



PARANOIA TM

The Great Outdoors

Original *PARANOIA* design

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New *PARANOIA* edition

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PARANOIA™

The Great Outdoors

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Looking after your best interests

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On the World Wide Web: www.mongoosepublishing.com.

Published by Mongoose Publishing, Ltd. Publication MGP 6642. Published 2010. Printed In USA.



Introduction

Alpha Complex is a big dome that is home to a whole load of clones. Millions of people live, die, die, die, die, die and finally die within the colour-coded-for-your-convenience walls without ever going outside. INFRARED clones are told that Outdoors is an uninhabitable toxic wasteland, assuming they even realise that there is an 'outside' at all – most INFRAREDs have less curiosity than a shoebox and assume that it's corridors and food vats forever.

At RED, you are informed that Outdoors is *technically* habitable but is crammed with horribly dangerous things like Commie Mutant Traitors and trees and savage monsters and toxic swamps and squirrels. Then they shove you out the door on a mission. If you don't die of explosive agoraphobia, then you get to run around Outdoors being scared of the giant dome that's so big you can't see the ceiling. There is no comfortable concrete floor, just a carpet of this weird green stuff that looks a little like a fungal infection. There are these brown pillars, only they don't go all the way up to the ceiling at all, they just stand there supporting huge badly-organised bundles of more greeny papery plastic things. Someone has turned the air recirculation system up way too high, causing unpredictable drafts. And the smells! Where's the tang of coolant? The membrane-burning scent of disinfectant? The soothing, balmy smell of sedatives? Instead of all those familiar smells, the air Outdoors smells like ...well, Outdoors. It makes your heart race like CoffeeLyke, only without the nausea.

Outdoors is weird.

By GREEN Clearance, you are cleared to know that Alpha Complex was built on (and under, and around) the ruins of an Old Reckoning 'city' called San Francisco. When the Commies attacked, much of San Francisco was destroyed by Commie nukes or flooded by Commie fifth columnists. The other cities fell to the Red Menace and only Alpha Complex was saved by Our Friend, The Computer. Over the intervening centuries between the foundation of Alpha Complex and the present, glorious year 214, the uncoordinated biological process known as 'nature' has reclaimed the uncontrolled territory between Alpha Complex and the Commie armies. The Armed Forces are the thin green line protecting Alpha Complex from the hordes of Commie Mutant Traitors lurking just beyond the dome.

Furthermore, they inform you that Alpha Complex is not entirely cut off from the outside world. In addition to the Armed Forces, the other Service Groups obtain certain key resources like fresh water and uranium despite Alpha Complex's 94.33% system closure rate. They also inform you how many times they've recycled your urine and you'll rather wish they hadn't.

Once you hit BLUE Clearance, you begin to suspect that everything you've been informed of so far – apart from the bit about urine recycling – is a Commie disinformation exercise. There are too many inconsistencies in the historical documents, the use of Outdoors to contain and control the proles is just too

convenient and nature ...it's just *sinister*. Evolution? Natural selection? Pshaw. A transparently thin cover story. Life doesn't just *happen* as the result of random events. There is an invisible conspiracy guiding everything from behind the scenes. Plants are obviously plants, animal were probably engineered in some laboratory and you are pretty sure that someone's encoding stenographic messages into the shape of those alleged 'clouds'.

Trust no-one. Suspect everyone. Assume that everything is out to get you.

Co-incidentally, BLUE Clearance is when citizens are given constant low doses of gelgerine in their drinking water for their convenience and mental health. Gelgerine does not cause paranoia. (Who told you to ask that? Who are you anyway? Why do you have so many questions?)

From INDIGO Clearance on, citizens understand the real truth about Outdoors – it doesn't really matter. Oh, you might find the occasional Old Reckoning geegaw that you can sell to a collector, the odd unexploded nuke or deranged feral, but Alpha Complex is the only place that matters. The only reason to go Outdoors is when you've been outmanoeuvred by some rival and you're fleeing the termination booths ...

...and even then, it's only a holiday. You'll be back to get those bastards. And when you do, you'll exile them into the Great Outdoors. It's hell out there.

Who Goes Where?

Most Alpha Complex citizens never go Outdoors or even think about the existence of Outdoors. The complex is the universe, as far as they are concerned, and there is nothing beyond the complex. The only Service Groups that regularly dispatch missions Outdoors are the Armed Forces, Tech Services and Power Services.

The Armed Forces talk about Outdoors a lot. Most of their really impressive weapons – the Warbots, the Hypernukes, the Plasma Throwers, the Antimatter Bombs, the Multiwarhead Cluster-Deployed Camera-Guided Smart Fuel-Ground Bomb, the DomeBuster Missile – are much too destructive to be used against targets in Alpha Complex and while the R&D eggheads might bleat about non-lethal or single-target weapons, the only thing that gets Armed Forces generals off (other than high Clearance pharmaceuticals) is a really, really big bang. They need to go Outdoors to blow up large chunks of it, under the guise of ‘weapons testing’ or ‘denying tactically significant targets to the enemy’. Only a small fraction of Armed Forces grunts ever go Outdoors; most low Clearance cannon fodder spend their lives guarding security checkpoints, harassing citizens, formation marching, formation drilling and formation standing.

The two Service Groups are obliged to do Service Services Outdoors. These Service Services service the state of the Alpha Complex infrastructure, repair and clean the domes and construct new external structures. Power Services operates several uranium mines, Tech Services pumps fresh water and mines for metals and other raw materials under contract to PLC. The mines are run almost entirely by bots, modulo the occasional exiled prisoner or bureaucratic snafu.

The fourth set of official Outdoors missions consists, of course, of Heroic Troubleshooters. Usually, when R&D or HPD&MC or whoever wants something done Outdoors, they send a Disposable Low-Budget Asset.



Chapter 1: Into the Outdoors

The default *PARANOIA* interpretation of Outdoors – and the one we will stick with for most of this book – is that the terrain outside of Alpha Complex is a verdant wilderness, dotted with Old Reckoning ruins and inhabited mainly by furry woodland critters, Giant Mutant Cockroaches and a handful of Alpha Complex escapees or the equally crazy descendants of people who survived the Event. Alpha Complex is a big, partially submerged dome ruled by The Computer, which started out as the San Francisco public transportation management system. If someone goes Outdoors, they find themselves in a muddy field or wooded area.

That is the sort of Outdoors the players expect. You can subvert these expectations for your own nefarious needs, of course. The players should never, ever be certain of what is going on in Alpha Complex – or outside it, for that matter. Here are a dozen variants on the Outdoors, just to make your players sweat a little bit more when they are about to open an airlock.

- Alpha Complex is a spaceship, travelling across the incredible gulf between the stars for uncounted generations and 'Outdoors' is hard vacuum. The Armed Forces don't go Outdoors except in the rarest of circumstances – they patrol cavernous empty fuel tanks and vast hydroponics bays. The myth of Outdoors is propagated because when people discover that they're stuck inside a tiny metal bubble in the middle of interstellar space, they go nuts.
- The whole place is underwater. The only people who go outside are the Armed Forces TINCAN power armour troops ... and yes, high-tech armour does look like a diving suit. Open an airlock and you will flood the sector. Ignore the creaking noises from above, citizen. External pressure is nominal ... ish. Report all leaks immediately. Leaking is treason.
- 'Alpha Complex' is an experiment in human psychology by the CIA, the

characters are all on whale-stoning doses of LSD, Mark II, and it is 1954 outside that door. The whole thing is an experiment in hot-house patriotism to help God-fearing Americans defeat the Communistic menace. Alpha Complex is an underground missile silo and the Armed Forces are actually stumbling around an Army reservation.

- Outdoors really is a blasted nuclear wasteland and The Computer deceives higher Clearance citizens to maintain their happiness. Happiness is mandatory, citizen. The Armed Forces go out but they don't come back...
- Hey, why neglect the clichés – Alpha Complex is Hell, or purgatory, or some other approximation of the afterlife. You *can't* die here and cloning is just denial. In this metaphor, The Computer really is God (Are you a member of the First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer? If so, you actually hit the one-true-religion jackpot!). Outdoors is either endless grey wastelands populated by hungry ghosts, lots of white fluffy clouds or alarmingly sulphurous and fiery.
- It is run by aliens. That's why everything is just a bit off here – they based Alpha Complex on information harvested from our television signals. The so-called High Programmers are really lizard aliens wearing masks. Outdoors means leaving the human enclosure and wandering through the greatest zoo in the galaxy. Gaze upon the fearsome Zrogghtruff (until it eats your eyeballs and lays eggs in the bloody sockets!). Be confused by alien souvenir shops! Remember, human feeding time is at noon (That's feeding as in 'feeding on', of course. The 'Armed Forces' is takeout food.).
- Take a page or an infinity from Borges' *The Library of Babel*. Alpha Complex is an infinite expanse of corridors, sector upon sector upon

sector, each one filled with a stranger bunch of conspiracies than the last. The Computer is an infinitely recursive reflection of itself. Hell, your clones aren't you – it's just that, given infinite space, there are infinite nigh-identical copies of you to take over from you once you die. Outdoors is a myth, an impossibility. The Armed Forces started out as an attempt to map the infinite space and now it is a bunch of Don Quixotes with robotic Sancho Panzos, questing for a promised land that cannot exist in this tesseract complex.

- Outdoors is a rumour started by the Sierra Club to get recruits. It was such a successful scheme that the Club became the most powerful Secret Society for a while and was able to set up a fake Service Group as a recruitment front. That front, the Armed Forces, turned on its erstwhile masters and overthrew the old Sierra Club leadership. Those bastards.
- Outdoors is just another loyalty test. If you go Outdoors, you can flee The Computer's beneficent regime and join up with all those other Commie Mutant Traitors who also rejected happiness. It may look like the open sky but it really is just a big blue dome with a really powerful lightbulb. Once all the traitors have been identified, then the 'Outdoors' will be flooded with toxic gas. In the event of a toxic gas flood, please lie on the ground and curl into a ball for easy disposal. Thank you for your cooperation.

The Real Outdoors

Assuming your Alpha Complex isn't on Mars, or deep beneath the Himalayas, or a computer simulation, then outside is the wilderness ... but what sort of wilderness. Again, this is definitively, authoritatively nebulous and ill-defined – not through Famous Game Designer Laziness but to ensure maximum fear and doubt among players. Pick your flavour of Outdoors.

CHAPTER 1: INTO THE OUTDOORS

Hey, What About The Outdoor Life Specialty?

If you are going with the 'Troubleshooters are absurdly clueless about Outdoors' approach, then Outdoors Life doesn't actually tell the characters anything about life Outdoors. The Speciality means the character has studied official briefing documents and taken training courses about surviving in the natural world, which bear as much resemblance to accurate information as a bear does to a chipmunk (which, ironically, is exactly the sort of mistake contained within those official briefing documents and training courses). What the Speciality does is allow the characters to be wrong with authority.

Outdoor Life, A Sample Conversation

Team Leader: What's that thing?

Outdoor Life Trained Troubleshooter: It's a ... quaffle.

Team Leader: Is it dangerous?

Troubleshooter: Potentially.

Team Leader: We need to get past it in order to attack that fortified Commie position.

Troubleshooter: Oh! I remember a technique I was shown in my survival training. I can hypnotise the quaffle with an alluring dance. That will keep it occupied and docile.

Team Leader: Excellent. Off you go.

Troubleshooter: Regrettably, sir, that means I won't be able to join in the attack on the Commie bunker.

Team Leader: Hmm. Can we shoot the quaffle instead of hypnotising it?

Troubleshooter: No! They ... feed on coherent light! Hypnosis is the only option. Look! It's becoming angry!

Team Leader: I don't see any change!

Troubleshooter: Exactly! A quaffle is most aggressive when it is perfectly still and seemingly oblivious! I must commence my dance immediately! Quickly, head for the bunker while there is still time!

Team Leader: Thank The Computer for assigning such an expert on wilderness survival to our vital mission. Come, comrades, er, citizens, we must all do our part in the frontal assault on the Commie bunker! Choke their laser barrels with our smoking corpses! *Glory Glory Hail Computer!*

Bucolic Wilderness of Terror

The Outdoors is perfectly peaceful. Humanity is mostly extinct, so it's all fluffy bunnies and trees as far as the eye can see. There is nothing that dangerous out there at all, beyond the occasional bear and the usual natural dangers like poisonous mushrooms and falling branches. Earth's biosphere has recovered from the embarrassing disease called mankind and the world is returning to ecological balance. You are welcome to sing *kumbaya* but there's no-one else out there to hear it.

This Outdoors is the complete antithesis of Alpha Complex. It's healthy, tranquil, natural and peaceful. Nothing here's trying to kill you, nothing here is plotting against you. It's ... nice.

You must teach your players to fear it.

It's all in the descriptions. Remember, the Troubleshooters have never seen a tree, or a bird, or a river, or the sky before, so describe these things as the bizarre, impossible, utterly alien intruders that the characters perceive them as. In this interpretation, the Troubleshooters are

innocent morons abroad in a world they cannot understand, suffering something akin to future shock, when confronted with a whole new paradigm of being.

Trees: *Hundreds of vertical tubes stick out of the floor up ahead. They're covered in some sort of crusty growth like year-old Cold Fun. At the top of the main tube, each one splits into a mess of smaller tubes that are covered in small green plastic tags. You can't see if anything is written on the little tags but it would be above your Security Clearance to find out anyway. The tubes are several metres tall but there is no access ladder. There are protrusions that are probably access ports that you could use to climb up if you had too.*

Grass: *The floor is covered in some sort of carpeting. It's green in colour and feels damp and sickeningly soft to the touch. Upon closer analysis, the floor under the carpet is absolutely filthy and you guess that someone installed this strange carpet to hide the grievous hygiene breach underneath.*

Bird: *It's a tiny monster of some sort! It looks like a very small flybot. There is no visible engine but it's got a pair of wings*

mounted on its narrow chassis. The whole thing is covered in some sort of modular ablative armour. It fixes you with a glare from its beady yellow eye and emits a screeching noise that reminds you of a laser cannon charging up. What do you do?

Coyote: *There's another one of these bizarre Outdoors entities. This one is four-legged and covered in some sort of dark hair-like coating. It has a triangular head and you spot lots of needle-like teeth in its mouth. As it approaches, you notice several more similar creatures. They seem to be circling around you, possibly as some sort of ritualised welcome. Hello, new friends!*

River: *There must be a really big broken pipe somewhere nearby, because you've just encountered the biggest leak you've ever seen. A clearish liquid flows through a rough channel in the landscape at high speed, extending as far as you can see in either direction. From the look of it, it's been leaking for some time but no-one has bothered to put so much as a 'wet floor' warning sign down, let alone call in a repair drone. The maintenance in this whole Outdoors zone is sadly lacking.*



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

Sky: *This dome is huge. Absolutely staggeringly, vertiginously, impossibly huge. So big you can't make out any of the features of the ceiling that must be up there... somewhere, right? There is a ceiling, isn't there? That's just a really big dome that's painted blue on the inside, isn't it? THERE'S SOMETHING BETWEEN YOU AND THE VOID OF DEEP SPACE, RIGHT! YOU'RE NOT CLINGING TO THE SURFACE OF A TINY PEBBLE, YOU'RE NOT ABOUT TO BE FLUNG OFF INTO INFINITY ANY SECOND NOW!? AAAAAAGH! Your heart is pounding and your head feels alarmingly light and hollow. It is just a really big dome. A really really big dome. Not emptiness. Just a dome. It's a dome. Dome. Home. Dome. Domey dome. Everything is fine. Don't think about falling off the world.*

Would you like to cling to the nearest object or take some more happiness pills, or both?

Dissatisfaction is Sedition, Sedition is Treason

For Straight-style games, play down the silly misunderstandings and play up the emotional contrast between Alpha Complex and the Outdoors. In this approach, the Troubleshooters know what Outdoors is and aren't befuddled by trees and squirrels. They know – or have been told, anyway – that Alpha Complex is surrounded by wilderness. This empty wilderness is not under The Computer's direct supervision; it stands as a contrast against the efficient, ordered, controlled life within Alpha Complex. Only a free-thinking deviant traitor could see any virtue in Outdoors. Only a traitor would want to flee Alpha Complex.

You can sow rumours of free towns out there somewhere, communities where humans live free of The Computer's insane regime. Outdoors becomes everything Alpha Complex is not – healthy, sane, safe, hopeful, trustworthy – but if the characters try to leave Alpha Complex, they will be shot as traitors. The only way to escape Alpha Complex is to play the game, to eliminate all the other

Troubleshooters so you can escape to a better life. In this style of game, Outdoors has to be perfectly safe and mundane in order to be an appealing alternative.

Putting Straight games Outdoors can get very, very nasty. Inside Alpha Complex, there is usually an external threat or convenient way to bump off other Troubleshooters. You don't need to shoot Bob-R in the back – you just need to run faster than Bob-R when you are both fleeing the rampaging crushbot and you've tied his bootlaces together. In a perfectly safe, mundane, tranquil Outdoors there is no way for me to get some external force to do my dirty work for me and provide cover for my screw-jobs. The only way to eliminate another Troubleshooter is to shoot him yourself.

Home on the (Firing) Range

Imagine a beautiful forest glade. Warm sunlight filters through the trees. Butterflies flutter on the cool breeze. It's almost perfectly still, except for the almost imperceptible quivering of the leaves and it is so very quiet.

Close your eyes¹. Imagine that glade.

In the distance, high in the sky, there's something moving, leaving a contrail behind it. The sunlight glints off its metal shell. It grows as it gets closer, turning from a speck to a dot to a ...

BOOM!

And in the instant before the glade, and the surrounding five kilometres of virgin forest, are blasted into a glass-walled crater, you hear the bomb scream 'DEATH TO COMMUNISM!'

In this interpretation, Outdoors is the front line against the Commie menace. It is hell out here. There are Commies in the trees, man, Commie tunnels are everywhere. That rock could be a Commie trap. Vatslime, you could be a Commie double agent. Up against the wall!

Take every Vietnam movie and put them in a blender with trench warfare, the 1950s Red Scare and Shock and Awe. Add in a generous helping of Kool-Aid and combat drugs and you've got the Armed Forces' view of the Outdoors in a glass. In this interpretation, the Outdoors is Them and we're Us. The Armed Forces is busy blowing up every Commie observation post (aka 'tree') and Commie forward operating base ('hill') and training camp ('open field') within 1,000 clicks of Alpha Complex. There is no real enemy but the Armed Forces, nonetheless, manages to spend billions of credits and millions of lives prosecuting a feverish war on nothing at all.

For the poor Troubleshooters who are sent Outdoors, the biggest dangers are getting caught in an Armed Forces artillery barrage, getting run over by a rampaging warbot, being targeted by a bombing run or being misidentified and shot as Commie scouts. The Outdoors is full of deranged Armed Forces soldiers, all armed to the teeth and coked to the gills, their nerves strung out like electrified piano wire on a cocktail of paranoia and Thymoglandin. None of these soldiers have actually ever seen a Commie but they've all got a hundred stories about how dangerous the Commies are and how there are Commies all around them, in the dark ...

Mutant Weirdness

Hey, why should Alpha Complex be the only place with weird mutants? After all, Power Services dumps just as much toxic waste Outdoors as it does inside Alpha Complex. In this interpretation of the natural world Outdoors, there are strange life forms that evolved after the catastrophe. Giant Mutant Cockroaches, for example, but there could also be bears with laser eyes, carnivorous trees with blood-sucking tentacles, hyperintelligent fungi that infect your brain with Maoism, ants with a collective consciousness who write pamphlets on collectivism, land sharks and puddles of escaped, sentient and vengeful vat slime. Oh, and genetically engineered Giant Radioactive Mutant Cockroaches that crave culture.

1: Ask a friend or hired servant to read you the rest of the section while you close your eyes.

CHAPTER 1: INTO THE OUTDOORS

If you put an alien world outside Alpha Complex, the players are just as confused and clueless as their Troubleshooters. You lose the humour² of the Troubleshooters trying to work out what rain is but you do get to hit them with rain so acidic that it burns the flesh off your bones.

Gamma Clearance World

The Event wiped away Old Reckoning civilisation but there are survivors and the descendants of survivors. Alpha Complex is just one weirdly mutated remnant of the world that was. In Outdoors, there are lots of other signs of the destroyed civilisation, like ruins, intact buildings, tribes who've cobbled together a culture from the remains, insane robots, mutant monsters ... the whole post-apocalyptic shebang. In this interpretation, the Outdoors is just as crazy, wild and dangerous as Alpha Complex. Crazy cannibal golfer tribes go to war with biker gangs and their monster truckbot allies.

This version of Outdoors doesn't have the same contrast to life in Alpha Complex as the other interpretations – in or out, life is nasty, weird and short – but it does offer the most scope for strange Outdoor missions. The characters might be sent to stop a threat to Alpha Complex (*mutant Genghis Khan is about to invade!*) or

Fear and Ignorance

If Alpha Complex is a satire on the fears of our own society – our increasingly absurd security theatre, our bureaucratic logjams, our frustrations with technology, our shallow consumer culture, our fear of *them*, our neurotic paranoia – then Outdoors is a satire on the fear of the unknown and the future. Back when *PARANOIA* first came out, Outdoors had a tinge of the post-nuclear war apocalypse. You can superimpose your own worries about the future on life Outdoors. Maybe it's peak oil that gets us, or bird flu, or grey goo, or dirty bombs.

Take your nightmares about the future and put clown shoes on them. Bands of cannibalistic bikers roam the blasted wasteland of the far future, peddling frantically on their bicycles – hey, oil ran out years ago, because we never listened to Jimmy Carter. Priest-ridden Renne Faire villagers scrape a living from the soil and burn strangers at the stake because they fear infection with bird flu. Sentient swarms of nanotechnology squelch through the landscape, fretting about fashion. Basically, take the screaming headlines of DOOM that fill the newspapers and stick it all Outdoors.

recover Old Reckoning relics (*bring us the YELLOW Clearance black box*) or deal with other denizens of the weird world outside the dome (*congratulations, Troubleshooters, on your promotions! You are now Alpha Complex's ambassadors to the Giant Mutant Cockroaches*).

Every trip Outdoors means more encounters with weird mutant tribes and conspiracies. Make the players dread being sent Outdoors, because it's even more confusing and paranoia-inducing

than Alpha Complex. Fear and ignorance shall, as always, be your watchwords.

Well, fear, ignorance and whatever you can salvage from the future remains of our vanished civilisation. Fear, ignorance and Country and Western music; fear, ignorance and hillbilly cannibals; fear, ignorance and the monks from *A Canticle for Leibowitz*; fear, ignorance and the saucer cult ...

²: Sometimes, it can be hilarious when players are willing to let their characters blunder around in the dark. At other times, it is tiresome and either becomes an excuse for non-fun 'wackyness' or a dull exercise where the players have to feign ignorance by asking questions that they already know the answers to ('Do I know it's a tree, already?').



Chapter 2: Stepping Outside

One does not simply walk into Outdoors¹.

Back in the early days of Alpha Complex, the sector grid system bore some resemblance to the actual spatial layout of the place. AAA Sector was next to BAA Sector, CAA was next in line and so on. You could navigate the place without having to follow colour-coded lines or asking The Computer for directions or hiring a guide-bot or a sherpa. One problem with this system was that it made the 'border sectors' too obvious. The dissidents and traitors who chafed under The Computer's glorious regime – those proto-Sierra Clubbers and Humanists and Runners) congregated in the sectors closest to the exits to Alpha Complex. This was deemed a threat to security.

In its electric wisdom², The Computer ordained the Alpha Complex Secure Efficiency Through Redistricting Initiative, which changed the jurisdiction of the various sectors. Instead of a neat grid, Alpha Complex's internal maps³ now resemble ... well, basically, you take a bunch of squid, open-minded squid and get them drunk. Once they're suggestible, you dye them all a variety of luminous colours, number them from AAA to ZZZ and then dump them into a tank.

That's the sort of tank with turrets and tracks and armour and a big gun, by the way.

The drunken, amorous squid drive the tank off a cliff. Photograph the smushed remains of twisted metal and tangled, squished mollusc. The result is something approximating a map of Alpha Complex. Sectors twine around other sectors in an unpredictable organic mess. Most sectors have something like a centre of mass but some have been squashed flat and others have been chopped into pieces and scattered across the landscape and there are big chunks of broken industrial machinery everywhere. Getting from A to B (or, more likely, AAA to BBB) means wading through a lot of goo and debris.

Anyway, the upshot⁴ of all the Alpha Complex Secure Efficiency Through Redistricting Initiative was that it is now impossible to tell which sectors have exits to Outdoors. Just because you know that heavily guarded THX sector is right on the edge of Alpha Complex doesn't mean that the 'neighbouring' THY sector is anywhere near there. Finding an exit from Alpha Complex is more complicated than it seems.

Sanctioned Exits

There are official exits – the Armed Forces has to march out of somewhere, after all. Sneaking out an official exit is almost impossible. For one thing, the doors on most of these exits are titanic clamshells of concrete and steel that are tough enough to withstand a direct nuclear strike. Massive atomic-powered

electromagnets strain to pull the doors open. The exits are surrounded by layer upon layer of security – mines, security checkpoints, pillboxes, barbed wire, laser cannon emplacements, artillery emplacements, guardbots, pit traps, razor-wire, regular air patrols, mutant hunting teams, warbots – and that's just on the Alpha Complex side. The Outdoors side is where they put the really big guns. The Computer is convinced that the Red Army is about to invade at any moment and so it concentrates its defences at the exits.

The locations of these exits are classified GREEN but really everyone knows where they are. It's hard to miss the giant multi-lane transtube, the kill-zones and the blast shields. Just don't *mention* any of these things or acknowledge them in any way and you won't be executed.

There are small sanctioned exits elsewhere in Alpha Complex. These exits are for the use of commando teams, scouting missions, Troubleshooters and other small groups. These sanctioned exits are also guarded and protected but with less overkill than the main exits, so they are a favoured target for Sierra Clubbers and other such traitors. To maintain security, there is a special unit of the Armed Forces that randomly positions itself outside a different small exit each daycycle. If anyone comes out of the exit without giving the correct password, they get zapped by the 50 goons lurking outside the door.

1. Of course, if Well-Known Fantasy Movie Franchise™ was a *PARANOIA* mission, someone would have shot Frodo and grabbed the Ring as soon as the Fellowship was two minutes down the road from the Mission Briefing of Elrond.

2. As advised by CPU (screwing over HPD&MC) and aided by PLC's Map and Sign Production Department.

3. No accurate official maps of Alpha Complex are permitted to exist. The Computer deliberately issues slightly (that is to say, wildly) inaccurate maps, just in case a Commie Mutant Traitor gets hold of a map and uses it to plan a terrorist attack. Every map has one or more deliberate errors (like, 'not actually depicting the terrain in the slightest'). Questioning official directions is a sign of sedition or an attempt to uncover classified information; either way, it's treason. Wise citizens learn to make the best of the situation and bribe locals for information and directions.

4. Actually, the 'upshot' was TransComplex TransTube HV-6. During the Alpha Complex Secure Efficiency Through Redistricting Initiative, the transtube's planned route was changed by the redistricting and ended up rising at an 87° angle out of Sector QAX. 4,255 vehicles and transbots were launched at high speed out of Alpha Complex when the transtube was officially opened for business.

CHAPTER 2: STEPPING OUTSIDE

Permission to Exit

No citizen below INDIGO is permitted to leave Alpha Complex without express authorisation. No citizen of INDIGO Clearance is allowed to leave Alpha Complex without a Computer-mandated military escort. No-one gets out legally without The Computer knowing about it. This security is for your own protection, citizen.

Dome Exits

There are lots of exits from Alpha Complex that emerge onto the surface of the dome. Exits of this type include flybot launch tubes, maintenance exits, incinerator chimneys, air ducts and bottomless pits⁵. Most of these exits are accessible only by climbing up very long, very steep shafts, filled with toxic fumes. If you do manage to struggle up to the dome, then you get to wander among the concrete mountains until you fall down another shaft or get eaten by a Domebird. Not really a useful option for most traitors.

Waste Disposal Ports

Waste not, want not. The Computer dislikes anything leaving its sphere of influence. Once something belongs to Alpha Complex, it must be protected against Commie Mutant Traitor subversion. In The Computer's ideal universe, Alpha Complex would be a self-contained system, wholly cut off from the Outdoors (also: Alpha Complex would take over the entire world and everyone would love Their Friend, The Computer, and everyone would be happy and no-one would have to have electrodes attached to anything or be shot or be dragged out behind the chemical sheds and beaten with truncheons). Even toxic waste and spent reactor control rods are *our* toxic waste and spent reactor control rods. If the Commies got their hands on Alpha Complex toxic waste, they might use it to poison the water supply. Better to store the toxic waste within Alpha

Complex (say, there's that handy shelf above the water supply) and keep it out of enemy hands.

That said, there are certain forms of waste that it is easier to just dump outside, especially as the storage tanks and caverns in the Underplex are overflowing into the lower sectors. Waste material permitted for external dumping includes:

- Ash.
- Biological matter deemed treasonous and therefore unusable for recycling into Soylent RED.
- Borsht-flavour Hot Fun from Production runs 4648583–4649882.
- Sewage with a TeaSir content of 11.4% or higher.
- Toxic gases.
- Shredded files.
- Expired medicines and drugs.
- Plasma generators approaching the end of their expected lifespan.
- High-pressure goo.
- Boots contaminated by flame-resistant boot fungus.
- Anything that doesn't fit in a recycling tube.
- Clippy The Indestructible HelpBot.

A few brave traitors sometimes hold their noses and try to sneak out through the waste pipes. Officially, all waste pipes are supposed to include lethal countermeasures to stop Commie saboteurs sneaking up Alpha Complex's tailpipe but these traps are often poorly maintained or even non-functional. If

you can stomach wading neck-deep through any of the above, you might be able to find your way Outdoors.

Illegal Exits

Alpha Complex is, well, complex. It is also crumbling. There are any number of unknown and illegal routes to the Outdoors. Go down corridor 5430 and push the sixth concrete block from the left on the third row from the bottom and the secret door will open. The fourth overflow pipe in the TumTumYum Soy Processing Food Vat leads to a holding tank and there is a hatch in the top of that tank that goes Out. Follow the chalk marks starting in the VVX Sector cafeteria. (Only the penitent traitor will pass.)

Illegal exits are very hard to find. Normally, they are discovered by chance and then carefully concealed by their discoverer. Some exits have survived for centuries and are now protected by absurdly complicated traps and puzzles; others are open secrets or Internal Security honeypots.

Illegal exits are immensely valuable. Everyone wants a piece of the Outdoors action. Sierra Clubbers, obviously, want easy access to their beloved Outdoors. Runners, too, need exits for their eventual escape. The Illuminati have their own sinister plans involving Outdoors, the Mystics and Free Enterprise smuggle drugs and other stuff in and out of Alpha Complex, some Romantic sects comb Outdoors for Old Reckoning stuff, spies for other Complexes need a way home. Oh, and obviously Internal Security would be very interested in knowing about such an exit. If you know where an illegal exit is, you can sell that information for a pile of credits.

Instructions on finding illegal exits are traded on the black market, in the form of whispered riddles and crumpled, stained maps.

5. As per High Programmer directive UV503, which permits them to dispense of traitors via 'pit traps that open right in front of my desk'.



Chapter 3: Survival

As everyclone knows, Outdoors is much, much more dangerous than Alpha Complex. It is a horrible, nightmarish place that is completely non-compliant with CPU-mandated safety directives (and since The Computer has to provide all citizens with six clones to keep Alpha Complex from collapsing into terror-driven anarchy, that means that Outdoors has to be much, much worse). Here are just some of the horrible dangers that brave clones are faced with Outdoors.

Outdoors On Less Than Two Credits A Day

The Outdoor Life skill lets characters identify things Outdoors but gives no clues on how to actually live Outdoors – for that, you need the more-than-slightly seditious Secret Skill of Survival. Even Armed Forces goons who are sent Outdoors are deliberately given misinformation about conditions by The Computer, for their own good. Citizens capable of surviving Outdoors are capable of leaving; citizens who leave are outside The Computer's beneficent regime. Therefore, keeping citizens utterly incapable of surviving for even one day in the open is in The Computer's best interests.

If the characters do try surviving Outdoors – and by this we mean 'sitting in one place trying not to die' – then follow the flowchart below. If they try to do something, then hit them with the Outdoors Random Encounter table and then the flowchart on page 11.

Hey, what's with the tables numbered from 1-6? Well spotted, citizen. Some of the tables in the flowchart have only 6 entries.

I don't have a six-sided dice? Of course you don't, citizen. Unlike other non-fun roleplaying games, *PARANOIA* uses only 20-sided dice, so you obviously have no need for a non-fun dice.

So how do I use those tables? Excellent question! You have two options.

1. The Quick Non-Fun Option: Get a six-sided dice. Raid a *Monopoly*TM set or a casino or something.

2. The Fun But Slightly More Time-Consuming Option: Pick the most appropriate skill for the task at hand (usually Violent or Stealth, possibly Wetware, Hardware or Management, definitely not Software) and have the player roll. If the roll fails, divide the margin of failure by three and go to that result on the table. This system is fairer to the players, as it gives them a chance, however slim, of succeeding and means that the more extreme results on the table are much less likely. On these grounds, we suggest switching to option 1 if the players get uppity.)

Survival Equipment

Outdoors is vitally important to the Alpha Complex economy. Like an intricate ecosystem, it works something like this.

High Clearance Armed Forces General #1: Gee, I sure do want another ivory backscratcher.

High Clearance Armed Forces General #2: You know what to do.

High Clearance Armed Forces General #1: Hey, CPU! The Commies are coming! We need another 10,000 brand new warbots.

CPU Accountant: What's wrong with the warbots you have already?

High Clearance Armed Forces General #1: Oh, they're obsolete. Changing nature of the modern battlefield and stuff.

CPU Accountant: Oh, well. I suppose R&D will have to design some new warbots then. R&D?

R&D Mad Scientist: Mwhahahaha! Yes?

CPU Accountant: Armed Forces need a new warbot. Knock together a couple of prototypes, will ya?

R&D Mad Scientist: Mwhahahaha! For Outdoors?

CPU Accountant: Yeah.

R&D Mad Scientist: Mwhahahaha! The very same Outdoors where we can blow anything up! Where we can use the most powerful, most dangerous, most unstable, most expensive weapons ever conceived? Where we can cut corners on safety, because the only people out there are already Commie Mutant Traitors?

CPU Accountant: That's the one.

R&D Mad Scientist: Mwhahaha! Here's one I made earlier.

CPU Accountant: Does it work?

R&D Mad Scientist: Troubleshooters! Field test this invention.

Doomed Troubleshooters: Ok boss.

R&D Mad Scientist: Mwhahaha! The test was a complete success! 100% casualties.

CPU Accountant: Excellent. Hey, PLC?

PLC Executive: Yo.

CPU Accountant: I've got an order here for 10K brand new warbots. If you pay me a, cough, handling fee I'll make sure you get the contract.

PLC Executive: I think we can do business. I'll give you your cash at the next Free Enterprise meeting.

CPU Accountant: Great.

High Clearance Armed Forces General #1: These warbots are great! Y'know, they're so great that I could imagine a few of them driving off a cliff or something, forcing us to order more. You know, I'll be ordering a field exercise next week, near a conveniently large cliff.

PLC Executive: I think we can also do business. IOU one ivory backscratcher.

High Clearance Armed Forces General #2: Can I just blackmail you at this point? Standard fees.

PLC Executive and High Clearance Armed Forces General #1: Oh, we assumed you'd already blackmailed us. Your cheque is in the post.

CPU Accountant: The system works! Ooops. Budget deficit. Hey, HPD&MC?

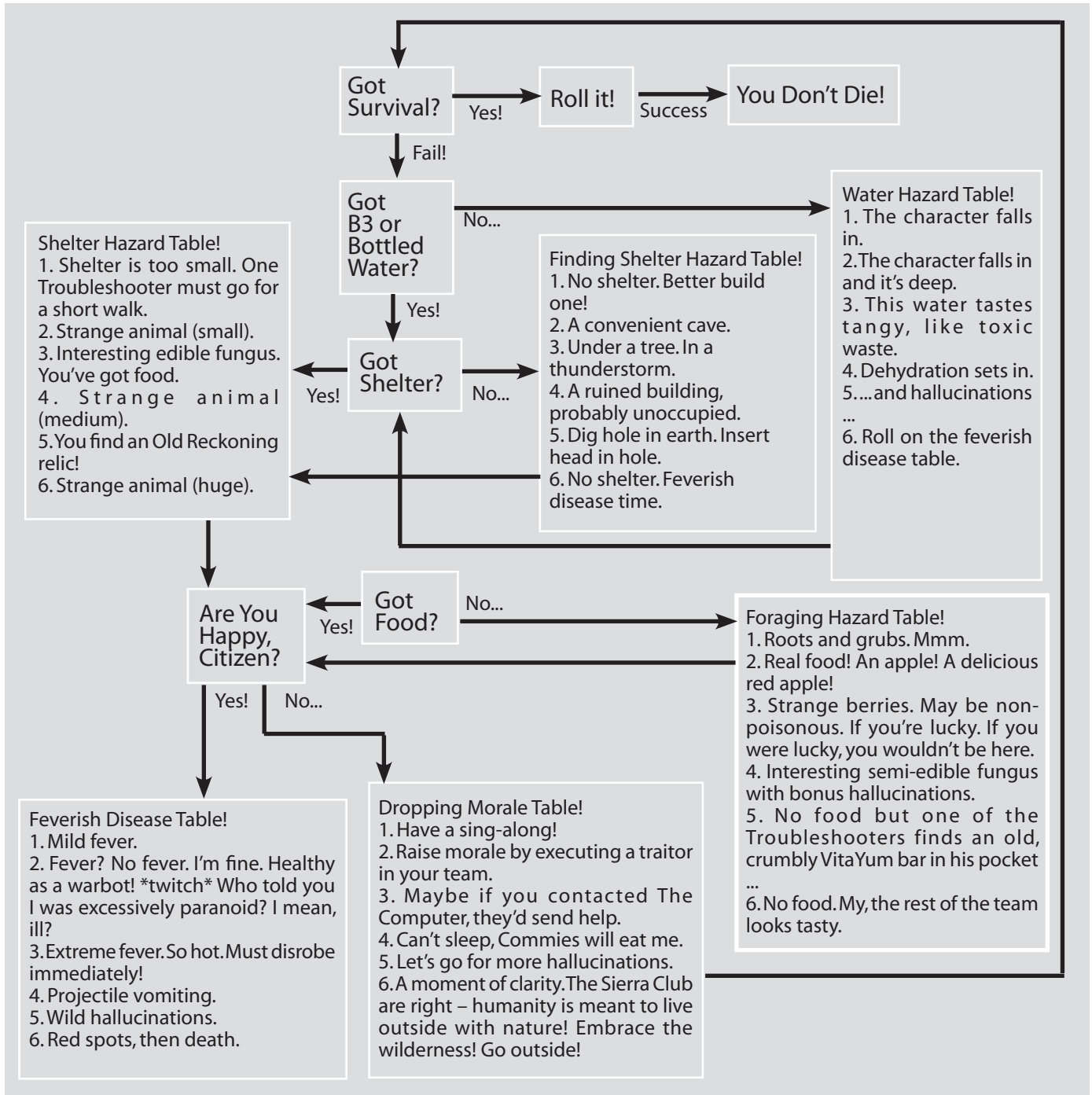
HPD&MC Slimeball: Whaddya want?

CPU Accountant: We're going to have to cut food rations again to pay for the new warbots. Can you make that sound like good news?

HPD&MC Slimeball: Attention citizens! To commemorate the launch of the new, even more perfect Warbot Mark V program, all VitaYum bars and Soylent RED packaging will now bear a handsome, collectible laser-etched hologram of the noble Mark V. Collect them all and get a free badge! Note that for aesthetic reasons, packaging volume has been decreased by 40%....

In summary: to most of Alpha Complex's higher echelons, Outdoors is a money

CHAPTER 3: SURVIVAL





THE GREAT OUTDOORS

In Alpha Complex...	But Outdoors...	Solution!
... Your Friend, The Computer maintains Alpha Complex at a pleasant, temperature-controlled environment optimised for your comfort and convenience. (Please note that your perception of comfort may vary; adjust your perceptions accordingly.)	... The temperature varies wildly! At any time, it could be boiling hot or freezing cold and there are extremely strong and unexpected air draughts. There's no way to adjust the temperature or humidity!	Protective clothing for any and all climate conditions. Troubleshooters should be prepared for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subzero temperatures • Searing heat • High winds • Vacuum
... Your Friend, The Computer protects you with a solid, comforting dome. You are safe under the dome. Relax.	... There's no dome. Nothing. No protection. Nothing but the void!	Medication. Experimental dome substitute headgear.
... The dome never leaks. (Citizens should be aware that low Clearance corridors and rooms may be temporarily redesignated as fluid storage tanks without prior notice. In the event you find yourself in a fluid storage tank, note that INFRARED citizens are positively buoyant ¹ .)	... The sky leaks. Sometimes, it leaks so much that there are floods. Worse, the water permeates the ground, creating mud. As official Alpha Complex safety briefings show, mud may conceal quicksand, instantly sucking a Troubleshooter down to his death and putting him in breach of hygiene regulations.	Water-proof Rubberised Enviroshield! (Troubleshooters must avoid getting their hot-weather and cold-weather protective clothing wet, as the highly advanced micro-fibre structure is dissolved by water. Please note that Water-proof Rubberised Enviroshield melts in high temperatures and freezes solid below 0°.)
... Food comes from vending machines and cafeterias. Citizens can enjoy healthy, tasty SynthFoods™ containing almost all of the vitamins and nutrients needed for human survival. 'Water' is depreciated – quench your thirst with a delicious Bouncy Bubble Beverage instead! It's the mandatory thing!	... There's no food. None at all. Everything Outdoors is deadly poisonous. Rumours that higher Clearance citizens eat so-called 'real food' and that food similar to this 'real food' grows 'naturally' Outdoors are treason. Everyone knows that Commies 'planted' this 'real food' Outdoors to catch unwary Troubleshooters.	Take the supplies you need with you! Every citizen going Outdoors is assigned the supplies necessary to keep them alive, such as a six-pack of B3, Ultra-Dense NutriCubes, MRE rations and Self-Warming Fun Packs. Citizens complaining about the weight of these supplies are encouraged to shut up.
... Toilet facilities are available throughout Alpha Complex.	No toilet facilities are available.	PortaLooBots or the EWOC.
... Your Friend, The Computer ensures that all Alpha Complex citizens are maintained in perfect health. Biofilters and chemical treatments ensure that only the most powerful and adaptable bacteria and viruses survive in Alpha Complex!	... Everything is crawling with germs. If you so much as touch anything Outdoors, you're probably contaminated. Any citizen displaying unusual symptoms or unusual behaviour may be infected and should be quarantined immediately.	Chemical disinfectants, yet more protective gear, nasal filters, anti-bacterial sprays, immune system boosters, tailored retroviral therapy and vitamin supplements, none of which have any known side affects.

hole into which they can pour untold billions of credits but they can skim off some of this cash along the way. That means that Outdoors equipment is even more expensive, unreliable and dangerous than normal gear. Like Troubleshooters, it's heavy on the built-in obsolescence.

If you're feeling cruel, more Outdoors gear can be found in *The Thin Green Line*, *Stuff*, *Stuff 2* and pretty much every *PARANOIA* mission ever printed. It's the ecology, stupid.

Protective Gear

In the unlikely event that a Troubleshooter is terminated Outdoors despite this protective gear, fresh clones can be dispatched via delivery rocket.

Biohazard Suit

This is a variation on the standard environmental suit but it is designed for even *more* hostile environments. It is issued when The Computer sends teams into areas tagged as 'biohazard zones'. Rumours that Sierra Clubber hackers

planted these zones in The Computer's memory are treason.

The suit comes with its own built-in air scrubber, a heavy back-mounted unit that recycles the air in the suit every 15 seconds. If the air scrubber gets stuck, this can create a small and usually harmless vacuum in the suit helmet. The suit also contains a handy belt of high explosives wired to a biohazard detector. If the suit's onboard computer detects that the suit's integrity has been breached, it initiates self-destruct mode

1: Emotionally, not physically.

CHAPTER 3: SURVIVAL

Dehydration and Starvation in *PARANOIA*

Behold as, through powers of Famous Game Designer Necromancy, we raise the Dread Hand of Simulationism and let it flop like a dead fish all over your game.

Starvation actually takes quite a while to kill someone, even a malnourished Troubleshooter. Water is a bigger problem – lack of water can kill you within a few days. Troubleshooters also have a problem with withdrawal symptoms, as everything in Alpha Complex is laced with drugs. A Troubleshooter team cut off from supplies is not a fun bunch of people to be around.

Here's how it works in the game and you can tell the players this – for each day without vital supplies, each of them loses one point of Perversity. If a player runs out of Perversity, then his Troubleshooter starts taking damage instead (day 1=Wounded, day 2=Maimed, Day 3=Down, Day 4=Killed, Day 5=let's face it, the rest of the team ate him on Day 4 if he was lucky).

Perversity is regained by being the *first* person to consume food/water/drugs when they finally find some supplies. You may want to point this rule out, loudly, several times. Maybe put a bottle of water on the table with a pile of Perversity tokens on it. Make it crystal clear that conditions are so bad that no-one will judge them if they turn on each other...

to ensure the contagion does not spread. The white heat of the explosion should be enough to sterilise the unfortunate wearer but just to be on the safe side, the suit's last act is to call in an air-strike on its current location. This air strike consists of one bombing run, followed by a high-altitude spraying of Kleer-All.

Clearance: GREEN **Cost:** 15,000 Credits **Protection:** —

Dome Substitute Helmet

Citizens suffering from agorophobia (also known as Ceiling Absence Shock Syndrome, the Screamies, Rapture of the Sky or the Big Blue Blues) should be fitted with a Dome Substitute Helmet before going Outdoors. This helmet consists of a light-weight plastic dome some three metres in diameter. While wearing the DSH, the citizen's view of his surroundings is curtailed in the vertical direction, rendering him incapable of seeing up and thereby preventing him from missing the comforting solidity of the dome. The DSH lets a sensitive citizen carry his home with him. Due to the considerable size of the DSH, it cannot be worn indoors or in an enclosed vehicle. At least two other citizens or bots are required to fit a DSH to a user's head. Wearing the DSH for longer than five minutes at a time will cause permanent neck or spine damage.

Clearance: RED **Cost:** 200 Credits
Protection: 1 if you hide behind it.

HISTORICAL RECORDS CLEARLY
STATE THAT
NATURE IS **RED** IN TOOTH AND
CLAW,
TROUBLESHOOTER,
SO YOUR
RED REFLEC
WILL PROTECT YOU FROM ALL
POSSIBLE DANGERS
OUTDOORS.

Biotesting Rod

The biotesting rod was originally intended for use with captured Commie Mutant Traitors but has become popular among sadistic motivating Team Leaders as a tool for disciplining unruly Troubleshooters. The rod consists of a long rigid pole with controls at one end and a collar at the other. The collar is placed around the neck of a volunteer or traitor who is then forcibly guided, using the rod, to a potential hazard, such as unidentified fungus or a body of water. The volunteer then tests the hazard to confirm whether or not it is, indeed, lethal.

The controls on the rod can:

- Extend or retract the rod (between 1 metre and 10 metres).
- Apply a mild electric shock to the volunteer.
- Apply a strong electric shock to the volunteer.

- Apply a lethal electric shock to the volunteer.²
- Monitor the volunteer's life signs or lack thereof.

The lifesign monitor warrants extra explanation. The collar contains a small needle that pierces the back of the volunteer's neck, allowing the rod to take temperature readings, blood samples, measure brain activity, heart rate, skin conductivity and so on. This is intended to let the operators monitor the effect of the potential biohazard on the volunteer. This information is also logged by the rod and may be presented in debriefing. Testing biohazards is a meritorious act, so a Troubleshooter who has acquired a few Treason Points can shape up and grab some Commendation Points by volunteering to wear the collar.

Clearance: ORANGE **Cost:** 1,000 credits

Light-Sensitive Goggles, Mark II

Citizens used to the homely flickering of the lights in Alpha Complex may be alarmed by the harsh sunlight of Outdoors. For the health and sanity of such citizens, R&D has invented these handy light-sensitive goggles. The goggles are fitted with a special light sensor that instantly adjusts the polarisation of the lenses. In low-light conditions, the lenses depolarise completely and become perfectly clear



but if the light is too bright, the goggles darken in response.

Note that in certain unlikely conditions, laser-fire nearby can trip the sensor, causing the goggle to become completely opaque. If this happens, simply remove the goggles.

New! The Mark II version of these goggles corrects the design flaw noted by early field testing. The Mark I goggles were attached to the head using a vulnerable rubber strap and could easily become dislodged or lost in the heat of combat. The Mark II goggles use a vastly superior SuperGrip Chemical Bond to glue themselves to the wearer's skull³. The goggles will remain attached until the SuperGrip Solvent is applied at the end of the mission. The solvent instantly dissolves the glue⁴.

Clearance: RED **Cost:** 100 Credits

Water-Proofed Rubberised Enviroshield

Like a rubber poncho, only less fashionable. Absorbs water like a sponge, swelling up to several times its original weight and volume. It melts in high temperatures (like, when you breathe on it) and freezes at the first inkling of a chill.

Clearance: RED **Cost:** 50 credits **Protection:** 1 but only when completely waterlogged

Thermal Regulation Package

The Mandatory Long Range Operation Thermal Regulator Package (MLROTRP) is assigned to any team that is going beyond the area of Outdoors immediately adjacent to Alpha Complex. There could be anything out there. Glaciers, deserts, methane swamps, the fabled Cheese Mountains. To ensure that Troubleshooters are kept at their optimum temperature at all times, R&D

invented the MLROTRP. It consists of six components, all of which are integral to the functioning of the MLROTRP. Losing or damaging any of the six components is treason.

Thermal Regulation Regulator: A handy sensor package worn around the neck. When the external temperature crosses a present Thermal Boundary, the Regulator issues an alarm. A very loud alarm, a sort of bone-rattling scream that dislocates your jaw in the first 10 seconds and causes nosebleeds after a minute or so. To end the alarm, the user must exchange his current Regulator Suit for one more appropriate for the temperature.

Thermal Regulation Suit (Hot): It looks like a jumpsuit made of tinfoil covered in a spider-web of tiny plastic tubes. Attached to the back of the suit is a tank containing an alarming blue liquid. This liquid is an ultra-cold fluid that sucks heat away from the wearer's body. It is deadly poisonous if it gets into your blood stream – but don't worry citizen, you are in no danger. The fluid is so cold that if it came in contact with your skin, it would instantly freeze your flesh solid, ensuring it cannot enter your now-frozen veins. Any damage to the suit may cause hazardous leaks. Also, the wearer should ensure that the backpack tank is kept safe, as any breach will cause an instantaneous explosion as the fluid boils off. The TRS(H) is worn under armour.

Thermal Regulation Suit (Cold): The cold suit looks like a jumpsuit made of tinfoil but this one is covered in smaller foil packages. These sacs contain a compound that generates a tremendous amount of heat when compressed. Once the jumpsuit is donned, the user then pulls on a form-hugging rubberised body sock that gently squeezes the inner suit, causing the sacs to generate heat and maintaining the user's body temperature at a balmy 37.5 degrees.

Any additional weight or pressure on the user's body can result in undesirably high temperatures. Putting, say, a suit of reflec on top of the TRS(C) bodysock cooks the user slightly. Piling the weight of a backpack, the usual pile of R&D equipment and other survival gear on top of that turns the suit into a pressure cooker.

Under no circumstances should the wearer fall over, be crushed, jarred, shot or subjected to any other impact, up to and including an awkward and somewhat embarrassed hug. Doing so may breach the cell walls of one or more thermal sacs, resulting in an excessively generous thermal event.

Thermal Regulation Suit (Medium): The TRS(M) suit looks like a ratty jumpsuit of the appropriate Clearance level. It does nothing at all but if you are not wearing one of the three suits, the Thermal Regulation Regulator starts screaming.

Thermal Regulation Bubble Tent: So, you've got these three suits, two for extremes of temperature and one for casual wear – but what if you're sauntering through a desert, nicely chilled by your TRS (Cold) suit and a blizzard blows in? These things happen Outdoors, you know². What do you do? Die of cold? That's for sissies? Put on your fur hat, you Commie? No – you're a hero of Alpha Complex. You know what to do! You pull out your Thermal Regulation Bubble Tent, inflate it and climb inside. Within the temperature-controlled confines, you remove your equipment, your Water-Proofed Rubberised Enviroshield, your reflec and then you change your TRS (Cold) suit for a TRS (Hot) suit, put back on your reflec, your Water-Proofed Rubberised Enviroshield and your other equipment. That Outdoors weather can't stop you from accomplishing your mission!

2: In rare cases, this may overload the collar's shielding and electrify the whole rod.

3: They probably mean 'skin'.

4: They probably mean 'skin'.

CHAPTER 3: SURVIVAL

The one small downside of the TR Bubble Tent is that it's a little cosy. Only a Troubleshooter who's a midget contortionist can actually fit inside comfortably and actually changing your clothing inside the tent is next to impossible unless you over-inflate it. If the tent is inflated past the red line, it swells up big enough to be used as a changing room but the slightest prick means it explodes. How a plastic balloon tent explodes into a fiery wreck of twisted shrapnel is an exercise for the reader's imagination.

EWOC

The External Waste Organic Collector is basically a metal octopus that lives in your crotch. Two tentacles wrap around your waist with alarming strength. Other cold metal tubes go ... places ... where tubes shouldn't go. Then it begins to hum and gurgle and pulsate. Tiny cold metal claws massage your sphincters (*all* of your sphincters) and it violates you in ways you can't even articulate. All your waste fluids are sucked away into the throbbing metal shell of the crotch-topus. Then, obscenely, another tentacle unfolds from the monster. Dripping, it snakes up your torso and places itself wetly at the side of your mouth. This tentacle ends in a rubber nipple. It offers your own recycled waste to you as a 'nutrient-rich hydrating slurry'.

The EWOC ensures that:

- You'll be able to enjoy sanitary toilet facilities in the middle of Outdoors!
- You'll be able to enjoy sanitary toilet facilities anywhere, even in the middle of a firefight!
- You'll wake screaming in the night for the rest of your life!
- You'll always have a refreshing beverage to drink!
- You'll never get the taste of that beverage out of your mouth!
- You'll enjoy a complimentary phobia of pipes, toilets and octopi!

Clearance: RED

Cost: Well, how much would you pay for a metal crotch octopus that haunts your nightmares? Don't answer yet, because the EWOC also comes with a FREE cleaning cloth (can also be used to mop up your tears of shame), a can of EWOC shining wax, a handful of happy pills to bring blissful temporary oblivion AND a weird spatula-like thing with a hook on the end. Attached to the weird spatula-like thing is a sticker that says 'INCINERATE LARVAE IMMEDIATELY AFTER REMOVAL' and you don't want to think about that either.

Medication

Drugs are good, citizen. Medication ensures happiness, happiness ensures compliance, compliance ensures orthodoxy, orthodoxy ensures security, security ensures productivity, productivity ensures medication. Life Outdoors is a special challenge for R&D's biochemists, as medicated Troubleshooters may be out of touch of medical professionals and pharmaceutical dispensers for long periods of time. Therefore, they make the drugs extra strong so they will last longer.

Polydoxine

Common Name: Twitcher.

Clearance: ORANGE.

Availability: Administered to any citizen going Outdoors for an extended period.

Effects: Enhances the user's immune system to cope with nasty Outdoors diseases and allergies.

Side-Effects: None for most citizens. The exceptions are citizens with cybernetic implants (like Pro Techers or Corpore Metal members); the enhanced immune system makes the body reject these implants, causing sickness and eventual death if the user keeps taking the drugs.

Methods of Application: One tablet daily.

Guggeldohydrox Barbituate

Common Name: Myopia.

Clearance: RED.

Availability: Administered to any citizen suffering from agoraphobia Outdoors.

Effects: Mild sedative; also, limits vision to a comfortable range of two metres. Anything further away than that is a comfortable grey blur.

Side-Effects: In rare cases (less than 75% of users), the drug causes complete blindness instead of merely restricting vision. Also, some users report feelings of intense paranoia instead of a happy buzz from the sedative.

Methods of Application: Tablet (lasts a day) or injection (lasts a scene).

Magnaporazine

Common Name: Quick March.

Clearance: ORANGE.

Availability: Administered to Armed Forces soldiers and Troubleshooters on long marches.

Effects: Overrides the nervous system's control of the legs. The user feels an overwhelming compulsion to keep marching forwards, even while asleep. The drug overcomes fatigue and other impediments (like, say, missing legs) – as long as the user has a bloody stump or two to twitch, then he'll march, dammit!

Side-Effects: Roll 1d20.

1–10 No added effect.

11–15 User's left leg moves faster than the right; user marches in circles.

16–20 Murderous rage, purple demons everywhere.

Methods of Application: Gobstopper-sized tablet (lasts 8 hours).

Comms

Being Outdoors means the Communications & Recording Office's role is more important than ever. In Alpha Complex, The Computer is everywhere. It watches over you from security

5. See Armed Forces Educational Film AFOS530(R), *Weather – A Commie Plot Against Alpha Complex!*

6. In another unfortunate snafu, some Commie saboteur replaced the errata page for the manual with Communist propaganda. PLC swear blind that they've removed all the errata pages from all the manuals and there is no chance at all that Troubleshooters might inadvertently be issued with treasonous material.



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

cameras, it listens to you in confession booths, it speaks to you from terminals and from your PDC. Outside, the only communication channel back to Alpha Complex is via the C&R's officer's radio, a fragile umbilical cord back home ...

Long Range Satellite Comm

This Long Range Satellite Comm is an aftermarket upgrade to the standard multicorder, designed for use on missions that go over the horizon from Alpha Complex's dome-mounted long range radio mast and so cannot communicate directly with The Computer. The LRSC bounces coded signals off an orbiting satellite.

Physically, the LRSC is a large (but still technically man-portable) satellite dish that clamps onto the multicorder. Setting up the LRSC is a simple matter but communicating is slightly trickier. The lower bandwidth of the satellite communication means that standard encryption and authentication systems cannot be used. Instead, the LRSC operator must give the correct password/response when opening a communications session with The Computer. The password/response pairs are given during the initial briefing; the Communications & Recording officer is also informed when the password/response pair changes. A briefing might go something like this:

Troubleshooter: Er, what's this about pass/response codes?

Briefing Officer: Ah, yes. If asked for a password, you respond with a password and they respond with a response but if you're challenged with a password, the

response is a response, not a password. The password is 'the response' and the response is the 'challenge' until they respond to a response with your name, in which case the response is your password which is 'quasimodo' and that makes the password response 'your name' but the password is still 'the response'. Except on Twosdays.

Troubleshooter: What ... what happens on Twosdays?

Briefing Officer: For security reasons, all passwords become responses and all responses become passwords.

Troubleshooter: Can I get that in writing?

Briefing Officer: No! Maintaining security is your first priority! Never reveal the password or the response to anyone who does not already know the password!

Troubleshooter: How will I know if they know the password?

Briefing Officer: They'll know the response, of course.

If the wrong password is given at any point, then Alpha Complex assumes that the Troubleshooter team has been captured or subverted and the Long Range Satellite Comm has fallen into enemy hands. The LRSC is switched to its secondary operation mode, where it acts as a homing beacon for the guided missile that just got launched from an Armed Forces flybot on 24-patrol over Outdoors. Beep ... beep ... beep ...

Security Clearance: RED
1,000 credits

Cost:

Outdoor Hostile Identification Software

There are lots of strange things Outdoors

and not every Troubleshooter team has had the specialist training needed to identify them. Therefore, those geniuses over at R&D have created the Outdoor Hostile Identification Software, a plug-in for the standard multicorder that scans the data from the camera feed and matches shapes with those in its database, instantly spitting back the name and pertinent details of whatever you point it at.

And it works. Really, it does. Oh, it is got the usual errors and omissions in the database but it is pretty accurate for something that crawled out of an R&D lab. It knows a hawk from a handsaw even when the wind isn't southerly. It can identify anything from a bug to a tree to a cloud to Venus in the night sky. It'll identify whatever you point it at.

The trick is pointing it at the right thing. Say a huge hairy monster bursts out of the undergrowth and starts chewing your leg off. In the spirit of scientific inquiry, you choose to point your multicorder at it instead of blasting it with your laser pistol.

Troubleshooter: Agh, my leg! Multicorder, identify that thing!

Multicorder: Match: human leg.

Troubleshooter: I'm pointing it at myself! Oops! Zoom in a bit ...

Multicorder: Match: Flea. *Pulex irritans*. Small blood-sucking parasite.

Troubleshooter: Too much zoom. Pull back!

Multicorder: Match: Grass. Match: Trees. Match: Seagull. Match: Another seagull. Match: Bear. Match: More grass. Please exercise more care when handling multicorder. Match: Bear. Match: Human corpse.

Kleer-All Weapons

Weapon	Wpn Type	Dmg Type	Min-Boost-Max	Shots	Range	Cost	Clearance	Notes
Hand Sprayer	Field	Bio	S4V	3	20	200	RED	Area 10m, Spray
Big Sprayer	Field	Bio	S3V	10	20	500	RED	Spray
Grenade	Thrown	Bio	S3V	1	20	25	RED	Area 5m

7. Coming soon: Kleer-All With Jagged Metal Chunks and Radioactive Kleer-All For Extra Freshness!

CHAPTER 3: SURVIVAL

A marginally less finicky version of this software is available for Class 3 and 4 multicorders under the title of Life Form Recognition Software.

Weaponry

The Computer positively encourages Troubleshooters to use high-powered weaponry when Outdoors. We cannot afford to show weakness in front of the Commies. Any team going out the Big Door may get assigned all sorts of experimental and highly dangerous weaponry. Some of this weaponry may even be dangerous to the enemy.

R&D has also developed some weapons specifically for Outdoors.

Kleer-All

Citizen! If you're stuck in a bog in Outdoors, surrounded by potentially hostile trees, out of ammo and waiting for Commies to close in, be happy! Look at it this way – this bit of Outdoors is really just a sector that hasn't been built yet. Get rid of all the vile vegetation, drain the ground, bulldoze the landscape, concrete it all over, build a dome, put in a few vending machines. Close your eyes as you sink into the cold mud and dream of home.

Kleer-All is the first step to that dream. It's an extremely potent defoliant. A few droplets of Kleer-All can strip a huge tree of all its leaves and a sizeable percentage of its bark. A Kleer-All grenade can denude a small forest. A Kleer-All bombing run from an Armed Forces bomber squadron is a glorious sight – as long as you are looking at it through an extremely powerful telescope from a very long way away. Otherwise, the Kleer-All vapour will strip the sclera from your eyes and burn your lungs. The stuff is absurdly toxic. It absolutely destroys all forms of plant matter but it is nearly as effective on animal tissue. It's sticky, it's slightly lighter than air (so the wind carries it merrily) and it lasts for years.

Outdoors teams get gallons of Kleer-All. Individual Troubleshooters may be issued Kleer-All Grenades or Kleer-All sprayers. Barrels full of the virulent yellow goo get piled into the back of crawlers, loaded onto flybots or just left lying around the place. Some have suggested that Kleer-All is actually just

a transparent attempt to rebrand toxic waste⁷ and sell it to the Armed Forces. People who make that sort of suggestion end up wearing concrete shoes at the bottom of a vat of Kleer-All.

Target Painter

The Armed Forces are here to help, citizen! Call in a bombing run and a squadron of Armed Forces flybots will scream overhead within minutes and drop a salvo of absurdly destructive ordnance right on your position. If you want slightly more enemy-orientated targeting, you will need a target painter.

A target painter is a can of paint (usually a transparent acrylic or a lurid puce colour). It comes with a Target Designator Utensil, which may look like a regular two-credit paintbrush but costs the Armed Forces 5,000 credits to buy. The magic ingredient here is the paint itself, which is radioactive and glows like a giant beacon in the remorse sensors of those brave flybots. Anything painted with the target paint gets the crap bombed out of it.

Laser Barrel Refill Kit

For many reasons – security, marketing, the laws of physics, Game Designer yuks – the standard laser barrel becomes unreliable after six shots and must be replaced. That's fine when you are in Alpha Complex, where laser barrels are readily available from armouries, vending machines or the smoking bodies of your previous clones, but out in Outdoors they're harder to come by. The Laser Barrel Refill Kit lets you reuse a single laser barrel up to 60 times before it's completely depleted. Refilling a laser barrel from zero shots back to six takes about 10 minutes work and a Laser Weapons Ops and Maintenance check.

The refilled laser works perfectly, with one small drawback. Normally, when a laser malfunctions, there is a short (1d20/4 rounds) period before the gun explodes (S2K damage). With a refilled laser, there's no grace period – roll a 20 and it goes boom. Remember, the malfunction number for a laser drops by one for each shot after the sixth.

Transport

While Alpha Complex has a number of standard Outdoors transport vehicles, Troubleshooters are almost always assigned experimental models.

If you are in R&D, the absolute dead end for your career is to be assigned to the vehicles section. Mass transport ain't going to change in Alpha Complex. Say you invent a radical new form of transport that is faster, more efficient, more friendly and just more gosh-darned fun than your standard transbot. Is that going to be adopted by Tech Services? Not unless it has exactly the same dimensions as the standard transbot, uses all the same parts, can keep to the same schedule and looks just the same. The established transport infrastructure has remained the same for centuries and has huge bureaucratic inertia. From one end of Alpha Complex to the other, from the deepest sublevel to the top of the dome, a transbot is a transbot. Suggest changing that and Tech Services will have you killed and 'accidentally' decant your remaining clones into an elevator shaft.

There isn't any more innovation at the higher end of the market. There are always newer, shinier models of autocar coming out for the high Clearance citizens but these never involve really radical change. VIOLETS didn't get where they are today by letting new and untried technology anywhere near them.

The only place where an up-and-coming new R&D vehicle designer can distinguish himself is by making transport for Troubleshooter teams heading Outdoors – and the best way to distinguish yourself is by really pushing the envelope.

Won't your Troubleshooters be glad they get to help promising young R&D scientists from languishing in a dead-end job?

I'm sure that knowledge will give them a warm glow.

The glow could also be radiation from the experimental hyperdrive.



Chapter 4: They Live

When the Old Reckoning civilisation was destroyed, most of the survivors were the huddled masses crowded into the various domed cities scattered across the world. These domed cities turned inward as paranoia ran rampant and the trapped crowds of survivors became the first generation to live their whole lives underground. This was the genesis of the Alpha Complex we all know and love, along with those other rival Complexes who we have always been at war with.

I will leave the city's rush leave the fancy and the plush
Leave the snow and leave the slush, And crowds
I will seek the desert's hush, Where the scenery is lush
How I long to see the mushroom clouds.
— Tom Lehrer, *The Wild West Is Where I Want To Be*

Most people were unlucky enough to be caught Outdoors when it all went down. 90% died in the initial cataclysm; 90% of the survivors died that first winter, when a choking cloud of dust blanketed the world and temperatures plummeted in a new ice age. The unlucky few who managed to survive were heirs to a ruined world. Look, we've all seen post-apocalyptic movies, right? It's gone all *Road Warrior* out there.

Over the centuries, dissidents, traitors and quite a few terminally lost Armed Forces patrols or Troubleshooter teams have also gone native Outdoors. Some of these groups still have connections to Alpha Complex – even in the the wild jungles far from the dome, the Troubleshooters may run into familiar enemies from back home.

Each of the groups is written up like a Secret Society but they are not Secret per se, just Geographically Isolated.

Dissidents

Ex-Alpha Complex goons who've either fled The Computer's glorious regime or got kicked out. Some of these dissident groups have managed to survive Outdoors for some time, others are on the verge of collapse.

Exiles

Beliefs: Those bastards in Alpha Complex exiled me to die out here but I survived! I'll show them! I show them all!

Friends: Runners.

Enemies: Sierra Club, Lost Boys, Gangs, Mutant Commies.

Description: Exile is not a punishment that is regularly used in Alpha Complex. Why kick a clone out, when you can brainscrub him to within an inch of

sapience and use him as a paperweight or a form checker or a Troubleshooter? A Traitor might be exiled if:

- Termination or brainscrubbing would be politically difficult. In this case, the citizen is assigned to an 'extended mission Outdoors for the good of Alpha Complex'.
- There are food or housing shortages and the bureaucrats need to clear out some deadwood, in which case exile becomes the standard punishment for any misdemeanour.

In either case, the traitor is given a pair of stout walking boots, a bottle of water and a map salvaged from a fast food restaurant and sent out to seek his fate Outdoors. Most exiles don't get far at all – if they're not eaten, they find some place to hole up within sight of the dome and plot their revenge on Alpha Complex, like some arboreal Phantoms of the Opera.

Other exiles are voluntary exiles – they fled Alpha Complex to escape a purge. These guys are de facto Runners, even if they had no previous connection with that SecSoc.

Subfactions: None. Well, technically some Old Guard groups are exiles but that's like saying the guy eating his shoe

on the pavement and the guy cruising the Caribbean on his luxury yacht are both homeless nomads.

Communities: Exiles don't form communities for long. Most of them want to get back to Alpha Complex and the best way to ingratiate their way back into The Computer's good books is to turn in an even worse traitor.

Trade Goods: Some exiles were pretty high Clearance before they got Troyskyed. They can trade useful secrets about Alpha Complex for stuff like food and ammo.

Special Rules: None.

Clone-Outs

Beliefs: Screw The Computer, I'm dropping out. I'm tired of working in a food vat and getting blown up all the time. Oh give me a home Outdoors instead, where life is simple and serene.

Friends: Mystics, Death Leopard, Mutant Communes.

Enemies: Deep GREEN, Crazies, Sierra Club. The Sierra Club really hates these guys, as they're basically doing what the Sierra Club claims it's doing.

Description: Clone-Outs are citizens who've dropped out of Alpha Complex. A lot of them are ex-Sierra Clubbers or ex-Troubleshooters. Most of them just want to be left alone, to live out simple lives of quiet dignity in their heavily fortified compounds or squalid yurts. Clone-Outs refuse to answer to their original 'slave' names and adopt new names derived from their natural surroundings or Sierra Club legends.

Subfactions: The True Sierra Club, Oregon Warbler Died For You, Organic Mystics.

Communities: Most Clone-Outs just want to be left alone. They don't mind having neighbours that they can call on for help in a firefight, they just don't want those neighbours living on top of them. Clone-Out groups make their homes within an hour's travel of each other.

Trade Goods: Furs, salted meat, body odour.

Special Rules: The body odour of most Clone-Outs qualifies as a biological weapon. Anyone downwind of a Clone-Out takes O4S damage.

CHAPTER 4: THEY LIVE

The Lost Boys

Beliefs: My fellow officers! It has been ... some time since we last saw our beloved Alpha Complex! But I say to you, Keep Happy and Carry On! Our new marching order will bring us victory!

Friends: Deep GREEN.

Enemies: Everyone.

Description: Many of those sent Outdoors never return. The official reports state that they were killed by Commie Mutant Traitors or fell victim to some other terrible Outdoors hazard but the truth is that Outdoors is very poorly signposted. It's all just shades of brown and green, and all the trees look alike. Once you get lost, there is no handy Computer guidance to get you back on track. The Lost Boys are teams sent out from Alpha Complex that are still loyal to The Computer but haven't seen home in a long time. Some Lost Boy teams have been out here so long, the hormone suppressants have worn off and they've started reproducing naturally. They've taught their kids about the promised land of Alpha Complex. Maybe after 40 yearcycles wandering the woods, they'll get there.

Subfactions: Long range Armed Forces patrols, lost Troubleshooters, downed Tech Services satellite maintenance crews, experimental R&D teleporters run amok, CPU fact-finding trips gone wrong.

Communities: Lost Boys are nomads; they don't settle down. They will keep on looking for that promised land.

Trade Goods: Not a lot.

Special Rules: Lost Boys are willing to help anyone who is loyal to The Computer. Unfortunately, their idea of The Computer may not accord with reality. After so many years wandering the wilds, the Lost Boys are a few CrunchyTyme chips short of an explosive bowel movement, if you know what I mean.

Deep GREEN

Beliefs: Trust no-one! Hey, that's totally justified out here. If you're Outdoors and we don't know about you, you're a traitor!

Friends: Lost Boys. Exiles, sometimes.

Enemies: Sierra Club, Runners, Free Enterprise, Outsiders.

Description: Deep GREEN agents are a special division of Internal Security called External Internal Security. A ring of Deep GREEN agents surrounds Alpha Complex at all times. They are undercover as Outsiders, as Dissidents, as mutants or even as trees or furry animals. The role of Deep GREEN agents is to identify and arrest would-be defectors. The conversation goes like this:

Clueless Sierra Clubber: I've done it ... I've escaped The Computer's tyrannical rule ... gasp ... maybe I'll starve to death soon but I'm free! Free!

Deep GREEN agent: Hi there!

Clueless Sierra Clubber: Are you ... are you an Outsider?

Deep GREEN agent: Yep. Born and bred free, that's me. Lived my whole life Outdoors.

Clueless Sierra Clubber: Is it not glorious to live out here, in tune with bounteous beautiful nature?

Deep GREEN agent: I guess. You're from Alpha Complex?

Clueless Sierra Clubber: Yes! But I'm free! I escaped.

Deep GREEN agent: Never going back?

Clueless Sierra Clubber: NEVER!

Deep GREEN agent: Would you say you hate The Computer?

Clueless Sierra Clubber: I ... yes, yes, I do. I hate it. I hate its cold, unnatural, unfeeling gaze, its cruel intellect, its total-

Deep GREEN agent: Wait, hold on a sec, getting some feedback. Would you mind stepping to your right and talking directly into that hollow tree there?

Clueless Sierra Clubber: Sure. Hey, is that a microphone?

Deep GREEN agent: Of course, friend. It's a microphone tree. Nature grows microphones. Come the fall, we'll harvest them.

Clueless Sierra Clubber: Praised be nature!

Deep GREEN agent: Praised be, yeah. Sure. Now, you were saying you hate The Computer?

Subfactions: Allegations that some Deep GREENs have gone native are, of course, treasonous. If such a sub-faction did exist, they totally would not be playing both sides off against each other. They would not be passing traitors

onto Alpha Complex in exchange for supplies or taking bribes from the Sierra Club and other dissidents, and their sympathies wouldn't really lie with the Outsiders. Under no circumstances could they be described as 'poaches turned gamekeepers' or 'unscrupulous bastards who'll have you terminated or eaten if you don't bribe them'. Such rumours are, we repeat, entirely false.

Communities: Deep GREENs pretend to be lone Outsiders but usually have backup from several heavily armed IntSec agents lurking in the undergrowth.

Trade Goods: Stuff from Alpha Complex.

Special Rules: External Internal Security troops are permitted to remain Outdoors, and don't accrue Treason Points by doing so.

Outsiders

Outsiders were never citizens of Alpha Complex. They come from Outdoors. Instead of being decanted in a sterile steel womb, they were 'born' like the primitive humans of old. Most Outsiders are unaware of Alpha Complex's existence or stay well away from it. The Armed Forces' *'shoot first, then shoot some more, then bomb it, then shoot it again and finally think about forming an exploratory committee to discuss the protocol for submitting a list of questions for review to Central Processing that may, in the fullness of time, be referred to another committee to discuss the possibility of interrogating whatever it was we just shot'* policy wins few friends for Alpha Complex.

Friars of the Old Mission

Beliefs: God has sent this trial to test mankind and purge us of sin. The duty of the Church is to preserve knowledge and civilisation. Turn the other cheek. Be nice to everyone. The meek shall inherit the Earth once everyone else is done with it. Be excellent to one another.

Friends: Everyone claims to be their friends.

Enemies: Everyone screws over the Friars.

Description: Oh dear. The Friars of the Old Mission are the nicest people left in the whole post-Oops world. They're trusting, genuine, enthusiastic, kind, gentle and downright lovely. They



THE GREAT OUTDOORS

believe that if everyone would just work together, we could rebuild civilisation and bring about a new age of peace and prosperity for all mankind. The Friars travel the world in search of other survivors and Old Reckoning knowledge. While they're motivated by a deep and abiding faith in the goodness of God, they're totally ok with non-believers and practitioners of alternate lifestyles.

In short, they're doomed. Absolutely everyone screws over the Friars. A patch of sentient vat slime could outwit these guys because they're so trusting and innocent and well-meaning.

A typical Friar is a tonsured guy in a ragged, scratchy habit with a gentle smile on his face. Woodland animals and birds about him, drawn by his gentle soul or the rich ecosystem of fleas that live in his armpits.

Old Mission Friars: A Typical Conversation

Friar: Hello, my child. God be praised! Join with us and help my order rebuild the world.

Troubleshooter: Duh, whut? Are you one of them First Church guys?

Friar: I am a humble servant of the Lord.

Troubleshooter: What's his Security Clearance?

Subfactions: The Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith is a splinter sect of the Mission. They got sick of being the guys everyone in Outdoors beat up on, so they went back to their medieval roots and hauled out the thumbscrews and the hot pokers. They look like typical friars except for a steely glint in the eye and an equally steely glint from the big sharp spiky things they carry.

Communities: The Old Mission itself somehow survived the cataclysm and is now on an island in the bay near Alpha Complex. It is only accessible by boat. The friars have set up secondary missions and monasteries on the mainland.

Trade Goods: The Good News.

Special Rules: Friars always have Scam Radar as a weakness.

Gangs

Beliefs: Kill things and take their stuff.

Friends: We don't need no stinking friends.

Enemies: The whole damn system. The man. The men. Them. *You*.

Description: Several dozen gangs of various sorts roam the wilderness near Alpha Complex. We've lumped all the gangs together because they all behave in similar ways – they gang up on people and take their stuff (the clue's in the name). Most gangs don't have much in the way of high-tech weapons but being beaten to a pulp by 50 goons with sticks kills you just as dead as being shot by 50 guys with plasma throwers.

Gangs: A Typical Conversation

Cyclepunk: Chummer, you done zeroed the wrong gmap, cred?

Troubleshooter: What?

Cyclepunk: We'za goin' frag yer, total bag job.

Troubleshooter: Huh?

Cyclepunk: Make ya think you hit black ice, chummer.

Troubleshooter: Black ice?

Cyclepunk: Yeah, it's really treacherous on the cycle paths 'round here.

Subfactions: Notable gangs around Alpha Complex include:

- **Cyclepunks:** Bad-ass post-apocalyptic bikers. Their motorcycles don't actually work but they can push themselves along the ground with their feet surprisingly fast.
- **Giants:** Vicious marauders, all of whom have the Growth mutation.
- **Leather Contingent:** Quasi-medieval brigands in leather armour, armed with whips.
- **Nouvelle Vague:** Weird Mystics led by a psychic Guru.

Communities: Gangs don't build communities, they raid them.

Trade Goods: Whatever they stole recently.

Special Rules: None.

Relics

Beliefs: Remain calm! Carry on! Just because the world ended doesn't mean our pointless existence is any less pointless!

Friends: Romantics, some Folks, some Bots.

Enemies: Raiders.

Description: When disaster strikes, some people cling to the familiar. Yes, a giant meteorite just hit the continental United States and the whole planet is gripped by a terrible winter and nearly everyone's

dead but if all you've ever done in your whole adult life is worked behind the counter in Frank's Diner, then gosh darnit, the only thing you can think of to do in response to this global catastrophe is to head down to the diner and open up. After all, there'll be customers again ... one day.

Fast forward a few generations and Frank's Diner is still going strong. Better than ever, in some ways – the people behind the counter have been bred for this role for generations and selective breeding goes a lot faster when there's lots of mutations. Why, these guys might be the best diner staff in the whole town. Admittedly, there isn't anything left of the town, there's just this rusted diner sitting in the middle of the forest run by obsessive freaks... but that don't matter to them. For the first time in a very long time, they've got *customers*. Strange folk, in bright red armour, from Alpha Complex. Boy, they sure do look tasty ... I mean, hungry ...

Different relic communities accreted around different things – talk radio stations, recording studios, cinemas, farms, libraries, sewage plants, gas stations, circuses, civil defence shelters, gaming stores, army bases, whatever. Anywhere that (a) had a sense of inevitable routine and (b) wasn't turned into a flaming pancake, stood a chance of becoming a Relic.

Subfactions: Well known relics near Alpha Complex include:

- **PACE Record Studio,** home of the YELLOW Clearance Black Box.
- **That underwater research station** that no-one's ever reached in *Das Bot*.
- **Fresno Sanitary Landfill.**
- **Donner Party Memorial State Park** visitors centre.
- **Endgame Oakland.**

Communities: Small communities can spring up around the more intact Relics, especially if they produce something useful.

Trade Goods: Whatever the Relic used to make, they still produce lots of that.

Folk

Beliefs: Life is hard. World is cruel. Uh.

Friends: Clone-Outs, Friars.

Enemies: Gangs.

CHAPTER 4: THEY LIVE

Description: Most of those in Outdoors are just plain folks. Salt of the Earth, types, really. A little bit inbred, a teensy bit mutated, a smidgin xenophobic, maybe ever so slightly crazy with a touch of cannibalism but they really just want to be left alone. Folks cluster in small, heavily fortified villages surrounded by farmland. If they are not being attacked by raiders, Folks tend to get mistaken for Commies by the Armed Forces and bombed back to the Stone Age. Admittedly, for some Folk settlements, that's an improvement.

Folk: A Typical Conversation

Troubleshooter: We come in peace, despite all appearances!

Folk: Uh. *Wary, suspicious. These people shoot Folk a lot.*

Troubleshooter: We seek a crashed flybot that landed in this region. Have you seen it?

Folk: Uh? *Confusion and sudden greed. They want something.*

Troubleshooter: A sabotaged flybot. Sort of a metal ... flying ... robot?

Folk: Uh? *Blank incomprehension. What's a robot?*

Troubleshooter: Look, is there anyone else we could talk to?

Folk: Nuh. *Defensive indignation. This guy's fourth Eldest in the village, you condescending Troubleshooter.*

Troubleshooter: Screw this, it's like talking to a wall. Let's move on.

Folk: Nuh. *Said with the confidence that comes with knowing there's a bunch of heavily armed Folk goons creeping up on these intruders.*

Troubleshooter: No?

Folk: Yuh. *Triumphant glee at seeing these hoity-toity Alpha Complexers taken down a peg.*

Troubleshooter: What to you mean, no?

Folk: Tolluh.

Troubleshooter: Tolluh? Toll? You want us to pay a toll?

Folk: Yuh. *Overwhelming, infuriating, smugness.*

Troubleshooter: For what?

Folk: Uh. *This simple monosyllable somehow encompasses the path the Troubleshooters just walked down.*

Troubleshooter: And if we don't pay?

Folk: Uh ... *Then we eat well tonight!*

Communities: Notable Folk settlements near Alpha Complex include:

- **Coppertin:** A mining settlement, where the villagers salvage metals from the hulks of destroyed factories. The Coppertinners are ruled by a strange cult; once a year, the high priest parades an empty white box around the village and the villagers give him all their money. Anyone who questions the perfection and desirability of the white box is torn limb from limb.
- **Fairfield:** One of the larger settlements, these Folks are open to trade with Alpha Complex and welcome visitors (especially visitors who bring high-tech gadgets, useful skills and delicious drugs with them). The place is therefore crawling with Deep GREEN agents.
- **Santa Cruise:** A fishing village on the coast. The locals have salvaged several large Old Reckoning sea-going vessels and use these as mobile fortresses and fishing boats.

Trade Goods: Whatever the community produces, especially food. They want technology from Alpha Complex, especially guns.

Bots and Weird Critters

There are quite a few bots still running about Outdoors. Most of the surviving ones are old military units equipped with nuclear batteries that'll run out around the same time as the sun goes boom. Bit rot has set in with a vengeance in their positronic brains and now they make The Computer look like a sane, user-friendly piece of technology. Avoid at all costs.

As for the weird critters – it's Outdoors. Any of the animals in this book can be an intelligent mutant version of the base species, in case you want your Troubleshooters to run into the Kingdom of the Psychic Squirrels or Giant Radioactive Mutant Cockroaches.

Secret Societies

A few Secret Societies are really interested in Outdoors. It might form a key part of the eschatological beliefs or just be a handy source of stuff to trade on the INFRARED market. Other Societies may be randomly encountered Outdoors but the most likely suspects are mentioned here:

Sierra Club

The Sierra Club are synonymous with Outdoors. More accurately, they are synonymous with *stuff* from Outdoors. Only a tiny fraction of the Sierra Club's members actually get to go outside. The higher echelons of the conspiracy jealously guard access to Outdoors. It's their leverage over the other members – behave, give us stuff and maybe we'll let you smell this bottle of fresh Outdoors air. That means that any Sierra Clubber actually encountered Outdoors is probably:

- A manipulative sociopath.
- Experienced at surviving Outdoors.
- Massively paranoid.

Sometimes, a cell of Sierra Clubbers will get lucky, find an exit and try fleeing Alpha Complex and setting up their own little community of like-minded morons. These breakaway groups last, on average, about two weeks before disintegrating.

The Movement

Movementarians are more ruthless than the average Sierra Clubber. The Movement regard going Outdoors as an unpleasant task that has to be endured as they skulk from Alpha Complex to their shiny new construction site (or sites – there are several different Movement sects with their own Complexes in different stages of construction/being flattened by the Armed Forces, who are overjoyed to do something that is actually useful for a change). Movement groups are easy to spot – they're the guys carrying construction material.

Runners

Pretty much the same as Sierra Club, only even more clueless about Outdoors. Successful Runners become Clone-Outs).

Romantics

Romantics hate Outdoors but really like the Old Reckoning stuff you can find Outdoors. They're most likely to be found grubbing around ruins and archaeological digs, or trying to learn Old Reckoning cultural tips from some crazy Outsider, which is the textbook definition of the blind leading the blind.



Free Enterprise

FreeEnt goes Outdoors solely to grab stuff for resale to other Secret Societies and High Programmers. The death of real culture in Alpha Complex means that Old Reckoning media and antiquities are *cash money*, baby. Anyone bringing interesting stuff back from Outdoors will get an offer he cannot refuse. Well, you can refuse – you just better hope your next clone will be more reasonable.

Old Guard

High Programmers loathe Outdoors (when you've been lurking in the depths of a super-fortified bunker being massaged by genetically engineered love slaves while being fed angel pate for a century, wandering around a swamp loses its appeal) but love stuff from Outdoors. Many supposedly security-critical top secret missions are actually just scavenger hunts and shopping trips for Uvs.

Outdoors is also the ultimate bolt hole if a High Programmer is in trouble. You can set yourself up out there as a king for a few years, if you bring a few dozen armed goons and warbots with you, then wait for The Computer to move onto the next traitor. Old Guard encampments are basically where Alpha Complex's elite go camping; 'roughing it' means only having one swimming pool in your bathroom palace instead of four.

Sounds idyllic but there is one catch. Old Guards are invariably immensely paranoid – if they're found by the Armed Forces before the heat's off, they'll get nuked. Anyone from Alpha Complex who finds the Old Guard camp must prove their complete and total loyalty to the disgraced High Programmer, or else ...

Animals in PARANOIA

Bears: Remember, only you can prevent forest fires.

Management 1
Intimidation 16
Moxie 8
Stealth 4
Violence 10
Claw 14
Bear Hug 16
Armour 13. Bear claws do W3D

damage; a hug does S2K damage.

Small Fuzzy Woodland Animals:

Squirrels and the like. Harmless things, for the most part, unless they bite and infect Troubleshooters with rabies or some other unpleasant disease.

Sea Lions: Alpha Complex pumped enough toxic and radioactive waste into the bay to cause the native population of Sea Lions to mutate. Now they are a lot more aggressive and have evolved giant teeth and claws. Unfortunately, official

records have not been updated and the creatures are still tagged as 'mostly harmless' in all briefing documents.

Management 1
Stealth 8
Burst out of the water 14
Violence 10
Bite 14
Armour 15. W2V bite damage.

Mutant Cockroaches: As any R&D scientist worth his lab coat knows, radiation makes things grow big! Giant irradiated fruit! Giant irradiated insects! Giant irradiated tumours!

The Mutant Cockroaches are a tribe of human-sized cockroaches. Right now, they've got the intellect of your average couch potato and really, that's all they need. They've been snarfing down the left-over snacks and junk food of the pre-apocalypse civilisation for generations. They've picked up language along the way, mainly by reading radiation-seared copies of supermarket tabloids and gossip magazines. Mutant Cockroaches are an amiable bunch of insect freaks who hardly ever feel the need to use their proportional strength, speed and resilience to beat Troubleshooters to death with their own limbs.

In a few billion years, by the way, the mutant cockroaches inherit the Earth and Alpha Complex, for that matter. Lovecraft was right; there is nothing in our future except death and coleopterans.

Movement? Runners? Who?

These are lesser-known Secret Societies introduced in other *PARANOIA* supplements. The *INTSEC* book, for example, has a full rundown. In brief:

- The Movement want to build their own rival to Alpha Complex and then blow up the original, forcing the population to move to the new Complex under the Movement's glorious rule.
- Runners are a bunch of dissidents who know they are under suspicion. They help each other plot an escape from Alpha Complex.
- An Old Guard is the retinue of a disgraced former High Programmer who's fallen out of favour with The Computer but hopes to weasel his way back in. Until the heat is off, the High Programmer hides out with his best buddies in some out-of-the-way sector or even in the Underplex or Outdoors, while his more disposable buddies are sent off on missions to restore the High Programmer's reputation or exact revenge on his old enemies.

Management 4
Trivia 16
Stealth 10
Sneaking 14
Violence 8
Clicking Mandibles 14

Armour 14, W2M damage. Oh and they've all got Regeneration as a mutation. They're cockroaches.

Giant Radioactive Mutant¹ Cockroaches: The Giant Cockroaches are ... big. Like, ocean liner big. Like, shrug off a direct nuke big. Like, swallow a Shadow Mark IV warbot whole big. Like, New Gods of Earth big. They are the

CHAPTER 4: THEY LIVE

descendants of the product of a genetic engineering experiment undertaken shortly before the apocalypse, back east at Fordham University in New York. During the Great Cataclysm, the parents of the GRMCs and their newly-laid progeny escaped the lab and made their way to an abandoned tenement in the South Bronx. There, the parents tragically became mortally ill but before they died, they encouraged their children to go out and get a good education.

Deprived of their parents' advantages, the GRMCs have never learned to read, have never seen the Great Masters, have never enjoyed Grand Opera, have never tasted fine wines and have no idea whether the salad course should be served before or after the soup. In short, their education remains woefully incomplete and they are eager to amend this situation in consideration of the last wishes of their dear departed parents. Touching, huh?

Fast forward a few hundred years. The GRMCs have terrorised the North American continent in search of culture. They ran into a long range expeditionary team a few years back. The conversation went something like this:

Troubleshooters: Oh ****.

GRMCs: Hello! We seek Renoir and Proust. Bring them to us.

Troubleshooters: Er ... what?

GRMCs: Culture! We are in search of culture. All we have found so far has been terribly primitive and facile. Bring us culture. Or we shall be displeased.

Troubleshooters: You're looking for culture. Like TV and stuff?

GRMC1: Well, we were thinking more along the lines of Renoir and Proust.

GRMC2: Now, now. Let us not rule anything out. The medium is not the message, after all. Perhaps these fellows have excellent, rewarding original television programming for us.

Troubleshooter 1: Here ... here's my Teela-O tape.

GRMCs: Oh no. This won't do at all.

Troubleshooter 1: Argh no don't squash me! *Gets squashed.*

Surviving Troubleshooters: Oh the humanity!

GRMCs: Now, do you have any culture?

Troubleshooters: Yes. Yes we do. Please don't kill us.

GRMCs: Marvellous! Give us culture. We're terribly blighted, you know.

Troubleshooters: It's not here.

GRMCs: Then where is it?

Troubleshooters: It's ... in Alpha Complex. We'll go get it.

GRMCs: Off you go! We'll be waiting.

And there the matter rested for some time. The expedition fled back to Alpha Complex. Armed Forces satellites have

tracked the GRMCs' movements ever since. They remained motionless for four years, then began moving towards Alpha Complex. The monsters appear unwilling to cross the Great Crater Sea, so they are taking the long way 'round. They should be arriving any month now.

Unfortunately, high-level squabbling between various factions means that the committee tasked with developing a counter-measure never actually met ...

No statistics for Giant Radioactive Mutant Cockroaches are included, because that would be silly. These things win.



1: Technically, they're Giant Radioactive Genetically Engineered Cockroaches but arguing semantics in this case is futile.



Chapter 5: A Question of Ballast

A PARANOIA Mini-Mission

*** MISSION ALERT ***

Troubleshooters are to report to Hanger 6, Level 128, SNU Sector immediately for assignment Outdoors. Do not consume any food or drink en route. Troubleshooters are requested to use toilet facilities before reporting for duty.

Mission Overview

The Troubleshooters are sent on a rescue mission. They have to deliver the codes to disarm a nuclear land-mine to the engineers who planted it in the first place. The trick is getting there ...

Background Notes

Alpha Complex is protected by defence in depth. The dome is studded with counter-missile launchers, point defence lasers, anti-aircraft missiles; it is surrounded by barbed wire, land mines, kill-zones, free fire zones, free firebomb zones, death-zones and lots and lots of Armed Forces thugs, but The Computer still feels insecure.

The latest addition to Alpha Complex's defences is Project VANGUARD a proposed ring of nuclear pop-up mines. These wonderful peacekeeping gadgets go boom if they detect any movement on the surface, turning a large chunk of Outdoors into a glass crater. Even better, the mines are also capable of detecting flying objects. If the mine picks up the radar signature of an aircraft, the mine flings itself into the air and explodes mid-flight. Nothing can get past VANGUARD.

Due to Commie saboteurs who printed the map upside down, the team of engineers who were assigned to plant the VANGUARD mines accidentally placed the mines in a circular pattern around themselves. The engineers are now trapped in the middle of a ring of impassable nuclear weapons, along with the very expensive and utterly irreplaceable VANGUARD mine-layer-bot.

The mines can only be disarmed by a master control code transmitted from the mine-bot. For security reasons, this

code is held in a safe in Alpha Complex and cannot be sent by radio. It has to be delivered. By hand. Across the nuclear mine-field.

Would you like a complimentary sedative?

1. Briefings Full of Hot Air

Hangar 6 isn't your standard briefing room. It's a huge concrete chamber, full of flybots slumbering in their launch cradles. The far wall is a huge curved metal door and on the far side of that portal is Outdoors. There are several Armed Forces engineers putting the finishing touches to an open-topped metal box marked EAGLE 1.

The Troubleshooters are greeted by a frantically grinning Armed Forces briefing office, Darren-Y. He's got a manic fixed grin and the wide, staring eyes of a man who's taken a lot of happy drugs today but is still stressed to the point of bone-crunching terror. He's got one finger pressed into his ear so he can hear all the voices screaming at him – Darren-Y is on a conference call with a whole lot of Armed Forces generals, none of whom are happy with him. He divides his attention between the Player Characters and the generals.

The generals are loud, angry, heavily armed and can make or break Darren-Y's future in Alpha Complex.

The Player Characters are Troubleshooters.

Guess who gets more attention.

Darren-Y: A Typical Frustrating Monologue

'Hi Troubleshooters, glad you're ... one sec ... yes sir ... yes ... no ... unknown at this time ... glad you're here, the mission is to ... well, sir, the results would obviously be catastrophic ... no sir ... deliver the disarm codes ... no ... Class 4, no ... to ... yes sir ... Project VANGUARD ... no sir ... sir ... yes, I did just mention VANGUARD, they're

cleared for it ... well, I was told they were vetted ...'

The characters may be able to piece together the following information:

- Their mission is to deliver top-secret disarm codes to Project VANGUARD.
- They cannot cross the VANGUARD perimeter or they'll get nuked.
- They cannot fly over the VANGUARD perimeter or they'll get nuked.
- R&D are working on an alternate mode of transportation, which will be ready shortly.
- Failure is not an option. The security of Alpha Complex depends on the mission's success.

Outfitting

The Troubleshooters are assigned several key items of equipment, detailed here. They may also take any weapons they wish from the Armed Forces armoury, up to Clearance YELLOW – Darren-Y gives them a special weapons Clearance waiver for this mission. That means they can take slug throwers and flame throwers and lots and lots of grenades. Note down the items taken by each Troubleshooter.

Their assigned equipment is as follows:
The VANGUARD codes: The top-secret, VIOLET Clearance codes. Obviously, for security purposes, these codes must be protected, so they're supplied in a heavy, armoured, solid metal safe. The safe can only be opened using a special combination. Darren-Y gives half the combination to the Team Leader and the other half to a suitably trustworthy Troubleshooter (say, any Armed Forces member). The two halves of the combination must be entered correctly to open the safe. Using the wrong combination or tampering with the safe will initiate lethal countermeasures.

Darren-Y reminds the characters that the contents of the safe are VIOLET. The safe is to be opened only when the Troubleshooters have made contact with

CHAPTER 5: A QUESTION OF BALLAST

the trapped engineers, at which point the Troubleshooters should open the safe without looking inside.

(If someone does tamper with the safe, it starts beeping. The beeping starts out slow and gets faster and faster. The 'lethal countermeasures' turn out to be a missile launched from Alpha Complex that homes in on the safe. The safe's armour is strong enough to withstand a direct hit. By the way, the safe's big enough to contain one (1) Troubleshooter.)

Emergency Supplies: A big crate of water, dried food, medical supplies and other survival equipment. All you need to stay alive Outdoors for weeks. (Exactly what it sounds like.)

Mine Detector: A bulky gadget with a TV screen and a complicated sensor antenna. The mine detector can detect VANGUARD-class mines, even buried ones (it works. The TV screen flashes up the message 'MINE DETECTED' when there is a mine within 10 metres of the detector. It uses the same technology as the mines use to detect targets, so if you can see the mine, it can see you ...).

Defence Gatling Laser: A big shiny rotary laser cannon. Absurdly destructive (this works perfectly well but kicks out an awful lot of heat when in use).

Trade Briefcase: In case the Troubleshooters need to deal with barbarians and Outsiders, they are issued with a trade briefcase. Darren-Y asks one of the Troubleshooters to volunteer to protect the briefcase. The lucky volunteer is handcuffed to the heavy black case. It contains trade goods that might be useful out Alpha Complex. They're pretty useful inside Alpha Complex too, for that matter – the briefcase is crammed with gold bars and high Clearance drugs like Rolactin. Every Secret Society in Alpha Complex could make good use of that briefcase.

Up, Up and Away

Finally, R&D Scientist Anna-O announces that the transport is ready. She brings the Troubleshooters over to the metal box, to which the R&D techs have welded a nuclear-powered heater that the R&D clerks have rigged to blow hot air, a mylar balloon and a battery-powered

propeller. It's very simple – the heater will fill the balloon with hot air. The Troubleshooters then ride the balloon to the trapped Armed Forces engineering battalion. The Troubleshooters can alter their altitude by changing the heater's temperature and change course by moving the propeller. It's simple. A compass shows the balloon's heading and the engineering battalion is currently due east of Alpha Complex.

Got all that? The Troubleshooters are herded into the metal basket, along with their assigned equipment and any gear they took from the armoury. The heater is switched on and the balloon quickly swells with hot air. The hangar door opens. Blinding sunlight floods the room.

The last thing the Troubleshooters see as they rise into the great high Clearance yonder is Darren-Y, waving frantically.

2. What Goes Up ...

The Troubleshooters sail across the sky. Below them – far, far, far below them – the grey domes and exhaust ports of Alpha Complex give way to forest and glittering water.

A few points about this balloon trip, before we start turning the screws.

- If anyone gets killed, a fresh clone will be delivered by flybot, unless the characters are too close to the VANGUARD ring, in which case the flybot would set off the nuclear mine.
- The balloon itself is laser-proof. It reflects laser beams fired at it. Roll 1d20 if someone shoots the balloon – on a 1–5, it reflects back into the basket, otherwise it fries a passing seagull or sets fire to the forest below. The balloon is also flameproof. It ain't bulletproof.
- The ropes that connect the basket to the balloon are neither laser- nor flame-proof. They are not bullet-proof, either, or knife-proof. They're not even teeth-proof.
- It's fairly cramped in the little metal basket, with all the Troubleshooters and their gear. Doing anything that

requires movement means climbing all over the rest of your team.

- The balloon slowly loses heat naturally and less heat means less altitude. The Troubleshooters need to switch the heater on every so often to give the balloon a boost.

Tech Support

A few minutes after departing Alpha Complex, there is a loud and rather final clunk from the heater. Examining it reveals that it is broken down. A Nuclear Engineering roll reveals that the heater's computer control system has crashed and the only way to fix it is to reinstall the heater's software. Fortunately, there is a customer service number on the heater that the characters can call. The tech support guy should be able to remote reboot the heater via the caller's PDC.

Until the heater is working again, the balloon is going to keep losing height.

Calling the number connects the characters to Andy-MSF, an INFRARED call centre drone. Andy has a script that he clings to, come hell or high water. He won't move on until he gets an answer.

1. Where did you purchase the heater?

Answering 'we were given it by R&D' doesn't fly with Andy. He needs to know the name of the PLC clerk who issued the heater, the store's tracking number and the number of the ME card or tongue print used to pay for it. The characters can get all these things by contacting Anna-O but it'll take a long time and all the while the balloon is sinking.

2. Have you tried switching it off and on again?

Every time Andy asks this question, it is with a tone of hopeful anticipation. He really believes that this time, the heater will work, even though it never does.

3. Are you using the heater in accordance with specifications?

The heater is designed to heat a standard Alpha Complex barracks, not heat a balloon, and it certainly isn't rated for use Outdoors. Andy is so overcome by this massive deviation from his script that he has to put the PCs on hold while he gets some happy pills. When he comes



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back, he's so high he keeps looping back to question 1 every few minutes.

4. Are you wearing the radiation buddy that came with the heater?

The radiation buddy is a little badge that tells you how much radiation you are currently exposed to. The buddy is sitting on a desk back in Alpha Complex but the script won't let Andy instruct the characters on how to repair the heater unless someone is wearing a radiation dosimeter.

5. Open the access panel and then, if the radiation is within an acceptable limit, open the inner panel.

The characters have no way of knowing what their exposure is. Andy tells them that opening the inner panel without a radiation buddy could be very bad. He advises them to call out a Tech Services repair guy to take a look at the heater. If the characters take his option, they're transferred to another call centre and have the singular joy of trying to convince the clone they are talking to that 'about 5,000 feet above Outdoors' is a valid address.

6. Connect your PDC to the data port inside the inner panel, then pull the control rods to switch the heater to maintenance mode.

If the characters do this, Andy can reboot the heater's computer control. Unfortunately, as the PCs are outside Alpha Complex's internal computer network, he's transmitting the update over a very low-bandwidth connection and it will take ages. Meanwhile, the heater's core starts to melt down without the cooling control rods. This produces very little extra heat but makes everyone in the basket feel woozy and ill. Hey, why's my hair falling out?

... Must Come Down

While the heater is offline, the balloon starts sinking. The Troubleshooters have to throw things off to lighten the load. Whenever they dump something,

roll a dice, ignore the result and decide whether or not to torture them now ('you're still sinking! You're going to crash!') or torture them later ('that did it! You're rising again ... still a long way to go, though...')

So, what do the Troubleshooters jettison? For simplicity, everything is about the same weight or a multiple thereof. We'll call this unit of weight one UT-ETO (Unfortunate Troubleshooter or Equivalent Thrown Overboard). What's on board that can be dumped?

The Troubleshooters: One weight unit each. (Reflec and other basic gear weights next to nothing, so stripping down to their underwear won't help. It's amusing, though, so make them do that.)

The nuclear heater: Three weight units. Of course, without it, they'll keep sinking.

The safe: Three weight units. The characters could, theoretically, open the safe, remove the VIOLET VANGUARD codes and then throw the empty safe overboard.

The food supplies: One weight unit. Pro: not needed on voyage. Con: Starving to death if the PCs crash.

The mine detector: One weight unit.

All the guns except the gatling laser: One weight unit.

The gatling laser: One weight unit.

The trade briefcase: One weight unit and it's handcuffed to a Troubleshooter.

The propeller: The wind is currently blowing to the east, so the characters could theoretically dump their propeller and drift roughly in the right direction.

Other options:

- **Light a fire:** There's nothing flammable – Inflammable. Whatever – except the PCs.
- **Cut off bits of the metal basket:** Ah, you brought a cutting torch with you? Excellent forward thinking. Show me where you wrote it down on your character sheet.

- **Mutant powers like telekinesis, levitation, polymorph, pyrokinesis:** KILL THE MUTANT.
- **Crash:** Yeah, that's looking like a likely outcome.

3. Ending the Scenario

There are a few likely ways this deathtrap can finish up.

Success! Andy the heroic call centre drone sends the reboot code! The heater restarts! The balloon soars! The PCs rescue the VANGUARD engineers! The GM enjoys the massive bribe the players must have promised him to get this result!

Crash! The PCs can't decide what to dump, Andy never gets back to them. The characters land in the middle of Outdoors and have to cross the nuclear minefield on foot. Good luck.

A Short Walk And A Long Drop: In the debriefing, the lone surviving PC relates how his companions heroically and selflessly volunteered to throw themselves off the balloon, allowing him to reach his destination. A single tear rolls down the survivor's cheek as he remembers the sacrifice of his team-mates. Choking on emotion, he recommends them for the Complex Medal of Honour and suggests that he might star in a made-for-TV movie of their exploits.

The debriefing officer then reminds the lone survivor that both halves of the combination are needed to unlock the safe to get the disarm codes. Does the lone survivor have both halves of the combination or is he a Commie saboteur who murdered the rest of the team?

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MONGOOSE PUBLISHING—SWINDON, UK

MGP 6680

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