violent displays. The killer is, of course, Darrio Brazilio. The tulpa.

He isn't Darrio anymore — he's Trent. Only one room away from Trent when he was killed at the Temple, Darrio was overwhelmed by the explosion of pain, rage and helplessness coming from his lover and shaper. The Tulpa-Darrio was gone; the Tulpa-Trent stood in his place, reshaped once more by the same man, into a horrific image of himself.

For this is not Trent as he was. Rather, the tulpa is Trent as he became, in the last few moments of life. The intensity of the shaping was such that the Tulpa-Trent thinks it really is Trent, back from the dead, superhuman. The Tulpa-Trent is stronger, bigger, better, than Trent ever was. It has to be, to take revenge. It has acquired a long-range mind-reading ability to find "Sandmen," and uses its amazing unreal body to kill them. Only when all the "Sandmen" are dead will the death-energies of Trent Fresno be dissipated, and only then will the killings stop. Unless the characters do something about it first. (Note that Tulpa-Trent's mind reading ability picks up only Dream Kings, who only *think* they're Sandmen; actual Sandmen are as imperceptible to him as to a normal tulpa.)

Getting Started

Three specific entry points are provided to get the characters into the story. Needless to say, you needn't be that scientific. These points are presented in their order of occurrence, and you may choose how and when to get things going.

Entry Point One: The Exhibition

Rigor Kwasek, an English major (emphasis in poetry/creative writing) at D'Aubainne University

and member of the Delta Epsilon Theta creative fraternity, has birthed a brainchild. He submitted his latest poem, "Personal Pogrom," to the University's literary magazine (*Stir*) under the pseudonym of John Doe. Upon publication, he began urging other students to do the same, and DAU's "John Doe" movement began.

A smattering of students in various creative fields — sculpture, weaving, video, etc. — began releasing works with only the name "John Doe" given as the creator. Over a period of six months or so these pieces popped up in the regular creative channels of the university: student display spaces, the literary magazine, the personal ads in the student newspaper, etc.

Kwasek's point was not just to divorce creation from creator. By assigning the creator the bland and meaningless name of John Doe, he hoped to show how inspiration can arise from nothingness — the Big Bang, if you will. This ultimate point is something Kwasek kept to himself, not that anyone really cares. It's just a cool kind of thing to do.

Kwasek and some of his fellow John Doe contributors convinced Sommerite and art patron Lydia Goodman (OTE, p. 130-32) to sponsor an exhibition of "The Collected Works Of John Doe (An Exorcise In Entropial Restraint)" at the Zefilli Hall of Fine Arts on campus. The exhibition was set up with very simple guidelines: anything (within reason) that was deposited at the Hall with the name of John Doe attached would be presented. Of course, these works could not be returned, since proof of creatorship was difficult. Instead, the works would be for sale, and the proceeds donated to the Fine Arts department.

(Incidentally, and to the bemusement of Goodman and the annoyance of Kwasek, many works are showing up with "Jane Doe" attached instead, a statement in itself.)

Here's how it plays: It's a Saturday afternoon at the Zefilli Hall of Fine Arts, on the D'Aubainne University campus in the Science Barrio. On one side of the building is the glass-fronted entrance to the Galleri Zefilli, the gallery used by the university for most public exhibitions of creative works. The exhibit opens in the late afternoon. Anyone can attend, and the visitors who stream in prove it: penniless students, students who just dress like they're penniless, professors, administrators, sup-

From Whence Cometh John Doe?

In the “real world,” there actually is a movement of sorts among some strata of avant-garde (read: unknown) artists. This movement involves the creation of a name: let’s say, “Karen Thompson.” The artists then produce original works in whatever media they specialize in — sculpture, watercolor, poetry, music — and release it into the public domain, copyright-free, giving credit to “Karen Thompson.”

There is no consistent attempt to build a personality for this mythical creative individual. Anyone, anywhere, who hears about this can attach the “Karen Thompson” name to their own work and release it as well. The point of this is to divorce the creation from the context of the creator. It also helps numerous unknown artists get their works displayed through “Karen Thompson” exhibitions. Of course, they can’t officially take credit, but unofficially the names may well be passed around.

porters of the arts, and the various curious ones among the populace.

The atmosphere is low-key, the undercurrent of excitement not all that exciting. The show is something of a novelty, and for that reason has brought more people than would usually show up.

Luminaries in the crowd are few. Lydia Goodman is present, along with several Sommerites. Sir Arthur Compton (OTE, p. 112-15) is a surprise guest (in fact, he’s one of the contributors to the show — see below), but he seems unusually reserved. A few representatives of Al Amarja’s media are present. Rigor Kwasek, of course, is everywhere at once, beaming. He has a difficult time not yelling out that everything here is because of him.

Talk among the crowd is constant, but low. Anyone claiming creatorship of a given piece of art is looked upon with disdain, whether they’re tell-

ing the truth or not — they’re spoiling the effect. Nevertheless, there is frequent discussion about some of the more-popular pieces, and certainly there are those desirous of finding out who is responsible for them. The characters can mix and mingle as they wish. If the players ask for descriptions of some of the pieces present, use the following as a guide.

The works are of all types: pottery, photographs, sculpture, framed poems, fiction (uniformly short), interactive hypertext on computer, and more. While the merits of such work are subjective, there is clearly a preponderance of amateur entrants, displaying cruder technique and hackneyed ideas. Others show more sophistication; among the pieces attracting attention are the following:

- ❑ **“Excerpt From A Non-Existent Play”** is a true rarity, anonymous performance art. Three individuals repeatedly enact a short play (6-8 minutes long, with a five-minute break between each performance) dressed in bulky costumes and masks and hence unidentifiable. The voices are pre-recorded and distorted to prevent identification. The play concerns identity and confusion; the dialogue comes off very much as an existential version of the old Abbott & Costello routine, “Who’s on first?” Bizarrely, the piece is listed for sale by bid. Details are not provided.
- ❑ **“Unknown Self-Portrait”** is a black-and-white photograph, hand-tinted into a riot of color. It depicts a mirror, in which can be seen the photographer, with a bag over his or her head. In the background, a television set displays the logo from “The Gong Show.”
- ❑ **“Sea of Discord”** is a wall hanging, woven from many different colors of thread. When the piece is considered carefully, from left to right (as if reading a printed page), a story of sorts emerges: the colors all begin from a common source, then begin to diverge wildly, scattering their paths across the entire work. Towards the right edge, the colored threads seem to be converging again, but their paths are so disjointed that this can not be determined for certain.
- ❑ **“Poppy”** is a bright and appealing representation of a poppy flower constructed of other objects: bits of plastic, silverware, and other, less-identifiable items. If examined closely,

viewers may realize that the petals of the flower are made of human fingernails. Sir Compton is responsible for this work, done on a whim. If no one places a bid on it, Compton does, proclaiming it fascinating.

Nothing of great significance has to occur at the exhibition, so feel free to stage any happenings you wish here. This is an excellent opportunity to continue or introduce a subplot from your series.

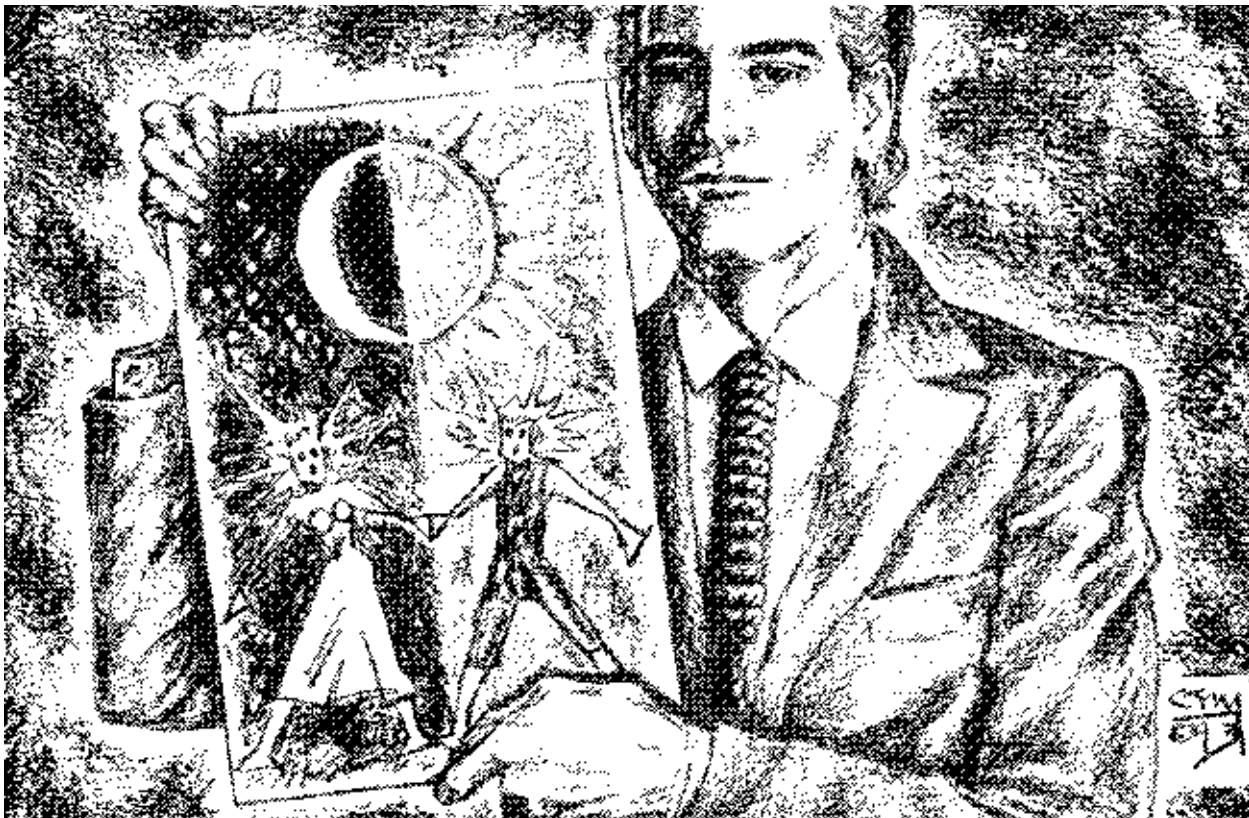
Don't feel that you have to describe all of the artwork delineated above; such an effort is likely to come off as staged. Let the players drive the scene. If they have artwork here, they will likely focus on what sort of attention their works receive. After all, they can stand around anonymously and listen to critiques of their work. This may prove to be an unpleasant experience.

If the players aren't getting into it, you might wish to have the Cut-Ups make a sudden appearance; the temptation to dramatically dive into this deliciously context-free exhibition may be too much for them to resist. Perhaps they replace the actors in the play described above, or simply join in the performance from the crowd.

Characters can get involved through this entry point in a number of ways. Any who are students in the creative arts are probably aware of the John Doe business, and may wish to contribute their own works. Those who aren't involved with campus life can still get in, however. Cut-ups may wish to display their own peculiar vision, for instance. The exhibition is supposed to be just for student works, but after all — who's going to know your "John Doe" piece isn't by a student? Other characters may get involved if they are on good terms with or are members of the Sommerites, simply by being invited to the exhibition.

Entry Point Two: Temple of the Divine Experience

It is generally understood at the exhibition that there will be an opening-night party at the Temple of the Divine Experience. Not an official one, mind you, but those attending the exhibition will likely as not head for the Temple after dinner. It may be



that this will be the entry point for the characters; if so, allow them to pick up details of the John Doe exhibition from partygoers, among whom it will be the main topic of conversation. Much like the exhibition, this is a good place for a subplot to pop up before the focus of this scene occurs.

Here's how it plays: *Party!* night at the Temple (Saturday) is always a blast. Nothing too serious, just a lot of good times. Drinks, drugs, and dancing predominate.

Two things of great significance occur. One happens in a men's restroom just off the main hall. The other happens in a small anteroom next to the restroom where some of the partygoers have peeled off for quiet conversation. These events happen at about the same time; determine which characters might witness one or the other. If both events are to be witnessed by characters in the group, intercut between the two when the time is right.

The Bathroom Event

In one of the larger stalls (one set up for wheelchair access, in fact) there seem to be several people talking animatedly behind the door. There isn't anything very unusual about this, considering the environment. The music blares in the restroom almost as loudly as it does out in the hall, making the voices hard to make out. The character or characters may be in the bathroom to meet a contact, make a pick-up or a drop-off, or just to take a leak.

If any character present expresses interest in the goings-on in the far stall, tell them that the voices sound rather demanding — perhaps an argument is underway. If no one pays special attention, don't give out this information. Should a character have special abilities that allow them to hear better, or perhaps to read minds, they get the gist of the following: three people are in the stall, threatening a fourth. They tell him he messed with the wrong people. Then they kill him.

The toilet flushes, and three people emerge. If the characters know what happened, they may take whatever actions they wish. It's unlikely the characters will interfere at this point, actually, though they may run for help.

Anyone looking into the stall — someone else will, and cry out, if no character does — will see a young man dressed in dark clothing sitting on the

toilet. He is dead. He has been gutted, his innards yanked out and shoved down the toilet between his legs, then flushed. The look on his face is blankly unpleasant.

Armivrek Kazandijan

Sandman with seniority

The Sandmen of Al Amarja don't really have a leader, but if they did it would be Armivrek Kazandijan, who has been plying his trade here longer than any other. He first came to Al Amarja in the early 1950s, tracking a tulpa he spotted in the country of his birth, Turkey. (As a member of Turkey's oppressed ethnic Armenian minority, Kazandijan has even more of a chip on his shoulder than the average Sandman.)

Kazandijan sometimes claims to have been the first to identify the properties of tulpa ordure and to distill it into Nightmare. Sometimes he denies it. It's unlikely anyone will contradict him. As Sandmen die young, he's probably the oldest one alive. Since Sandman culture is entirely oral, his longevity gives him the authority to say whatever he wants.

Armivrek has a nasty sense of humor — most of his jokes revolve around evisceration. He is a very happy psychopath, with a lifestyle he quite enjoys. However, lately he's been wondering if he isn't mellowing too much.

It was Kazandijan who gave Reis permission to set up his Exalted Order and tulpa brothel, and who persuaded his fellow Sandmen not to interfere with the new enterprise. Reis pays him a cut off the top; Kazandijan doles it out more or less evenly to the other Sandmen on the island. Armivrek knows them all, but doesn't keep a list where anyone might find it.

This new income has meant that he doesn't need to get out and hustle anymore, and the added leisure time is making him restless. He's beginning to think he's perhaps made a mistake, gotten entangled in something that appears to be a boon but is really a prison. Reis's ambitions just go against everything a self-respecting Sandman stands for.

Therefore, he's decided to let a little air out of Reis's tires. He's not sure why he's doing it — maybe he wants to remind him who's boss. Maybe he hates the whole idea of a hierarchical structure. Or

maybe he's just bored and wants the fun of wrecking something. He'll just make it up as he goes along.

He's made Reis promise to let him run any hits on competitors, to get that hands-on enjoyment once more. This is why he's personally in charge of taking out Trent Fresno. When he sees the Tulpa-Trent evolving in the alcove, he decides to let it do its stuff. Just for kicks.

Armenian man, age 69, I don't really remember his height or weight, or any — he's just — you know...

Languages: Armenian, Turkish, English, Al Amarjan patois.

Attack: 3 dice, X2 damage (Evisceration)

Defense: 4 dice (Non-descript — hard to concentrate on where he is)

Hit Points: 21

Traits

Non-descript, 4 dice — This fringe power is an extended version of the masking power that prevents tulpas from sensing him. He isn't invisible to humans and other sentients, but his psychic field selectively scrambles memory receptors in any who see him. They'll remember that they saw someone, but no details. (Really, uh, ah, um...hmm, I dunno.)

Sandman Powers, 3* dice. (Ah, jeez, you know there was something about him, but — no, I'm thinking of something else.)

Evisceration, 3 dice — Knows the parts of the human anatomy that slice up best. "Best" can be defined as the quickest kill or the most violent splattering, as he chooses. (I thought I saw an object in his raincoat, but — no, I'm thinking of somebody else...)

Humidifier History, 2* dice — Armivrek is an obsessive collector of humidifiers and de-humidifiers, ancient and modern. He has several storage units full of them throughout the city, which he periodically visits. (You know, he was talking about this really peculiar hobby he had, but — you know, you'd think you'd remember a thing like that...)

Anti-Social Psychopath, penalty die in social or cooperative situations. (Nasty jokes.)

Two Pawn-level Exalted Order Members

Attack: 3 dice plus bonus.

Defense: 2 dice plus bonus.

Hit Points: 18 (Brawny & Agile)

Traits

Hoodlum, 3 dice — Has all the standard attributes of a near-mindless hoodlum. They seem to just pour out of the sewers at the worst moment. Takes orders well, is insolent, with a modicum of street cunning. (Don't fuck with them if you're not up for a scrap.)

Brawling, 3 dice — Can handle themselves on the street. They know the moves, especially how to take tourists, untrained fighters, etc. (Decent opponents even when drunk.)

Swagger, 4 dice — They talk the talk, and walk the walk. They're just a cut above average street trash, and they're glad of it. (Egotistical, with a fist and a handful of connections to back it up.)

The Anteroom Event

Sitting alone at a table in the corner — with his eyes shut and hands over his ears — is a young Hispanic man. When the argument begins in the bathroom on the other side of the wall (it cannot be heard from here), his eyes pop open. When the man on the toilet is killed, the Hispanic guy goes nuts. He first begins to scream soundlessly; his mouth is wide open and the muscles on his neck bulge with the strain, but no sound emerges. He grasps the table, and suddenly breaks part of it off. Then his features ripple. For a moment his guts spill out onto the floor. Then he is intact again. His appearance changes, to that of a pallid Caucasian in dark clothes. He continues to cry out noiselessly, and clutches his stomach and doubles over. Then he vanishes.

It's better if the characters don't witness both of these events. And nothing will be lost if they come on the scene too late — for instance, they may brush by the murderers as the body is discovered in the bathroom, or they may enter the anteroom as someone stands up and points to the empty corner table. After the above events occur, security for the Temple steps in and clamps down. The party goes on, but the bathroom is sealed off for the Peace

Force, and guards begin to check for witnesses. The characters may offer whatever insight they may have, or may be asked to do so.

The killers are not caught that night, unless for some reason the characters got them. Preferably they don't. If this occurs, though, it's not a real problem; the Peace Force will know who killed the guy in the toilet, and that the killers were three drug dealers — big deal. This won't help them much at all. The remainder of the scenario will progress unimpeded.

If the characters keep their ears open, they may even catch the name of the victim, perhaps as he's carried out on a stretcher. His name was Trent Fresno, and he was an art student at the university.

Things settle down at some point; the party is hardly disturbed in any case. Characters may join the story through this entry point in several ways. The simple fact that this is *Party!* night at the Temple provides ample reason — it is, after all, one of the most exciting things to do on a Saturday night in the Edge. Characters may be going to let off some steam, meet a contact, look for a date or a drug, or just because they haven't been before and are curious.

Entry Point Three: The Sandman Sleeps

About an hour after the events at the Temple, another murder occurs, this one of an altogether different nature. This murder is unlikely to be witnessed by the characters unless you are specifically using it as an entry point. This entry point should be set in whatever location is handy. In the text, Sad Mary's is used, but it could just as easily be a restaurant, a business, or an alley. It should occur when the characters have other business they are tending to at the moment.

Here's how it plays: Sad Mary's is jumping. The wheeling and dealing is roaring, never boring. Tricks are turned, money changes hands, hustler fortunes and hustler lives passed around like a toke to be consumed. Onstage, a mixed group of dancers are doing a not-quite-live sex show, lots of bumping and grinding with (frustratingly) no release. Numerous patrons jump about the edge of the stage, shouting suggestions and throwing money at the

performers. The music is loud, of course, and many people are dancing spastically, or enduring epileptic fits — the music currently playing could as easily spawn one as the other.

The characters should be preoccupied with whatever business they have to tend to. They talk with their contact, they spy on a target, whatever. Around them, the churn of humanity is invigorating. These people can do anything.

Then, someone does.

There's a sudden whine of feedback on the sound system. A moment of confusion, flashing lights, the dancers still grinding, and then the speakers blow. Sparks shower down on the customers, who whoop their approval briefly. The lights all flare on, just as someone is sent flying across the room, crossing a good twenty meters, and falling onto the dancers onstage. The lights begin flickering again. The characters have a brief awareness of a terrible scream issuing from the figure as it arcs across the room. On impact with the dancers, the person explodes. Those near the stage are splattered with blood, tissue, and bone. The ceiling above the stage mimics a Pollock canvas. Onstage, the dancers collapse, several of them badly wounded from the flying shards of bone. Their injuries are impossible to discern from the spray of gore that paints their bodies.

The characters have a moment to do what they wish. Likely as not, this will consist of situation checks: what's going on, where's the exit, can I see where the body came from, etc. Answer as you wish, but keep them off-balance; jump from one player to another (but not in order around the table), take their question and spit an answer back at them and then move on. Next: from the spot where the body came from, there is a tremendous roar. Patrons pull back and scramble over each other to get away. Left standing for a moment is a dark figure, apparently a man in a black coat (but that isn't for certain) whose features are impossible to make out in the confusion and flashing lights. But the roar definitely emanates from the figure, a howl of rage, and then suddenly the figure lifts off from the ground straight into the air and through the ceiling, passing through it like a ghost, and is gone.

The rest is up to the characters. Describe the patrons in Sad Mary's as you wish — there may be a mad flight for the door, or the room may

go deadly still and quiet. If the former, details are impossible to discern. The characters might choose to lay low and wait for calm to return, or may join the rush for the door (or some other exit). If instead things are quiet, the voice of Sad Mary's owner Frank Germaine (see OTE, p. 102) will suddenly be heard, barking out obscenities and yelling orders. In a moment he'll address the patrons, advising them to calm down, telling them things will be okay, etc. If the characters are at Sad Mary's to meet a GMC, determine what that individual will do. There will doubtlessly be a bunch of Aries Gang members here shortly, and likely as not some Peace Force officers as well. Do the characters, or the GMCs, want to stick around for that? It's up to them, and to you.

If the characters want to ask some quick questions, they can pretty easily find out who the dead guy is. Or, rather, was. His name was Johann Jaeger, a drug dealer — known (if for anything) as a contact for getting Nightmare from the mysterious Sandmen. Identification isn't difficult; his head is intact, and rests onstage. Oddly, two words are scorched into his forehead: "John Doe." For your reference (no one at the bar knows this), Jaeger is in fact a Worthy-level Exalted Order member.

The identity of the dark figure, however, cannot be determined. No one is quite sure what happened, or how Jaeger came to defy the laws of gravity with such devastating results.

Getting the characters involved through this entry point shouldn't be difficult. As mentioned, the encounter can be staged in any location. Just spring it on them when they are working on business of their own. The only requirement is that it occur on a Saturday night, rather late.

Entry Point Summation

The above provides a tour of sorts, of the opening moves in this story. The characters will either participate in or indirectly learn about all of the above points somewhere down the road.

Having the characters involved in one of these points isn't difficult. The trick is keeping them involved beyond the initial point. Fortunately, players are players; when something weird and deliberate occurs, they'll probably stick their noses

in. But in case they don't, here are some suggestions:

- ❑ One or more of the characters, or a GMC friend, may be a suspect in one of the two deaths mentioned above. It shouldn't be difficult to frame them up just enough to make the suspicion warranted. At Sad Mary's, have them be right next to Jaeger just before he is hurled through the air. At the Temple, they are seen leaving the scene of the crime. Unreliable witnesses may testify against them; perhaps they are mistaken, or perhaps they are enemies with a score to settle.
- ❑ As will be discussed below, the participants in the John Doe exhibition (including Lydia Goodman) soon become suspects in the Peace Force's investigation. Goodman, incensed at the treatment of the students and herself, conducts her own investigation. Or rather, she directs others who do. The characters may well be one of several groups Goodman sponsors to find out what is going on.
- ❑ Very quickly, there are rumors of a large bounty on the head of the killer, a bounty allegedly placed by the Sandmen. The characters may need the money. But Reis isn't alone in wanting the killer caught; the deaths that follow are just as messy and public as the one at Sad Mary's, and that's bad news for everyone. One or more of the characters may have the experience or the special talents that someone else thinks could be of use in stopping the killer, someone else who the characters owe a favor to, or with the muscle or clout to rope them in.
- ❑ Characters may be already mixed up with Reis, Schwarz, and the Scarlet Palace for any number of reasons (see pages 30 and 41 for some example plot ideas). Extending this into the events of the scenario shouldn't be difficult.

The Events

What began at Sad Mary's (or wherever you placed it) continues the next morning. Someone, or some thing, is killing Exalted Order members, working his or its way up the hierarchy. In fact, the Tulpa-Trent is using its innate mind-reading ability to find and exploit the connections among



the various Exalted Order members. The Pawns who killed Trent Frezno at the Temple are found dead the next morning in the Sunken Barrio, torn limb from limb. "John Doe" is written in blood on the alley wall above their bodies. If they were taken by the police for some reason, other Pawns are killed instead. Below are the events that happen, day-by-day, if the characters do nothing. Their actions will, of course, alter this timeline. See "The Investigation" for details of what they can do, and use this section as a reference to what occurs each day.

Day 1: Saturday.

The exhibition opens; Trent Frezno, Johann Jaeger, and the three murdering Pawns are killed this night.

Day 2: Sunday.

Johann Jaeger was the Worthy who ran the Pawn-cell the three belonged to. Two other Pawns

were in that cell; this night, those two are killed and found early today.

Day 3: Monday.

Another Worthy and her three Pawns are slain late this night. Again, "John Doe" appears with the bodies.

Day 4: Tuesday.

Last night's victims are discovered. Unthinkably, almost a dozen people are dead. The Peace Force roars into overdrive. First, they close the John Doe exhibition at Zefilli Hall and confiscate all the works present. The three anonymous performance artists are arrested, interrogated, and held, their anonymous work thereby spoiled. The director of the Zefilli and Rigor Kwasek are brought in and questioned.

This afternoon, the entire Delta Epsilon Theta fraternity (to which Rigor Kwasek belongs) is

rounded up and brought in, and their house is seized and searched.

The Peace Force begin working to match all of the artwork with their creators, incidentally destroying the whole purpose of the exhibit. By late that night, numerous students have been brought in as others name them responsible for one “John Doe” artwork or another. If any characters participated in the exhibit, they may well be brought in as well.

This night, the Peace Force walks the streets with a heavy presence. They aren’t alone: various protection gangs and security services step up their efforts.

Reis and Schwarz are now on board their yacht, directing operations from there. They bring the higher-ranking Reis lackeys (Princes of Dreams and above) on-board and discuss what to do. They also pull all of their remaining operatives from the street and tell them to stay at home.

Late at night, a Pawn is abducted from his apartment and hurled to the ground from a height of about sixteen stories. The closest building is only five stories tall. No “John Doe” signature is found, but the body of the Pawn is too smashed to display it if it was there.

Day 5: Wednesday.

Lydia Goodman goes to the Plaza of Arms to protest the treatment of the students and the destruction of the exhibition. The Peace Force interrogates her, which of course only serves to *really* get her mad.

Almost no one the Peace Force has brought in is released as of this day; the Peace Force is waiting to see if the killings will stop when some particular person is in custody.

Reis and Schwarz cross-examine their henchfolk, looking for a traitor. They cut off communications with all of their operatives still in the Edge, but begin pouring heavy funds into gangs and security services to catch the killer. Almost anyone who can be out pounding the pavement is doing so. Reis and Schwarz suspect that the *true* Sandmen are working against them, and so will check to see if any of their recruits may be infiltrators. In fact, some of the *true* Sandmen are only exploiting the

circumstances that Reis has created, but he won’t realize that.

This night, the five remaining Pawns are killed. Their bodies are torn apart and dumped into the fountain in the Broken Wings Plaza. Four Dunkelberg’s Security officers witness the dumping; two of them drop dead when their hearts stop for no reason. The other two flee. They tell the Peace Force that a powerfully-built man in a dark coat was responsible. Their reports and the manner in which the two officers died are not made public.

Day 6: Thursday.

After a final round of interrogation focusing on the description of the killer provided by Dunkelberg’s, the Peace Force releases almost everyone in custody. First, though, they are screened for magic and psychic abilities, because of the manner of the Dunkelberg’s deaths. Those that test positive are held for further observation.

The Sommerites hold a sing-in protest in front of the DETH house. Led by Lydia Goodman, they welcome the returning fraternity members and other students and sing songs of power, for a return to peace and justice. Although the Peace Force doesn’t learn about it yet, Trent Fresno is allegedly sighted on campus near his old apartment.

Very quietly, the D’Aubainne government installs several white thought generators into the wealthier Plazas, in an effort to ward off the increasingly-public displays of violence from occurring in the most-public of areas. In addition, several are placed in Broken Wings Barrio, and other big-money spots. The generators are actually very effective in warding off the killer, though the D’Aubainne government (which, needless to say, is now very involved in these events) won’t be certain of this right away.

This night, the two remaining Worthies are killed and left in their apartments in Justice Barrio. Otto’s Men turn out in force when the bodies are discovered in the early morning hours, and several mistaken beatings result.

Day 7: Friday.

The D'Aubainne Government begins to question (with a psychic nearby) anyone known to possess superhuman powers, according to whatever records are available from hospitals, clinics, etc. A character possessing unusual powers of some sort who is known to the government (perhaps through Dr. Nusbaum or the psychic check performed at the airport terminal) is likely to be questioned and mind-read in this manner. If progress has been made on the characters' investigation, this will tip off the Peace Force to whatever they've learned.

Reports appear in the press of witnesses who claim to be seeing things: shadowy figures leaping across rooftops, hideous creatures in alleys, huge nightmare men with knives for teeth. Some of these reports are, in fact, genuine. Worse, they are accurate.

Another sighting of Trent Fresno occurs. False rumors of other sightings spread among some students.

The value of Nightmare has skyrocketed; no new supply has come onto the street in several days. Reis and Schwarz decide to take advantage of this, and plan ways to get the drug back on the streets through other channels. A Master of Sleep is horribly murdered in front of a number of witnesses, the "John Doe" mark again present. The witnesses' testimony varies; exaggerated reports of who they saw killing the victim appear in the press and on the streets. They range from a huge man in dark clothes, to some sort of insect-like thing the size of a tank.

Day 8: Saturday.

The Nightmare drug becomes available on the university campus through a couple of students in dire need of money, hired by Reis through a variety of fronts, using drop-offs to kill the trail should anyone try to follow it. The drug sells for ridiculous sums; the killings lend the Nightmare notoriety, as does Trent Fresno's growing fame on campus (see "Investigation: Trent Fresno's Nightmare," page 57).

Tension builds in the Edge. A Master of Sleep is killed late this night, the last one except for Spiro

D'Lohran (see "Investigation: The Sandmen," page 58).

Day 9 and Beyond.

Events continue as described above for a few more days until the killer reaches Reis's yacht. See "Ending the Story," page 60.

The Investigation

This is the meat of the scenario. Several different areas worth investigating are described. Several areas include a dramatic or intriguing scene that may be played out or ignored, or drawn on for other scenes of your devising. Movement among these different investigation areas is not linear; rather, the players will jump from one to another, often pursuing several lines of inquiry at once while they wait for information, a future meeting with a contact, or some other event to occur. To the players, these areas will not be separate, but rather a messy whole. The presentation of these areas in the text as discrete is somewhat arbitrary, but should make GMing the investigation relatively easy.

Of considerable importance is the section preceding this, "The Events," which begins on page 50. As opposed to the areas of investigation, that section is more or less linear, and describes how the story progresses while the characters pursue their investigation. Your toughest task will be integrating the events with the investigation items that follow, as events will change and will need to be changed depending on how the investigation is progressing.

All the scenes in this section are numbered consecutively, but that doesn't mean they occur in that order; the numbers are just for your ease of reference.

Investigation: Researching the Exhibition

The characters may wish to learn more about the "John Doe" exhibit, since the killings have

sported the “John Doe” name. This, of course, is why the Peace Force is doing the same.

Most of the information that can be found for this topic is summarized under “Entry Point One: The Exhibition,” presented earlier. By talking with students, university officials, and others the characters can learn that Rigor Kwasek started the “John Doe” thing, and that when it took off he convinced Lydia Goodman to sponsor the show.

This area of investigation is time-critical. The characters can easily learn the above information (if they didn’t already know it) before Day 4, but on that day Kwasek and dozens of others are arrested. If the characters are pursuing this line of inquiry on or after Day 4, the sources have dried up; those few who know the story behind the exhibition but who haven’t been arrested are lying low, and will be unlikely to talk. On Day 6, Rigor and most of the others arrested will be released. They will be willing to talk, though they’ll be somewhat guarded about it.

Scene One: Interviewing Rigor Kwasek

Before Day 4, Rigor can be found at the DETH frat house. When he is released on Day 6, he will move in with some friends temporarily, and avoid the frat house. His reactions to the characters’ questions will depend on when they speak with him.

Before his arrest, Rigor will be happy to talk. Word of the “John Doe” killings is scarcely out, and he hasn’t heard about them (or at least about the “John Doe” part). When questioned during this time, he will begin by explaining the concept behind John Doe — to show how meaning can arise from nothing. He credits the success of the show with the validity of his concept (and indirectly, the genius of his creation, of course). In fact, he thinks the whole John Doe show is one of the most important things to happen on campus in a while. In his view, it brought a lot of students together and gave the student creative community exposure it never had before. Of course, he says, “it attracted a lot of zero-talent losers.” But even their work was given meaning and validity in the John Doe context, Kwasek generously allows. After his arrest and subsequent release, Kwasek is haggard and on edge. He didn’t enjoy his time in confinement, and feels persecuted and put-upon. When questioned,

he responds with only the bare minimum of information. He tries to make it clear that he doesn’t know anything about the murders. Likely as not, he’s drunk when encountered, and raves about the fascist Peace Force, about how everyone hates him. Immersed in self-pity, he finally whines about how no one appreciates him, how no one understands him, etc., and holds onto the bottle even tighter. For his stats, see OTE p. 120.

Investigation: Trent Frezno

The characters may wish to look into Trent Frezno, the art student murdered at the Temple of the Divine Experience. Unlike the other killings, no “John Doe” name was attached. If the characters didn’t learn his name that night, they can get it from the newspaper or pretty much anyone in the student/creative community.

Questioning various students will give them the following information, which you can parcel out in large or small chunks at whatever rate you wish. Learning all of what follows should require several different interviews. Trent Frezno was 23 years old. An orphan, he lived on Al Amarja all his life. His parents left him with a generous inheritance and a carefully-managed endowment, which allowed him to live in comfortable surroundings without working.

At D’Aubainne University, he was a sophomore in the Fine Arts department, focusing on sketching & painting. He wasn’t known as a particularly promising talent. His art tended towards the chaotic and discordant, offering violent and jarring images, but never seemed to possess much of a spark. Examples of his work cannot be found on campus.

There was one exception to his banality, however. In the last couple of weeks, Trent had been selling doses of the drug Nightmare. He was charging less than street price, and in fact claimed that the visions produced by his supply were his own: he said he had made the drug himself, using his own nightmares. Rumor has it that his new boyfriend, a Sandman, was actually responsible. For more on this, see “Investigation: Trent Frezno’s Nightmare,” on page 57.

Frezno’s personal life is harder to learn about. He was a homosexual and a loner, with no real

friends. His often-fractious personality tended to drive off even those students with similar interests and beliefs. If the characters ask around, they'll find somebody Frezno went out with once or twice (see "Scene Two: Roger Bacon's," below).

If the characters are investigating Frezno on or after Day 6, they will hear something else: Trent Frezno is alive. Or so say several students who saw him near his old apartment, in the barrio, earlier that day. Tracking down these reports should consume some hours, since most everyone heard it secondhand. For more on this, see "Investigation: The Return of Trent Frezno," on page 57.

Scene Two: Roger Bacon's

Roger Bacon's is the name of a campus watering hole. Serving standard bar & grill food and alcohol, Bacon's has been a DAU fixture for years. Students often go there to kill an hour or two between classes, or to hang out on a Friday night. It isn't as expensive as many bars in the Edge, and isn't as pretentious, either. The bar's proximity to campus ensures that students of all types and interests congregate here.

Checking into anyone who might have dated Frezno will come up with a name: Mal Stanford. Asking around, the characters will be directed to Bacon's ("yeah, I saw Mal there a half-hour ago, snaggin' a burger"). Hopefully they ask for a description, or get someone to go with them who can point Stanford out.

Entering Bacon's, the characters find a crowded and noisy but (perhaps surprisingly) brightly-lit bar & grill. Numerous small tables are jammed together with flocks of chairs crowding the walls, with students seemingly poured in to fill the gaps. The music (campus radio station ALAM, usually) is ever-present but not overpowering.

Mal Stanford, a healthy-looking Caucasian Brit, sits at a corner table and nibbles on the remains of potato chips. He reads from a paperback novel, entitled *The Big Nowhere*. As the characters approach him, he'll look up casually and size them up.

Stanford heard that Frezno got killed. He says it's a shame, but they weren't close. They hung out a couple times, but Mal says Frezno wasn't easy to get along with. He had an inflated opinion of his artwork, and looked down on anyone that

didn't agree. Mal says the thing about Frezno that bothered him the most was his constant belittling of the other students they knew. "Guy was insecure. More money than talent...I think he knew it, too."

If asked, Stanford says he's pretty sure Frezno was seeing someone just before his death. He saw Frezno out one night around campus, walking with a Hispanic guy, really good-looking, better-built than Frezno. He heard the guy's name was Darrio, and that he was a Sandman — but he doesn't know any more than that.

Stanford can provide much of the information about Frezno mentioned earlier, such as his artwork, his family, his Nightmare-dealing, etc. He can also give them the address of Frezno's apartment. He does have a painting Trent gave him, if the characters are looking for a sample of Frezno's work. It means a quick trip to Stanford's apartment, nearby. The painting is a clumsy attempt at some sort of primitivism: simplistic representations of the sun, moon, people dancing, but all done in a harsh and unpleasant style. If a player asks, they recall seeing a couple of similar works at the John Doe exhibition. Stanford doesn't know if Frezno had works at the exhibition, but wouldn't be a bit surprised.

Investigation: Trent Frezno's Apartment

The Peace Force considers Frezno's murder to be related to, though not part of, the John Doe killings (mostly due to witnesses who saw the three killers). As such, Frezno's apartment — on the third story of a six-story complex — is closed off by the Force. Players will doubtlessly attempt to get in, however, and likely as not will succeed. If they have a contact with the Peace Force, this will be especially easy.

Scene 3: Breaking & Entering

Security is as follows: one Peace Force officer in the lobby, one in the hall outside Frezno's apartment. In addition, the building security officer monitors the elevators remotely and warns both officers by radio if someone is going to Frezno's floor.



The door to his apartment has yellow “PEACE LINE — DO NOT CROSS” tape stretched across it.

How the characters might distract or bypass the officers is up to them; any number of fringe powers could do the trick. Of course, should the characters be caught on the wrong side of a crime scene, the consequences won’t be pretty. Make sure and remind the players of this. Once inside Fresno’s well-furnished four-room apartment, the characters can find a few things of interest:

- ❑ Numerous pieces of Fresno’s mediocre artwork, gathered in one room that apparently served as a studio. They are in a style similar to the one described earlier, although the subject matter and medium varies. If a player asks, these works resemble some that were at the exhibition.
- ❑ A small amount of lab equipment set up in the kitchen — beakers, burners, etc. — that bear “PROPERTY OF D’AUBAINNE UNIV. SCIENCE DEPT.” markings.
- ❑ In the refrigerator, almost a dozen hits of Nightmare in vials. The coloration of the serum here is different from any Nightmare the

characters have seen before. See “Investigation: Trent Fresno’s Nightmare” on page 57 for details. Also here in a re-sealable container is a grey odorless substance; this is raw Dreamweb from the Tulpa-Darrio.

- ❑ Framed photographs and several loose snapshots, showing Trent Fresno or a handsome young Hispanic man or both. If the characters witnessed the shape-change event in the anteroom at the Temple, they recognize the Hispanic man in the photographs as the same one from that night.
- ❑ In the bedroom, clothing for two men of different sizes. One set, apparently Trent’s, consists of black jeans, t-shirts, engineer’s boots, and assorted cheesy-gothic-punk fashions. The other set is for a taller, bigger man and is more traditional; fashionable, in fact — silk shirts, moccasins, etc.

Little more of value can be determined. Nothing is present to give the identity of Trent’s new lover.

Investigation: Trent Frezno's Nightmare

From one source or another, the characters may have learned that Frezno had been dealing Nightmare in the last couple of weeks before his death. Asking around on campus, the characters can locate several students who recall buying Nightmare from Frezno.

They can all tell the characters the same story: about two weeks before his death, Frezno began showing up at parties, offering Nightmare for \$15 a dose — about half the going street price. He also tended to hang around while the buyers took the drug, to see what happened. When asked, he claimed that these were his own nightmares, and that he was making the drug himself. He spouted off about how this was a new medium for creative exploration; how this was the purest transference of idea to experience anyone had ever achieved. He also said it was the best and most involving Nightmare ever made — naturally, because it was based on his nightmares.

Those who took the drug reported intense visions, where the world became reduced to primitive, threatening archetypes (leering faces, out-sized anatomy), almost like folk art. Seeing things minimalized in this way proved a breathtaking and terrifying experience, for the insecurity of self it induced in the user was enormous as long as the drug lasted.

Should the characters bring along some of Frezno's artwork, or try to describe it, those they speak with will connect the images in the paintings to some of those in Frezno's Nightmare doses.

With a glib tongue and liberal funds, the characters may even find a student who has a dose and hasn't taken it yet. Given the current market and the (now-dead) source of the drug, the dose can be purchased for a measly \$200 or so. Consuming it has effects similar to those described just above.

Investigation: Trent Frezno's Other Nightmare

Beginning on Day 8, Nightmare is again available in the campus area. Characters who are pok-

ing around this late in the proceedings will probably hear the rumor pretty quickly. Various students, it seems, are selling it for \$100 a dose. Word at the school has it that the Nightmare they're selling is a second-generation copy of Trent Frezno's original.

As described in the Events section, this is Reis and Schwarz' first effort to get Nightmare back on the streets. They're capitalizing on the coolness of Frezno's drug by selling a copy of it — they recorded it from someone who was using an original dose. The effect is much the same, only less vivid, less real. It's still decent for Nightmare, though. And right now it's the only stuff in town.

Tracking down the source is difficult. Reis isn't taking any chances, and his followers are actually selling it to students virtually at random for \$60 a dose. Most of these students then re-market it for \$100 or so. Trying to find out who sold what to whom will lead the characters down numerous false leads and dead ends; finally, the most they will come up with is "some guy I met at a party." Reis and Schwarz aren't taking any chances.

Significantly, however, none of these students suffer the same murderous fate as the killer's initial victims.

Investigation: The Return of Trent Frezno

As mentioned earlier, the late Trent Frezno has supposedly been sighted in the campus area. The dead walking may not be an entirely unique sight on Al Amarja, but obviously this phenomenon bears further inquiry. The explanation is simple. The tulpa version of the dying Trent Frezno has been "haunting" the area around its/his old apartment, in the daytime when it doesn't wish to hunt (in accordance with Trent's "night equals evil and death" mentality).

The characters may well stake out the area. This endeavor will prove fruitless.

Tracking down those who claim to have seen him, however, is more productive. There are a number of students who have spotted Trent lurking about in his dark trench-coat in the campus area. Always, these encounters are brief and insubstantial. None of them ever approached the apparition, or even saw it for more than a few moments.

Emphasize the fleeting nature of these sightings. The players shouldn't be led to believe that Trent is still alive, or that he somehow faked his death. Rather, they should consider this to be a curious, perhaps supernatural, phenomenon.

Investigation: The Killings

Each night brings with it more death. The characters can get the bare facts (well, most of them) from the newspapers; other, wilder versions float on the streets.

They are welcome to make inquiries into each of the deaths, but they won't find much. The Peace Force has been there before them, and witnesses aren't talking. Of course, there are always people who claim they saw everything, and will gladly relate their wholly-fictitious version of the events for a price.

Make up grisly details as you need. The manner of the killings isn't significant as far as the investigation goes. What is significant is that all of the victims are connected to the Sandmen in some way (in fact they are all Exalted Order types of varying rank) and all had "John Doe" somehow written on their body, on the wall near the body, etc.

The topic of greatest interest, of course, is the killer. Rumors include a big man in a dark coat (sounding somewhat like Fresno, except Fresno was thin and slight, while the killer was some muscle-bound psycho) to various impossible (?) monstrosities: insectoid masses, roiling amalgamations of bloody innards and razor knives, and stranger things yet. Disturbingly, these conflicting reports often concern the same killing.

Investigation: The Sandmen

The characters may well deduce that the best way to find the killer is to move a step ahead. He or she (or it) is hunting "Sandmen" (actually Dream Kings, but only those who know Reis or real Sandmen intimately would realize this); find a Sandman, and you may find the killer. Of all the areas of investigation, this is the most directly fruitful. It is also the most dangerous.

Finding a Sandman in Al Amarja these days is like searching for the meaning of life: everybody's got a clue, but nobody's got the answer. Hitting the bars, the gangs, the street people, the thugs, the junkies — in short, the more-common career choices in the Edge — will turn up people who say they know someone-or-other that knows the Sandmen. But it will take some serious money to get some serious info.

Any serious info pertains to the Exalted Order front operation — the *true* Sandmen are even harder to find out about. Unless the PCs already know a genuine Sandman, they won't find out anything about them. If for some weird reason they're on friendly terms with a real one, he'll be very cryptic about the ongoing situation: "Just sit back and watch the fun. And stay out of the way." A jarring giggle may follow. To press him on this point means probable evisceration.

This area of investigation is something that should take a couple of days, probably while the characters are in the midst of other things. When you feel they've asked enough people and put out enough cash, let them get lucky. Or so they think. Hit them with Scene 4.

Scene 4: Express Train To Hell

His name is Spiro D'Lohran. He's an Exalted Master of Sleep, and he's shitting his pants. Everyone that ranks below him is dead. Everyone that ranks above him is missing — gone into hiding, he thinks, and left him twisting in the wind. He's right.

When the characters meet him, he has about half an hour to live. It's late evening, in the Plaza of Great Men. The characters' contact has told them she's found them a "Sandman," but he wants \$1000 to see them. In fact, D'Lohran will settle for \$200 — the cost of a one-way plane ticket to Italy. D'Lohran, you see, is on the run. He split from his apartment a couple days ago, when he finally clued in to what was going on. One of his Pawns lived in the apartment building across the street. When D'Lohran was awakened by sirens and saw the righteous assembly of Peace Force officers in the night, pouring into his Pawn's building, he figured it was time to bail.

He hit the streets and took a Total Taxi to the apartment of a brother Order member, the one he

reported to. Lights out, nobody home. About then he started cluing in to the situation — the higher-ups had left him for bait. He headed back home; before he made it, there were Peace Force guys crawling all over his building, too. Something had gone down there, just after he left; he didn't dare go back now.

Spiro D'Lohran

Exalted Master of Sleep

Strung-out and hyperactive, Spiro had that special something that marks a potential servitor in Reis's eyes. It might have been his eternal dissatisfaction with the status quo; it might have been his need to constantly experiment with the parameters of his reality; it might have been his essentially predatory nature. Regardless, he's now a plot device. Al Amarjan male, age 27, 181 cm, 72 kg, medium-brown skin, dark hair, dark eyes.

Attack: 3 dice

Defense: 3 dice

Traits

Restlessness, 4 dice — He's never satisfied with the way things are. There's always some new angle to work, some new scheme to pull. The Order has offered him a secret to learn, and he's been committed to finding out all he can. But he always listens to his feet. (Anxious, mildly paranoid)

Talkative, 3 dice — Likes to hear the sound of his own voice, because it feeds his insecurities. Leads him to egotism as well. Listening to others suggests weakness, so he yaks all the more. (Excitable, tries to be authoritative)

Brawler, 3 dice — Didn't grow up poor for nothing. He can handle himself well in physical situations. Doesn't mind getting his hands dirty. (Accepts violence as a solution to problems)

D'Lohran will meet the characters when he wants to. The contact tells them to start walking through Flowers, and the "Sandman" will find them when he thinks the time and place are right. D'Lohran's as good as his word. He gets up from a cafe table and introduces himself, looking rattled and weary. He insists that they take a Giovanni's cab to the airport as they talk. Then he demands the money, whatever amount was agreed to. If the characters balk and want information first, he

relents; this is the first lead on escape money he's had, and he'll do whatever it takes. But his intention, which he'll tell them up-front, is to hop a plane at the airport and scoot for Italy.

The characters can fire whatever questions they like. He'll spill his guts (not literally, not yet). This means anything and everything he knows about the Order, which will mostly consist of their hierarchy, their rituals, and their bogus mythology. He'll give them every name he knows, which includes a lot of dead women and men, killed in the last few days. The only ones he doesn't know that aren't dead, are missing.

Thing is, though, D'Lohran knows more than he's supposed to. He worked a menial job at the Sleep Disorders Clinic and in fact was first recruited there (see page 36) and got some hands-on experience at recording dreams. (Unknown to D'Lohran, Reis mistakenly thought he might have had that "special something" that makes a true Sandman; because of this and his job at the Clinic, he knows more than his rank would normally allow.) He knows that Nightmare comes from Dreamweb, and he knows that Dreamweb comes from...someplace weird. "It's shit, man! It's some kinda funky shit from some kinda funky people that ain't human. They look human. I seen tapes I wasn't s'posed to see. They change, to whatever you want them to. I mean, you say 'I want a blonde,' boom, you got yourself a blonde. Tall, short, fat, skinny, whatever the hell you want, they is."

He can describe the process of recording the dreams onto the Dreamweb, but doesn't know what happens after that. He doesn't know who runs the show, or why. He doesn't know the name of these creatures (tulpas) and doesn't understand them very well. He's never met one in person, that he's aware of. But he will try to answer the characters' questions as best he can as they race to the airport.

If asked about Trent Fresno, he's heard of him. Dead guy. He was making Nightmare and selling it cheap. Where did he get the Dreamweb? "Fuck if I know! Maybe he knew one o' them shape-changing motherfuckers." Finally, the terminal is in sight. But that isn't all.

The cabbie yells. Dead ahead in the road is a flying *THING*. The creature is about the size of the car, swooping at them from the air. It resembles a mass of snakes, or intestines, or something, with appendages like spider legs and eyes like death. It

doesn't fly so much as it rolls through the air, reshaping its proportions constantly.

The characters have moments to act. Those with fringe powers may use them. Those with weapons of some sort may ready them. Those with brains will wish they were somewhere else instead.

Taking into account the actions of the characters, you must decide what is to happen. This is the general framework, which you should modify as the characters act:

The cabbie swerves, cursing colorfully. The creature somehow stays directly ahead of the cab, and in seconds the two meet. Two spider-legs punch through the windshield, and morph between hairy appendages and razor-sharp blades an inch thick. They catch the roof. The cab skids briefly but keeps going, unaccountably: the mass of the creature should have led to a collision, but it doesn't. Through the front and rear windows, the characters can see more of the spider legs punching through the hood in several places, anchoring the thing. Then the roof is ripped off. The wind comes rushing in at 60-odd miles an hour. The smell of the beast is horrific, like sex and shit and beating hearts pumping stinking blood through an anus. The roof clatters onto the road behind them, sparking heavily. Directly above the characters is the bulk of the creature, standing on the cab, supported by its thick leg-blades. The thing changes shape constantly. For a moment it is twisting wet death, human innards dripping with water, short blades stabbing through the mass spasmodically. Then it roars without a mouth, and then forms one, belonging to the massive stretched-out face of Trent Fresno. The mouth roars louder, and then a glob of muscle, guts and tissue is vomited down into the cab. It envelops D'Lohran and then retracts, sucking him up whole into the Fresno-thing's maw. After a moment of sudden quiet (interrupted only by the shrieking of the cabbie, and whatever noise the players — I mean, the characters — are making) the thing pulls its legs out of the metal of the cab and all at once is gone, lost behind them. Anyone looking back will see it spiraling up, up into the night, into the atmosphere that D'Lohran's hoped-for plane is even now passing through, towards the terminal.

The Fresno-thing will only attack the characters if they actually get in the way. Considering the circumstances, that's unlikely, but anything is

possible. If they do mess with it, it may suck them up and spit them out onto the roadside, where they will suffer broken bones and bruised flesh but will probably live. Or it may send a roiling gut forward and down a character's throat, which will probably make them stop whatever foolish act they were doing. When it leaves, it will retract the appendage at the same time, leaving the character vomiting on his friends in the back seat.

The whole incident, from start to finish, occupies perhaps twenty seconds. Needless to say, the cabbie stops on the side of the road and calls the dispatcher.

What the characters do next is up to them, though interrogation by the Peace Force is almost certain. D'Lohran's body is never found, but the roof of the cab left lying in the road carries the words "John Doe" scratched into the paint and metal with a sharp instrument.

Ending the Story

The killer has one very simple objective: kill the "Sandmen." He knows only the Exalted Order, and like any tulpa wouldn't see a real Sandman if he was standing in front of him. It's Reis and everyone who serves him who must pay — first for imprisoning him, then for killing his perfect lover.

Reis and his gang have one very simple objective: Kill John Doe.

How the story ends, however, depends on something altogether different: what is the objective of the characters? As they learn more about what's going on, they'll have to make a decision. Do they want to stop the killer? Or would they not feel too bad if it wipes out the Order and what seems to be the whole Nightmare chain?

If they decide to just pull out, once the students have been released from custody and they're satisfied that the "Sandmen" are the killer's targets, then there's another death or two. *La Grande Fraise* is found adrift off the coast, all aboard dead. The killer is never seen again, and the mystery is never solved — beyond whatever conjectures the characters can already make.

On the other hand, they may decide to look further into the "Sandmen." From D'Lohran, they have

Schwarz's Coup

If the characters are already involved in some way with the Order, you may be interested in developing the Schwarz-wants-control subplot (see page 26). Scene 5, following, provides an excellent opportunity in such a case. While the Eye of Chulka is in the possession of the Tulpa-Trent, Schwarz may use the opportunity to assault Reis and seize control.

Should you wish this to occur (and it should only happen if you were already developing this subplot — otherwise it just complicates things and confuses the players) you should know in advance what the outcome will be. Will Schwarz suc-

one big clue: the Sleep Disorders Clinic. If they start checking out that operation (see page 36), the Order will make their move. The Order has numerous non-Sandman contacts, and they know who's been asking questions and poking around. One of these associates will contact the characters and offer them an assignment: lure the killer in, and the "Sandmen" will take care of him. In exchange, the Order offers whatever it takes: incredible sums of money, information, or...a week with the characters' perfect, ultimate, ideal mate.

Set up this deal however you wish. If you want the Order to offer them the ideal-mate/tulpa option, they will no doubt arrange for a brief preliminary meeting with the tulpa, just to make it clear that they aren't fooling. They will not, however, allow the characters to meet any genuine Sandmen face-to-face, or give them any information which the killer could use to find Reis, Schwarz, and the rest.

All the characters have to do to complete their end of the bargain is press on with their investigation, with the knowledge in their heads that the "Sandmen" will be waiting in a certain warehouse in Great Men Barrio every night at midnight. Reis is reasonably sure the Killer is aware of the characters' activities, and will psychically pick up the information from their minds in short order.

Which, in fact, he does. It's up to the characters whether they want to go to the warehouse each night, or perhaps observe from nearby, or stay

as far away as possible. They aren't invited, but that doesn't mean they can't show up. The Order couldn't care less, either way.

Scene 5: Showdown

The warehouse is a tired old thing, creaking wood and aged memory. Within the spacious area inside will be six Order members of high rank, along with Reis and Schwarz. Their plan is simple: the Order types will slow the creature, while Reis throws the Eye of Chulka into the thing's bulk. The Eye has a notable power that the Order is banking on: it makes any tulpa who comes in contact with it human. And the killer, Reis knows, is in fact a tulpa. Reis and company arrive right at midnight. They all pile out of two Total Taxis and enter the warehouse. The taxis drive off.

A few minutes later, the killer arrives. A dark shape materializes in front of the warehouse, and then smashes through the front door. There's a horrific scream as the creature devours the first "Sandman" it can reach. Then there is a blinding flash, and the creature stops moving, stops shifting. It collapses to the floor in a mass of spindly legs and tissue, and then struggles feebly to get up. But it's impossible; the thing doesn't have a true skeleton, nor muscles. The impossible, illogical, supernatural image it adopted is now reality, and must conform to the laws of nature. The Eye



of Chulka has made it as close to human as possible, and the tulpa is a tulpa no more.

The thing croaks and gurgles. Trent Fresno's face is visible on its surface, in agony.

The Order operatives walk forward slowly. Their dead comrade lies on the floor, torn to pieces. Each draws a blade, and then as one they fall on the creature, and they let go of all the fear that's been in their hearts through this terrible week, and they stab and gouge and rip and tear. Their knives pierce the flesh of the shuddering, impossible bulk and pull it apart. Fiercely they rip and roar and shout and exult...and then Reis barks out an order.

They step back from the great bloody mass on the floor. They clean their steely knives and put them back into their sheaths, underneath their blood-besotted clothes. Schwarz speaks into a mobile phone, and the taxis come back. Reis leans over the remains and plucks out his monocle — the Eye of Chulka.

The lodge members smile their smiles and shake hands, clap each other on the back and kick the remains of the Tulpa/Trent thing as they walk outside, climb into the warm vehicles, and drive off into the Al Amarjan night.

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