PARANOIA

FLASHBACKS

Authors
PAUL BALDOWSKI
EDWARD S. BOLME
GREG COSTIKYAN
PETER CORLESS
JOHN M. FORD
STEVE GILBERT
JEFF GROVES
KEN ROLSTON
CURTIS H. SMITH
WARREN SPECTOR
GEOFF VALLEY
ALLEN VARNEY

Original design by
DAN GELBER
GREG COSTIKYAN
ERIC GOLDBERG

Paranoia XP design by
ALLEN VARNEY

PARANOIA XP

Flashbacks

Long-lost Classic missions retrieved, restored and rehashed by The Computer's loyal History Purifier service firms

BETH FISCHI
ALLEN VARNEY
XP edition editing and layout

JIM HOLLOWAY
Cover and illustrations

ANDY 'JAZZER' FITZPATRICK
DANA MARDAGA
Maps and graphics

DAN GELBER
GREG COSTIKYAN
ERIC GOLDBERG
Original game design & development

RON BEDISON
Proofreading

IAN BELCHER
Mongoose Publishing line editor

IAN BARSTOW
Mongoose Publishing studio manager

ALEXANDER FENNELL
Mongoose Publishing production director

THE COMPUTER
Constant supporter of History Purification

CONTENTS

Introduction 2

Mini-missions (1985)

'Robot Imana-665-C' by **Ken Rolston** 4

'Trouble With Cockroaches' by **Ken Rolston** 12

'Das Bot' by **Ken Rolston** 17

'Vapors Don't Shoot Back' by **Curtis H. Smith** with **Geoff Valley** (1985) 24

'The YELLOW Clearance' Black Box Blues by **John M. Ford** (1985) 60

'Send in the Clones' by **Allen Varney** and **Warren Spector** (1985) 111

'Me and My Shadow Mark 4' by **Steve Gilbert** and **Peter Corless** (1986) 165

'Alpha Complexities' by **Edward S. Bolme** (1988) 192

Code 7s (1986)

'An ARD Day's Night' by **Allen Varney** 238

'Reboot Camp' by **Allen Varney** 240

'Whitewash' by **Greg Costikyan** 241

NEW BONUS FEATURES!

'Pre-PARANOIA' by **Jeff Groves** 244

'Converting old skills to XP' by **Paul Baldowski** 253

Appendix: Converted pun names 256

Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET

WARNING:

If you're not Clearance ULTRAVIOLET, terminate yourself right now and save time.

TM & Copyright © 1983, 1987, 2005 by Eric Goldberg & Greg Costikyan. All Rights Reserved. Mongoose Publishing Ltd., Authorized User. Based on material published in previous editions of ***PARANOIA***. *ILLUMINATI* is a registered trademark of Steve Jackson Games, and is used by permission.
The reproduction of material from this book for personal or corporate profit, by photographic, electronic, or other means of storage and retrieval, is prohibited. You may copy props, character sheets, record sheets, checklists and tables for personal use.

E-mail questions and comments to **sales@mongoosepublishing.com**, or write to **PO Box 1018, Swindon, Wiltshire SN3 1DG, UNITED KINGDOM**. On the World Wide Web: **www.mongoosepublishing.com**. Published by Mongoose Publishing, Ltd. Publication MGP 6635. **Published May 2005. First printing May 2005.**

Introduction

by Allen Varney
***PARANOIA* XP designer**

The ***PARANOIA*** roleplaying game first appeared in 1984 from game publisher West End Games in New York City. From 1985 to 1995 West End published several editions of ***PARANOIA*** and close to three dozen supplements, missions and tie-in novels. Of these, I, like most longtime fans, remember most fondly the entire support line for the game's first edition (published 1985–87) and a couple of early missions for its second edition (1987–89).

Written by many funny people, illustrated by Jim Holloway and masterminded (mostly) by manic line editor Ken Rolston, these primordial works made ***PARANOIA*** great. I fell in love with their hallowed Classic style of fast-paced slapstick, intelligent humor and hopeless hose-job deathtraps. Across two decades they have retained their timeless appeal. Letting these missions fall out of print was treason; restoring them for a new generation of paranoids is Mongoose Publishing's civic duty.

This collection, ***PARANOIA*** *Flashbacks*, gathers almost all these fine works, flensed of excessively topical '80s humor and updated to the ***PARANOIA*** XP rules. There are five full-length missions, three mini-missions and three 'Code 7' sketches that convey a quick idea and get out fast. All told, with this book you can sustain a ***PARANOIA*** series for perhaps two dozen sessions. You could kill upwards of a hundred clones, assuming you stay focused.

What's here

The *Flashbacks* compilation features most of the best material from the West End days, presented here in order of original publication.

- 'Robot Imana-665-C', 'Trouble With Cockroaches' and 'Das Bot': Three short missions published in the insert booklet included with the first edition's Gamemaster screen (1985). Ken Rolston captures the ideal Classic tone of ***PARANOIA*** right away. 'Robot Imana', in particular, is an ideal introductory mission, one of the quintessential Alpha Complex situations never replicated in any other RPG.

- *Vapors Don't Shoot Back:* The first full-length ***PARANOIA*** mission (1985), written by Curtis H. Smith (with Geoff Valley). Smith later became West End's Vice President of R&D after the departure of ***PARANOIA*** co-designer Eric Goldberg.

- *The YELLOW Clearance Black Box Blues:* A virtuoso performance from 1985, brilliantly written by World Fantasy Award-winning author John M. 'Mike' Ford. One of the most highly regarded supplements in roleplaying history.

- *Send in the Clones:* In 1985 I wrote this long and loose-limbed mission with Warren Spector, who went on to become a legendary computer game producer and designer with such hits as *Deus Ex*. We got the assignment from Eric Goldberg, West End's R&D director. Every time the subject has arisen since its publication, Eric has pointedly observed that though my mission plays more smoothly than Mike Ford's *YELLOW Clearance Black Box Blues,* Mike's is better written. (Twenty years. Every—*single*—time.*)*

- *Me and My Shadow, Mark 4:* Written by Steve Gilbert and Peter Corless, this piece from the *Acute PARANOIA* supplement (1986) is by far most longtime fans' favorite ***PARANOIA*** mission. Talk to anyone who's played it, and in moments they'll wave their arms in panicky recollection: 'We were guarding this enormous warbot, when suddenly *something fell off...!*'

- *Alpha Complexities:* The 1988 debut of Edward S. Bolme, who became the most prolific ***PARANOIA*** writer through to the end of the West End line. Ed's 'invisible Commie' sequence shines as one of the line's highlights.

- 'Whitewash', 'An ARD Day's Night' and 'Reboot Camp': These are 'Code 7s' from *Acute PARANOIA*. The Code 7 name, coined by John M. Ford, derives from Troubleshooter Central dispatchers betting on how many clones a Troubleshooter will go through to complete a given mission. In the West End days, when each PC had six clones—*period*—'Code 7' meant 'certain death'.

  ('Reboot Camp', a quick two-page list of funny incidents that might occur if The Computer crashed and then returned, has nothing to do with the later West End 'Crash' and 'Reboot Camp' storylines.)

What *isn't* here

Some longtime fans may want to know why this compilation leaves out these classic products:

- ***Orcbusters:*** One of the bestselling ***PARANOIA*** missions in the old line, Ken Rolston's much-loved 1986 sendup of fantasy RPGs will appear in a future Zap-style collection.

- ***Clones in Space:*** Likewise, Erick Wujcik's fondly remembered 1986 space-operatic exercise in explosive decompression will return in an eventual *Outdoors Sector* supplement.

- ***HIL Sector Blues:*** *Extreme PARANOIA*, a rules supplement appearing in August 2005, adapts the best parts of Ken Rolston's 1987 Internal Security setting/mission/thingy.

- ***The People's Glorious Revolutionary Adventure:*** Cut for space from this volume, Edward Bolme's 1989 showcase of high-camp Communism will eventually appear in *Outdoors Sector*—or, you know, somewhere like that.

Some fans may note certain other mission omissions. 'Destination: CBI Sector', from the first-edition ***PARANOIA*** rulebook, is uneven in quality and not especially funny. 'Into the Outdoors With Gun and Camera' (from the second-edition rulebook) is perhaps more frustrating than fun.

As for the rest, almost all of West End's ***PARANOIA*** line from 1989 onward—everything after *The People's Glorious Revolutionary Adventure*—unfortunately ranges from ho-hum to bad to spectacularly terrible.

Mediocrity is treason

Art director Larry Catalano left West End in 1986. Catalano's successor fired Jim Holloway and brought in a succession of increasingly poor cartoonists. Ken Rolston left shortly thereafter for unrelated reasons. In Ken's wake, developers Doug Kaufman and Paul Murphy in turn briefly supervised the ***PARANOIA*** line. After they too departed, editorial control fell to—how do I put this tactfully?—people with different views of the ***PARANOIA*** line.

The ensuing five years and dozen-plus products, well over half West End's total ***PARANOIA*** output, saw (rumor has it) a 90% drop in sales. The missions from this period introduced an ongoing 'Secret Society Wars' plotline, crashed The Computer, and then brought it back. Plots parodied every passing pop-culture fad and relied heavily on a dimension-hopping story device, the Transdimensional Collapsatron. Not long after the game's 1993 'Fifth Edition' (actually the third), the line finally lapsed—until its

joyously received return to form, a decade later, in Mongoose's ***PARANOIA*** XP.

Now that things are back under control, it would be graceless and mean to dwell on the shortcomings of the past. Instead, let me constructively bloviate on how you, the eternally right ***PARANOIA*** Gamemaster, can learn from history and keep your players happy.

- **Employ actual, not simulated, humor.** Frantically forced jocularity never conceals lack of wit. *Actual* humor makes players laugh. *Simulated* humor makes players say, 'That's funny.' If you think you're being funny because you prefix random nouns with 'synthe-', and suffix every time unit with '-cycle', observe whether your players are, in fact, laughing.

- **Be fresh.** Maybe a volume of reprinted missions isn't the best place to make this point, but you keep players both amused and uneasy by hitting them with situations and devices they haven't seen. If you endlessly recycle plot elements and characters from past sessions, you risk losing their interest.

- **Be smart.** Your players aren't stupid.

- **'Fear and ignorance' means *fear*.** Unless you're playing in the Zap style, ***PARANOIA*** is not about cartoon mayhem—at least not *just* about mayhem. The game excels at inducing tense, nervous suspicion, if you let it. Build suspense; slowly turn the thumbscrews. Too much wackiness fatally undermines the atmosphere. When you've brought the players to a breaking point, an occasional climactic pie fight lets them blow off pent-up tension.

- **Satire, not parody!**

- **Meta-plot = death.** 'Meta-plot' refers to an overarching storyline that continues across multiple products. Many RPGs thrive on meta-plot, but ***PARANOIA*** suffers. Alpha Complex is not a soap opera but an atmosphere, a state of mind that changes by the moment. Nothing is verifiable; history is a lie; even memory is a traitor. Exposing players to an ongoing plot encourages a growing sense of familiarity, which is lethal to the game's effect.

Umm. Here at the start of a massive collection of the funniest writing the roleplaying hobby has ever seen, I've made hardly a single joke. I'll take an Official Reprimand for that. Let my inappropriate solemnity show how ***PARANOIA***, for all its frivolity, can rouse some admirers to passion.

What inspired such devotion? For the most part, the terrific missions in this book. Enjoy.

The good old days

In case the XP edition is your first exposure to the ***PARANOIA*** infection, you'll note some differences in approach and content in these classic missions, which were based on the first and second editions of the game.

Ken Rolston, the original ***PARANOIA*** line editor, often used props and staging to brilliant comic effect. Ken exhorted the GM to (for instance) simulate a faulty public address speaker by talking with a styrofoam cup in his mouth. Fans still talk about this. The XP line de-emphasizes props somewhat, partly because we're not as good at it as Ken, but mainly in an effort to expand the range of experiences players associate with the game. It's arguably harder to sustain a Straight tone of fearful anxiety when speaking with a cup wedged in your mouth.

This revised text doesn't update certain details of setting in these older works, even though the new ***PARANOIA*** XP edition alters them. For instance:

- The economy wasn't nearly as important in these older missions as it is in XP. Don't expect to see anyone in a serious cash-flow bind. However, supplies were scarce.

- There were no service firms back then, only the eight sprawling service groups. We did give service firms to the pregenerated player characters, just because.

- Earlier editions let PCs have troublesome powers like Precognition. Roll with it.

- The XP 'service service' idea, which assigns Troubleshooters secondary duties from firms in all the service groups, generalizes from older editions' unfailing 'trip to R&D to field-test valuable experimental equipment'. All the full-length missions here send the Troubleshooters to R&D. If you're new to the game, you'll soon understand why old-time players can't talk about R&D without giggling and shivering.

- The early writers sent the Troubleshooters Outdoors, over and over. In those days, most low-clearance Alpha Complex citizens weren't even aware of the existence of a world beyond the underground city, and mere knowledge of it was treason.

- For that matter, mere knowledge of secret societies or mutations was itself treasonous. So was lots of other stuff. The 'Acceptable behavior' chart is new to the XP edition.

- PURGE was a comedic society like all the others. The XP edition recasts PURGE as ruthless, genuinely scary terrorists best suited to a Straight play style.

- This revision couldn't quite winkle out every single reference to 'clone families'. In previous editions of ***PARANOIA*** each player character had six identical clones, all decanted at the same time and raised together as individuals. When one clone was on a Troubleshooting mission, the others in his family were working desk jobs or something, waiting to jump to duty as soon as their brother got offed. When all six clones died, you created a new family of six identical clones.

  In the XP edition, each PC is created as one individual, the 'Prime', with backup clone bodies floating unconscious in a Tech Services clone tank somewhere. When the current PC dies, his memories are transferred to the new body, and he returns to action. (What's that? This idea makes no sense? Well, if you're so smart, why don't you take that up with The Computer? No doubt it welcomes diligent correction.)

Puns

One hallmark of the West End ***PARANOIA*** line was Classic-style punning in character names: Sue-R-RAT, Bobby-O-DUR, Texun-Y-AHU, Schwarzenne-G-GER (yes, really). As the line went on, the puns grew ever more—what's the word—punnishing.

Puns are a polarizing issue in the ***PARANOIA*** fan community. Many gamers love them, but a substantial minority, including some Famous Game Designers, think they detract unnecessarily from what could otherwise be tense, suspenseful satire. Think about it: When once the Troubleshooters encounter a High Programmer named Yadonluk-U-ISH, can they ever again take any ULTRAVIOLET seriously?

The revised missions in this book give most characters non-punnish names by default, relocating the original puns to an appendix. If you like the puns, put them back. It's easier to restore them than it would be to take them out. You might give the non-pun version a try first; it's remarkable what a difference it makes. But as always, every Gamemaster is right.

PARANOIA Mini-missions

KEN ROLSTON
Mission Design & Mind Control

STEVE GILBERT
Development

BRUCE MILLIGAN
1st edition editing

JIM HOLLOWAY
Illustrations

DOUG KAUFMAN
NICK QUANE
Additional bad ideas

PETER CORLESS
ROBERT TUFTEE
JOHN OLEN
SAM WEISS
MARGOT DIAMOND
ED WILLIS
JASON DETRANI
Playtesting

THE COMPUTER
Political orthodoxy

Robot Imana-665-C 4
Trouble With Cockroaches 12
Das Bot 17

Charts, tables and resources
What-if-they-do-this table 9
Sierra Club NPC roster 16
Oceanians NPC roster 21

At your service, Gamemaster…

These mini-missions—'Robot Imana-665-C', 'The Trouble With Cockroaches' and 'Das Bot'—are quickies. How long they actually run depends on your style of roleplaying, but we hope they won't take less than an hour or more than three hours.

Each mission focuses on a single problem. We keep the settings as simple as possible and the steer the players firmly down straight-and-narrow paths to the mission conclusions. We kept the missions simple for you, while making the problems obscure and frustrating enough to make even the most well-adjusted players properly paranoid.

You can use these missions as quick entertainment (when you haven't got time for a full mission), as plug-in modules to slip into your own missions, as inspirations or outlines for developing your own missions, or simply as entertaining reading, full of clever ideas on how to design and run ***PARANOIA*** missions.

Unlike the full-length missions later in this volume, these mini-missions don't include pregenerated Troubleshooter player characters. Have your players create characters for them, or consider using one of the three sets of 'six-shooter' pregenerated PCs included in the fine ***PARANOIA*** supplement *Crash Priority.* The Classic or Straight six-shooters work best for these mini-missions.

Have fun driving your players crazy. And when they get too smart, ask difficult questions, or otherwise disturb your tranquility, don't forget The Computer's favorite response:

I'm sorry. That information is not available at this time. Thank you for your cooperation. The Computer is your friend.

Won't these missions be fun? The Computer says they will be fun.
If these missions aren't fun, who will be blamed?
Not The Computer.

Robot Imana-665-C

••••• MISSION ALERT •••••

Robot Imana-665-C is reported to be malfunctioning. The following Troubleshooters will report directly to George-B-MEM-4, acting undersecretary to the temporary assistant director of Research & Design, Sector MEM, for assignment.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Mission overview

A team of RED-Clearance Troubleshooters is assigned to investigate and repair a malfunctioning bot. The Troubleshooters are not appropriately skilled, equipped nor briefed to perform this task effectively. This operation is thought to be extremely dangerous. Therefore only worthless Clearance-RED Troubleshooters are being assigned.

Background notes

Due to overzealous and under-supervised research experiments with new weapon designs, MEM Sector Research & Development is severely understaffed. The incident that dramatically shrank the unit's personnel roster also caused extensive damage to the research facilities and the Files and Records Department. As a result, George-B-MEM-4, acting undersecretary to the temporary assistant director of Research & Design, has suddenly become the acting director. Though his department is disastrously understaffed, with totally inadequate facilities, The Computer nonetheless expects George-B to maintain production at its normal pace. This has forced George-B-MEM-4 to desperate measures.

Robot Imana-665-C, property of a High Programmer named Alon-U, was recently referred to MEM R&D for repair. Unfortunately the research accident destroyed the records describing the bot's malfunction, as well as the only R&D personnel familiar with the bot's function. Alon-U has been pressing for delivery of the repaired bot, and George-B is afraid to admit neither he nor his staff has any idea what to do with the bot. In desperation, George-B has arranged some convenient scapegoats.

George-B has requested a group of RED-Clearance Troubleshooters for special duty. If these rookies are vaporized while trying to repair the bot, no one will miss them, and George-B will have scapegoats from another department to blame for the bot's destruction.

The bot itself is actually no more than a fancy automatic freezer. The malfunction is a damaged

logic unit a skilled technician could easily replace. For untrained Clearance-RED Troubleshooters, the repair may be more challenging.

Briefings

Read the entire mission first so you understand what's supposed to happen. Then study particularly the suggestions for staging the mission (aptly titled 'Staging the mission'), which tell you how to get the most out of the storyline's twisted ideas.

Group briefing

To introduce the mission, read aloud the 'Mission alert' above. Answer *no* questions at this time. Reply to all requests for information, equipment or clarification of the assignment with one of the following responses:

– What is your security clearance?… I'm sorry, that information is not available at this time.

– No further information is available at this time. Report directly to George-B-MEM-4 for further instructions.

– Rest assured all of your needs have been provided for. The Computer provides for all its citizens. Would you like some medication to relieve your unfounded anxiety?

Individual conferences

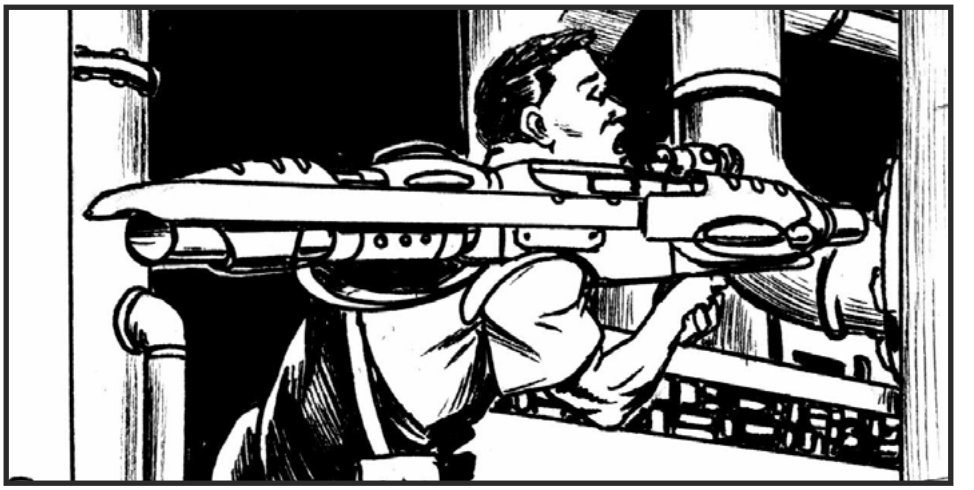
Give these relevant rumors to players with membership in the appropriate secret societies or service groups:

Research & Design: Recent research accidents have resulted in numerous fatalities, extensive damage to facilities and an energetic purge of Commie traitors in R&D administration. A witch hunt is now in progress, and R&D personnel must cover themselves carefully, expecting treachery and betrayal from other mission personnel.

Internal Security: Infiltration of R&D service group by Commie traitors and members of the Humanist, Romantics and Frankenstein Destroyers secret societies is responsible for the sabotage of MEM Sector R&D facilities. Beware of traitors on this mission team who may also intend further sabotage in MEM R&D.

Technical Services: Robot Imana-665-C is not a production bot. The model designation is unfamiliar. Therefore the bot is presumably experimental, and possibly extremely dangerous. Tech Services is eager to get a report on this bot, and eager for R&D to be embarrassed by failing to repair it.

Armed Forces: The destruction of the MEM Sector R&D facilities has greatly inconvenienced the Armed Forces, which in the past has received many valuable weapon designs from the R&D staff there. If experimental use of the Imana-665-C caused the damage, Armed Forces is eager to get its hands on such destructive power.



Central Processing Unit and Programs Group: Alon-U, a High Programmer, has sent a number of increasingly impatient letters to MEM Sector R&D concerning a bot he sent there for repair. Inasmuch as bots normally go to Tech Services for repair, the bot must be something special.

Pro Tech and First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer: Be alert for saboteurs on the team who may attempt to complete the destruction of the R&D facilities. Beware particularly of subtle sabotage—that is, apparently cooperative behavior actually intended to interfere with the mission objectives (for example, arguing that the bot must be dismantled in order to determine what is wrong with it).

Humanists, Romantics, Frankenstein Destroyers: For Imana-665-C to have survived the highly successful sabotaging of MEM R&D, it must be a terribly well armored bot, and presumably therefore a terrible weapon. Destroy it at all costs.

Corpore Metal: There is no record of a bot with this designation. If it is an artificial intelligence, make every attempt to contact it, enlist it in the cause and free it from human domination.

Spy for another Alpha Complex: Arrange to have at least two multicorders on the mission, and steal one of the recording tapes for study. Of particular interest would be recordings of the bot itself and the research facilities.

Spy for another service group: (See the sections above for specific service groups.)

Death Leopard: We have broadcast a request for heavy cutting tools (or other implements of destruction) through secret society communications channels. Payment will be in cans of spray paint of various colors.

Computer Phreaks: The code word 'walmat' can access The Computer's classified files on bots.

[**Note:** This rumor is accurate, but fails to mention that a security system immediately notifies The Computer of a security breach. Within five minutes The Computer is fully aware of what has occurred. Depending on the circumstances (multicordings, testimony of other agents, computer transaction records) The Computer may or may not discern who used the code word; however, it will certainly launch an investigation, starting with its debriefing of the Troubleshooters.]

Give other PCs a variety of seemingly important rumors with no bearing whatever on the mission. These rumors should encourage the PCs to betray one another and expend rounds of ammunition at the first opportunity.

Assignment and outfitting

The mission alert mentions no specific equipment to bring on this mission. Unless players indicate otherwise, assume characters have brought with them all the possessions listed on their character sheets.

(This is routine procedure for all Alpha Complex citizens of Security Clearance ORANGE or lower, inasmuch as they normally have few possessions. As Troubleshooters reach YELLOW Clearance and are allotted individual cubicles, it is increasingly likely a citizen might leave something in his own living quarters rather than carry it around. With illegitimate equipment (e.g., stolen gear or weapons of inappropriately high security clearance) common practice varies. Some carry the items concealed on their persons; others try to hide them in living quarters or in more secure caches.)

The characters should report as directed to George-B-MEM-4 in R&D, MEM Sector. If they do not report willingly, well-armed, brutal and corrupt GREEN-Clearance IntSec (Internal Security) goons escort them. The route they take is irrelevant and need not be described in detail. Clear directions are available at every Computer console.

George-B's briefing

The mission begins in the office of George-B-MEM-4 (**Tension level 10**). George-B is short (a meter and a half tall) and self-conscious about it. He compensates for his insecurity by dominating others. His skill specialization has been in Management, and he is adept at Intimidation, Bootlicking, Con Games, Interrogation and Oratory. Imagine him as a fiery pigmy drill sergeant who struts amidst the towering recruits as he barks orders, insults and embarrassing questions.

Read the following description of George-B's office aloud to the players:

When you arrive at the office door of George-B-MEM-4, you note that, unlike the other doors in this sector, which are marred by blast and scorch marks, his door has been scrubbed clean. Printed on the door are a number of names and titles which have been crossed out. A RED-Clearance painter from Housing Preservation and Development & Mind Control is stooped over working on a new title, 'Acting-Undersecretary-to-the Temporary-Assistant-Direc…'. The letters are written in bold blue paint.

The HPD & Mind Control worker opens the door for you, then scurries aside. The room is empty except for a desk in the middle of the floor toward the back wall. On the desk is a computer console, and behind the desk, barely visible over the clutter of forms, reports and manuals, is George-B-MEM-4. He is quite short.

George-B's orders to the PCs are simple—'Fix the bot.' There should only be three key words, generously repeated, in George-B's long-winded, abusive, insulting and threatening address. George-B treats any PC attempts to interrupt him with questions or comments as personal insults and challenges. If a PC is not satisfactorily subservient, George-B immediately reports his insubordination to The Computer, guards arrive within moments and the other PCs are ordered to wait in the hall until the clone replacement arrives, when the briefing will continue.

George-B wants the bot fixed, and he is fully aware that the PCs have no special abilities to fix it. All he practically expects is that they will die trying, but he is desperately hoping that he will get lucky and the PCs will bail him out. If they fail, it won't be because he didn't threaten them enough.

Indulge your player character abuse skills here, and give the PCs a good dose of fear and ignorance. Smart players will engage in a festival of bootlicking and toadying. Rebellious players will have to be sneaky and clever, or eager to run through a number of clones.

The walk to the testing room

When George-B finishes his briefing, he calls four well-armed GREEN-Clearance R&D guards to escort the PCs to the Testing Room. The guards are obviously much better disciplined and professional-looking than is customary for R&D guards. IntSec has gained enough influence here in the wake of the decimation of R&D staff to install IntSec guards until the saboteurs are caught.

Use the walk to the Testing Room as an opportunity to stimulate the PCs' anxious imaginations. Assume a constant **Tension 6**, unless it makes sense to adjust the level. Include descriptions of corridors blocked by combot guards, constantly flickering red lights and flashing signs reading 'Excessively Lethal Radiation'. This is also a good chance to demonstrate the privileges earned by faithful Computer servants, when the GREEN guards produce portable radiation shields they hide behind as they scurry past the blocked corridors. As the disconcerted PCs amble nervously past these corridors, roll the dice secretly and solemnly scribble notes as you *tsk-tsk* sympathetically.

The PCs are led into a heavily armored and equally battered section of the MEM R&D facilities. They stop at a door marked simply 'Testing Room'. The guards order the PCs to wait for the Special Equipment to arrive. Within minutes a small workbot appears carrying crates labeled 'Special Armor Supplement'.

The number of crates is equal to the number of the PCs minus two. Each crate is about one meter long by one-and-a-half meters wide. The crates are battered and dusty, suggesting great age and neglect. The guards insist the PCs sign forms acknowledging receipt of the equipment. (Pass a piece of paper around and collect the players' signatures. If a PC uses a false name, the guards take him directly to the Debriefing Station for a quick reprimand. See 'The debriefing stations' below.)

After the players have signed for the crates, they may investigate the contents. Read aloud the following description:

Inside each crate is an opaque plastishield one meter by one-and-a-half meters and five centimeters thick. Also enclosed is a one-page instruction sheet entitled 'Using the XM9-357 Portable Nuc-Blast Shield'. Against all expectations, the instruction sheet apparently matches the hardware.

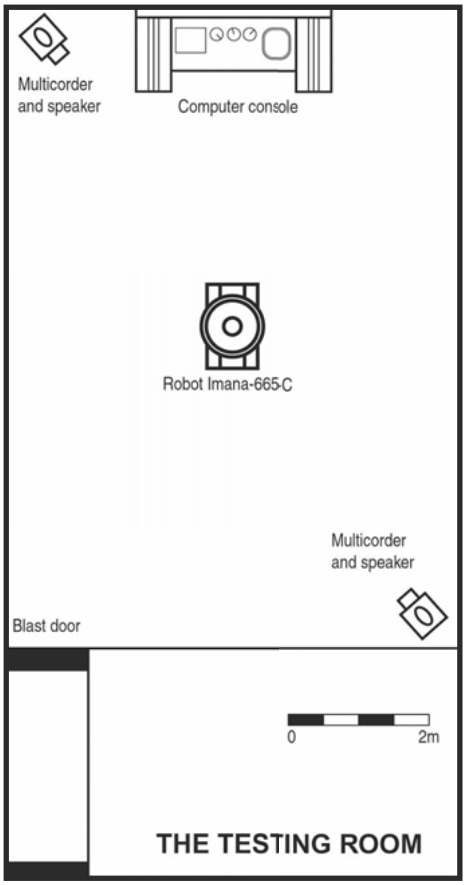
Ask the PCs if they want to read the instruction sheet. If they inquire about the security clearance, tell them there is no indication of appropriate clearance. (This equipment dates from before The Computer and security clearances.) Read the following aloud if they want to read the sheet:

'The XM9-357 Portable Nuc-Blast Shield is designed to provide superior protection from an over-the-horizon nuclear

Bot description

The following section describes the bot and its functions. The players are allowed to look at the Imana diagram, but not at the parts descriptions (diagram key). If the PCs ask questions about the bot's parts, read only the unparenthesized sections. If a player uses the code word 'walmat' with a request for information about the bot, he receives the following descriptions, including parenthesized text from the diagram key. (Remember, within ten minutes of using this code word, The Computer sends an IntSec squad to arrest and interrogate the user of this top-secret code word.)

ROBOT IMANA-665-C. Experimental prototype intelligent food freezer. No serial code.
Intelligence: Speaks and understands English; intelligence and emotional maturity similar to a four-year-old child.
Description: See Diagram Imana-665-C.
Armor: Kevlar equivalent (I2)
Weapons: None
Skills: Food Freezing (15)
Security system: Voiceprint ID with visual confirmation.
Power: Cable to external power. Battery for warning light and logic units.
Sensory apparatus: Sonic indicator fixed on 360-degree rotating track.
Additional information: The Imana-665-C is a self-propelled freezer equipped with a manipulator arm letting it serve foods as well as store them and with a drink tray magnetically attached to the side. The. 665-C is mounted on a standard Ford 559 mini-tread chassis with a maximum speed of 3km/hour.
WARNING: The preceding should have been read only by personnel of ULTRAVIOLET Clearance. If you lack proper security clearance, please report your treasonous activity immediately to Internal Security. Failure to report your treasonous activity is treason. Thank you for your cooperation.



explosion. Given that the XM9-357 weighs only two kilograms, it provides remarkable protection. However, should the user experience minor skin irritation following a nuclear blast due to improper use of the XM9-357….' And so on. The manual even has a diagram showing how normal-sized persons may easily crouch behind the XM9.

Should any PC make a knowledgeable comment about the phrase 'over the horizon', The Computer should gently inquire about where the PC first heard the term 'horizon'. This ought to be worth at least a moment of unofficial anxiety.

As the PCs are puzzling over this gear, The Computer's voice should issue forth from speakers in the ceiling, offering congratulations on their assignment and expressing complete confidence in their ability to complete it.

The testing room

GM note: Internal Security and The Computer constantly monitor the multicorders, microphones and other sensors in the Testing Room. It is **Tension 16.**

As the PCs stand outside the door of the Testing Room puttering with the portable Nuc-Blast Shields, the GREEN guards call in their final report to The Computer.

'Roddy-G-PWD-3 reporting. Repair squad about to enter Testing Room. Open the blast doors.'

After a delay of about a minute, the door's sliding bars and locking mechanisms begin banging and grinding into place. Several minutes later, the last mechanism squeaks to a halt, and the door swings ponderously open. The door is about a meter thick and obviously massive. The guards hustle the PCs into the room without delay and scurry out as the door begins to swing closed again.

Read aloud the following room description:

The room is ten meters deep and seven meters wide. You enter through a door on a seven-meter wall; the standard computer console with keyboard, display screen and sensor array is on the opposite wall. The console is obviously a very recent installation.

The door is massive and heavily armored, and has no visible controls for opening from inside the room. Shielded multicorders and speakers are diagonally opposite one another in two corners of the room. The walls, floor and ceiling appear to be made of a glossy plastic substance similar to that used in combat armor. The surface is slightly distorted and discolored in several places, suggesting the effects of great heat or of massive impacts.

A terrible odor fills the room. Though reminiscent of the Sanitary Facilities and the food vats, it is far more powerful and revolting.

In the center of the room is the robot Imana-665-C. A power cable leads from the bot to the opposite wall. The bot does not respond to your entrance.

Give the players a brief glance at the bot diagram, then continue reading the following aloud.

You hear the locking mechanisms in the door behind you as you are sealed into the room. Suddenly, a loud whirring sound comes from the bot. The cone-shaped device swings around to train on you as the bot lurches forward toward you.

The bot is simply responding belatedly to an opportunity to leave the room, but to the PCs, the bot is apparently advancing on them, perhaps with deadly intent. However, the bot automatically comes to a halt two meters short of the door. This is because its power cable is only four meters long and the bot's motion will inevitably pull out the plug.

Immediately after Imana loses power, the serving tray (held on by an internal electro-magnet) falls off with a great clatter. This is usually a good time for The Computer to request a progress report.

Once the bot is powerless, the PCs may examine the Imana-665-C at their leisure. Allow them to study the bot diagram, but do not give them any classified information. For example:

Ken: I'm looking at the circular metal disk that fell off the bot. Is there anything special about it?
GM: *[Reading from the diagram key.]* It appears to be a flat metallic disk with no obvious function.
Ken: How was it attached to the body?
GM: You find no device for attaching the disk to the body.

Eventually players will tire of looking at an inoperative bot. At this point they will probably consider trying to force it open or to plug it back in. The Imana cannot speak to the characters until it is plugged in again. If the PCs try to force the Imana open, the bot's security systems activate automatically (red light flashing, beeping alarm, etc.), and if they proceed, extensive damage will result.

Plugging the bot back in is no simple task. One method involves picking up the bot and carrying it over to the power socket. The problem is that the bot weighs 250 kg. Moreover, when the bot is plugged in again, it resumes its attempt to crawl to the door, inevitably unplugging itself again. The PCs can keep the bot stationary by keeping its tread out of contact with the floor, either by lifting the bot in the air, propping it up with Nuc-Blast Shields or tipping the bot on its side. More primitive players may prefer to shoot the treads off, though The Computer would certainly disapprove of such treatment of its property.

Once the players have immobilized Imana-665-C, they may attempt to speak with it or repair it.

Poor Imana-665-C

Alon-U, the bot's owner, had the bot taken from one location to another and installed. However, in the reinstallation, the technicians damaged the visual sensor logic unit. Reluctant to admit their fault, they jury-rigged a repair and told no one.

After a time the jury-rigged visual sensor system failed. Since the bot was cleared to open only for ULTRAVIOLET personnel, it could no longer confirm a user's security clearance. It knew that it could not be repaired without confirming proper security clearance. Caught on the horns of this dilemma, the bot's brain became paranoid.

Alon-U discovered that the bot would not respond to any commands and he sent it to Tech Services for repair. Without even checking the bot, Tech Services determined the bot was experimental and therefore forwarded the problem to R&D. The bot sat around unattended for several days at R&D. Then the accidental

explosion destroyed the records and the personnel assigned to diagnose and repair it.

Roleplaying the bot

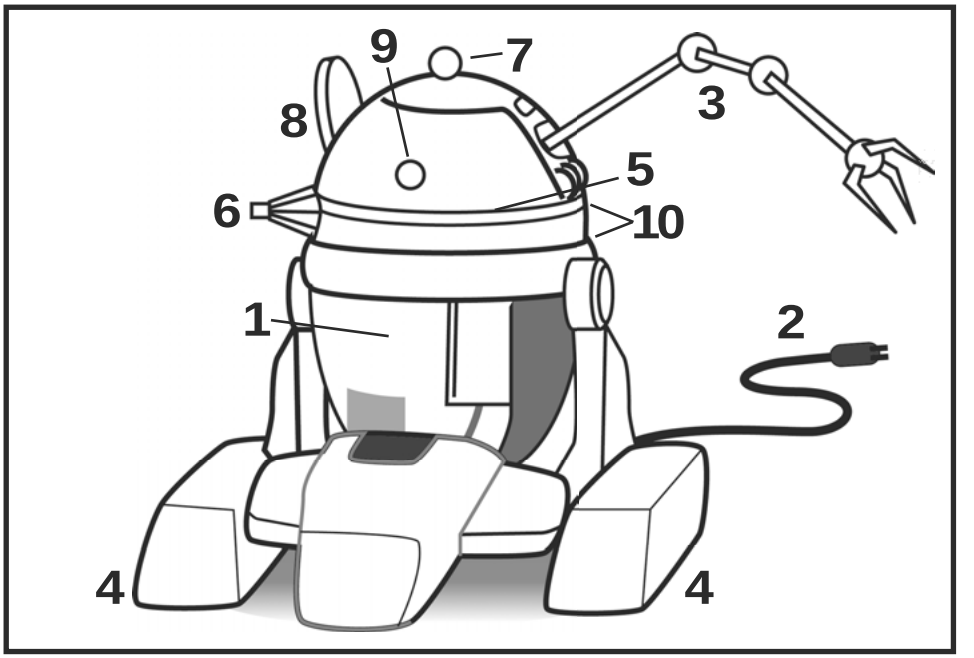
In playing the role of the bot, think of it as a very cooperative but very literal four-year-old with a severe case of insecurity and paranoia. It wants to be helpful, but its Daddy told it never to open for strangers, and it would never do what Daddy told it not to do because it did not want to be turned off. Like a four-year-old it has a small vocabulary and a limited store of life experience. If it does not understand a word or concept, it can't help very much in the process of figuring out what it is not understanding. About all it can do is say 'Huh?' (or, more strictly, 'I'm sorry, but I don't understand. Please try to rephrase your command or question.') repeatedly, or quit in frustration after a few failures.

Worse yet, it has been told by Daddy not to talk to anyone who does not have the proper security clearance, so what it DOES know it is reluctant to reveal unless Daddy says it's okay (that is, if security clearance is confirmed). However, it does have a small amount of self-interest and flexibility built into it, and the PCs must exploit that to get it to cooperate so they can repair it.

Talking to Imana-665-C

Here is how the bot should respond to the PCs:

1. It does not speak unless directly addressed in the following form: 'Imana-665-C, *[any command.]*' (In playtests, it usually took quite a while before the PCs thought to speak to the bot, or to speak to it in a formal way.)
2. If it doesn't recognize the command (that is, the command has not come up in its normal routine in serving as a home freezer), it responds, 'I'm sorry, but I don't understand. Please try to rephrase your command or question.'
3. If it does recognize the command, (for example, 'Open', or 'Report inventory' or 'Describe malfunction'), it initially responds, 'What is your security clearance, please?' Then, whatever the PC statement, it responds, 'I'm sorry. Clearance not confirmed. Your request cannot be acknowledged at this time.'
4. The bot is insecure and paranoid. It feels it has failed its Daddy by not working properly, and it is afraid of being punished. If the PCs verbally or physically threaten the bot in any way, it will tend to be less cooperative, either in denying access or information or by shutting up altogether. Examples of threats include accusing it of treason, blaming it for malfunctioning, tipping the bot on its side, trying to force its door open, firing lasers at it or pounding on it in frustration.
5. If the PCs are nice to the bot and apparently concerned and eager to help it, the bot can gradually be talked into cooperating, at least to the extent of explaining that it won't open because it can't get visual confirmation of security clearance. Once the PCs have gained its confidence, it will tell the whole history, even down to squealing on the repairmen who originally damaged it. (Score points for revealing traitors.)



IMANA-665-C diagram key

Text in parentheses is cleared only for ULTRAVIOLET Clearance. The code word 'walmat' permits access to this classified information.

1. Cylindrical metallic body, glossy white.
2. Long, black plasticord with a power plug at the remote end. (*The power cable.*)
3. Mechanical manipulator arm, retractable, with three-digit grasping claws.
4. Twin tread chassis with a clearance of three centimeters.
5. Shallow depression running around the bot's body. A dark, black substance is visible at the bottom of this depression. *(The gap between the body and the lid of the freezer compartment. The black substance is a black rubber gasket.)*
6. A metallic cone-shaped object ten centimeters in diameter at the base. A hollow tube runs from the top of the cone shape to the body of the bot, though the tube does not seem to penetrate the body exterior. *(The sonic sensor.)*
7. A transparent bead protruding from the top of the bot. (*A special lens for the visual sensor. The image is of the space 360 degrees around the bot. The image is terrifically distorted, but it is used primarily to confirm security clearances by checking the color of the uniform of anyone speaking to it.)*
8. A flat metallic disk with no apparent function. *(The drink serving tray.)*
9. A small red plastic dome. *(A warning light that flashes when unauthorized entry is attempted. Forcing entry into the bot will cause serious damage to the door and locking mechanism. The term 'irreparable' comes to mind. This light is battery-powered and functions regardless of the bot's power status.)*
10. Shallow slots that run around the body of the bot. *(These tracks carry the sonic sensor around the body of the bot to train on the source of a verbal command. When a PC speaks to the bot, the sonic sensor whips around and points at the speaker. The PCs may be forgiven if they initially think this is a weapon preparing to fire on them.)*

6. However, it still refuses to open for anyone less than Clearance ULTRAVIOLET. The PCs can get around this in two ways:

   A. Using Con Games skill, they may logically prove to the bot that its duty is to disobey its Daddy's direct command and open for those who wish to repair it, regardless of security clearance.

   B. They may lie to the bot, saying that they are of ULTRAVIOLET Clearance. The bot, having no way to visually confirm this assertion, may be verbally conned into accepting it.

Repairing the bot

No one but Alon-U has tried to speak to the bot since its visual sensor system failed, and Alon-U was neither thoughtful, original nor inventive in his commands. (Mostly he said, 'Open up, you g— stupid machine!') The first step in repairing the bot will be getting it to respond verbally. The second step will be in diagnosing the problem by questioning it. The third step will be in either convincing it that it must open whether it gets security clearance confirmed or not, or in tricking it into confirmation. The fourth step is locating the faulty visual sensor unit and replacing it.

(The players may not proceed in this order, and some steps may be skipped, but these four steps are the best way to do it. Other approaches may be more direct, but unacceptable for various reasons. For example, steps one through three can be bypassed if the PCs blast open the bot with explosives. However, the damage to the bot will exceed the benefit done by repairing the sensor unit, and the PCs will be executed for damaging The Computer's property—in particular, the property of a High Programmer.)

Once the PCs have gotten the bot to open its door, the odor of long-spoiled food strikes the PCs in full force. (Alon-U kept all sorts of privileged delicacies in here, including fresh meat from the Outdoors, and it has been unrefrigerated for more than two weeks.) The control and logic units are accessible through a panel in the bottom of the freezer, under the decomposing foodstuffs. The location of the damaged visual sensor unit can be achieved either by speaking with the bot or by using the Bot Ops and Maintenance skill.

Having located the faulty unit, the PCs must request a replacement part. In typical ***PARANOIA*** style, this is hardly a routine task.

1. They first must order the proper unit by serial number. (Since the bot is a nonstandard design, no one in Production, Logistics & Commissary is familiar with replacement parts for it.) The serial number is not printed on the unit. The bot knows the correct serial number, and will cheerfully give the information if requested, but it will not volunteer.
2. When they have requested the unit by serial number, they receive (after a suitable delay) the wrong part. (Pick something at random from the Equipment Table in the XP rulebook.) The PCs must explain they have received the wrong part. (Impossible, of course—The Computer doesn't make mistakes! Smart players admit they misread the part number.) Then they have to reorder the correct part.
3. This time the right box arrives, with the correct part illustration and installation instructions on the outside. However, inside the box is a totally unrecognizable electronics part.
4. The next time the wrong box arrives, but the right part is inside. (**Note:** The wrong box has the wrong installation instructions as well.)
5. If the PCs have sent back the right box from step three, they must request a proper box with installation instructions. If they were clever and kept the proper box, they can begin to install the part.
6. They must use the Bot Ops and Maintenance skill to properly install the new unit. If the proper box is available with installation instructions, all PCs, even those without any Hardware skills at all, can succeed. The PCs may attempt

What-if-they-do-this?

PC actions	Results/consequences (1st/ 2nd/ 3rd offense)
Refuse to report to R&D	1. Stern warnings from The Computer 2. Armed GREEN-Clearance trooper escort 3. Stiff fines for insubordination
Report to R&D, but do nothing useful	1.* Stern warning 2.* Assign fines and level charges 3.* Trial, demotion to INFRARED, activate clone to this mission
Report to R&D, damage bot	1.* Treason points and stern warning 2.* Fine and treason charges 3.* Trial, demotion or execution
Report, attempt repair, fail, but lie about successfully repairing bot	1.* Big fines 2,* Trial, demotion or execution
Report, attempt repair, fail, give up and announce failure	1.* Pep talk from The Computer, 50cr fine for doubting The Computer's wisdom in assignment 2.* Politely ominous threats from The Computer, 100cr fine for insubordination 3.* Motivation assistance—The Computer assigns an ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooter supervisor, Renny-O-MEM-2. (He doesn't help—he just threatens to execute PCs.)
Requests information	*Available information* Repeat mission assignment. ('Fix the bot.') Definitions of 'fix' and 'bot'. *Not available* Description or explanation of malfunction. Description or explanation of what happened. Description or explanation of bot function. Robot model number, security clearance or technical data. Any other useful information.
Request additional equipment or personnel	*Available equipment* Any RED-Clearance or lower tools or equipment. Plausible bot replacement parts. *Not available* Relevant manuals. Other bots. Other competent specialists. Sophisticated, high tech, dangerous or useful tools or equipment.
Try to blame failure on scapegoat traitor (PC or NPC)	Immediate debriefing, recording of accusations or trial and review of evidence and testimony, judgment, return to mission.
Exhibit unspecified treasonous behavior, but treason is not reported by PC	The Computer and IntSec don't interrupt the mission unless there's a threat of damage to the bot. Otherwise, accusations, trial and judgment take place after debriefing.
* All PCs are immediately removed to separate Debriefing Stations for Computer interrogation: 'The Experimental Debriefing Station earnestly solicits your cooperation.'	

to repair the bot as many times as they choose, but each time they fail, they may damage some other part of the bot. Improvise the circumstances of this damage as you choose. The fault may be immediately obvious, so the PCs can try to fix it or make excuses, or the fault may be hidden, and the PCs may be called to task for it sometime in the future.

What if they do this…?

The chart on the previous page summarizes the probable results of the most typical player character actions. Of course, when the PCs get frustrated, they may do just about anything. Such problems encourage very creative (or very bizarre) responses. For example, in a playtest one character kept asking to go to the bathroom at crucial points so he wouldn't be present when the bot exploded. (Unlike school teachers, The Computer sometimes takes an unrepressive stance in its allowance of lavatory passes.) You'll just have to rule on such clever strategies as they arise.

In 'Results/consequences', assume that after any result or consequence that does not result in the repair of the bot, the remaining PCs and/or their clones are immediately returned to the Testing Room to complete their mission. The PCs cannot get out of this assignment until they are dead, executed, demoted or otherwise thoroughly incapacitated, and even then, their clones may be immediately assigned in their place.

An asterisk (*) indicates that the PCs are all immediately removed to separate Debriefing Stations where The Computer can individually interrogate each PC. (See 'The debriefing stations' for a description of the stations.)

The debriefing stations

The Debriefing Stations are recent developments of R&D and still in the experimental stage. The stations themselves are similar to phone booths, only not so spacious inside. The PC is directed to enter the station. The door closes behind him and his head, arms and legs are immediately restrained by bot-operated clamps bristling with shiny sensors and needles. Directly in front of his face are a camera lens and a video screen where The Computer may display multicorder tapes or other data.

The instruments in the Debriefing Stations include a standard lie detector and psionic phenomena detector (similar to those available for multicorders as described in the XP rulebook). Additionally the sensors monitor various vital functions like brain waves, heartbeat and skin temperature, and an experimental program interprets this data to function as a lie detector. Knowledge of the abilities of these experimental stations is at ULTRAVIOLET Clearance, so the PCs can only guess what is going on.

The Tension level here is—well, any number of cameras are pointing straight at the PC, and The Computer is giving him undivided attention. You figure out the Tension.

Each time the PCs claim to have repaired the bot, or have fouled up so badly that they are to receive warnings or threats, they are taken to these rooms where The Computer cordially interrogates them. The interrogation proceeds in this manner:

1. **Praise.** 'Thank you for your cooperation. Your diligent service to The Computer will of course be rewarded.' Generally this just makes the PCs more nervous, as it should.
2. **Gentle questioning.** 'Thank you for repairing the bot. Are you sure that it is working properly?' 'Now, what evidence do you have that your fellow Troubleshooter Tois-R-USS-3 is trying to sabotage this mission?' 'Are you sure that emptying your hand laser into the bot was the proper way to approach the problem?' The player usually discovers at this point he is in trouble, and he has a chance to lie his way out of it or confess his error and get a second chance. If he lies, and he does not beat the lie detector, he is pleasantly informed that he is lying, that he is hereby accused of treason and the interrogation continues. If he confesses his error, and politely asks for a second chance, The Computer usually is gracious. If he has indeed repaired the bot, and he answers all The Computer's questions satisfactorily, he is commended and released.
3. **Regretful judgement and reprimands.** 'The Computer is most disappointed in your performance, but you will be happy to know that your old job at the Waste Recycling and Food Reclamation Center is available, if you should continue to fail in reaching your potential in this important mission.' Adopting a sorrowful tone, The Computer expresses its concern for your future welfare and subtly reminds you of the fate of unsuccessful or treasonous Troubleshooters.
4. **Cheerful pep talk.** 'Be confident. Can you doubt The Computer's wisdom in selecting you for this task? Isn't being a Troubleshooter fun? You ARE having fun, aren't you, Gordo-R-DUD-3? *[Pause for enthusiastic response.]* Excellent. Then you'll want to return to your mission immediately. Thank you for your cooperation.' If the mission is going too slowly, or if the players are reaching the limit of their tolerance for frustration, this is a good opportunity to slip some suggestions to them, like 'Now, have you tried to talk to the nice bot? Don't you think you might have frightened it by firing a sonic blaster at it?'

Now how could anyone refuse to cooperate with such a nice Computer? Especially when restrained head-to-toe in a tiny cubicle. Be nice, but be firm.

Ending the mission

This mission continues until the bot is either repaired or totally disabled. New clones are activated to replace deceased or demoted Troubleshooters. When one clone family is exhausted, you, the wise GM, must decide whether to assign a new Troubleshooter PC to the task, or to let the player buy an additional clone six-pack according to the 'Straight' play style rules in the ***PARANOIA*** XP rulebook.

If the Troubleshooter repair the bot, reward each participating PC with a 500 credit bonus. You may want to bestow greater rewards for particularly clever or loyal behavior. You should also level treason charges at this point.

If, at the conclusion of the mission, a PC has earned termination or even erasure, notify him at the end of his session in the Debriefing Station and permit him his Final Words/Last Desperate Defense before IntSec arrives to haul him away.

Staging the mission

Here are the key elements in making this an entertaining mission.

1. No one would ever imagine repairing a freezer could be a perilous assignment. However, as far as the PCs are concerned, this bot could be anything, even a nuclear device. One false move and they could be atomized! Make it clear George-B-MEM-4 and the GREEN-Clearance guards are terrified of this bot, and they regard the PCs as doomed. Every time the PCs propose an action, ask them to carefully explain just how they will proceed, giving the impression you are waiting for the tiniest mistake to turn the team into a thick yellow spray.

2. The voice of The Computer should be like Mr. Rogers. 'Can you say "executed?" Sure. I knew you could.' Whenever things begin to slow down, pop in over the loudspeaker with an encouraging pep talk. 'It's good to see none of you have been badly injured yet. Could you bring me up to date on your progress in this mission?' When the players begin to request crowbars and axes, a subtle hint is in order. 'I'm sure you'll take every precaution to avoid damaging this valuable bot. Are you *sure* you need a chainsaw?' Constantly remind the PCs how fortunate they are to be Troubleshooters, living a life of danger and adventure. 'Beware! Treason is all around you.' *[Pause to let the players look suspiciously at one another.]* 'Stay alert. Trust no one. Keep your laser handy.'

3. The voice of the bot should initially be quite flat and mechanical—all business. However, this is just a façade. The bot is wracked with guilt over its malfunction and its failure to serve its master, and it's afraid of getting turned off or melted down for scrap. As the PCs begin to pry the story out of the bot, it should develop a distinct whine in its voice, and whenever confronted with the central dilemma—that it must open to be repaired, but it must not open unless it has confirmed security clearance, but it cannot confirm security clearance until it is repaired—it should give a little squeal of anguish and inner turmoil, then go catatonic for a few minutes. After proper sympathetic coaxing, it may return in an even more whiny three-year-old-kid-who-doesn't-wanna-get-spanked voice, protesting its innocence, but steadfastly refusing to disobey its master's orders. Really get into the whining part. Drive the players crazy. Whining is a horrible weapon. Make them squirm. They may decide to execute the bot for treasonous whining. That would make an interesting debriefing.

4. Until the PCs think to speak to the bot and get it to respond, this mission should be extremely frustrating. They have no skills, tools or information, don't know what's wrong with the bot and can't even get inside it. Once they get the bot talking, they can extract information and coax the bot into opening up.

   If the players don't think of talking to the bot, and frustration begins to turn into no fun, relent and give some hints. The Debriefing Station is a good place for this—you'll have the PCs' complete and anxious attention as their lives hang in the balance.

   The Computer may also politely interrupt the PCs' activities with requests for progress reports. If the PCs seem despondent, The Computer may unbend a little and make a few suggestions.

   On the other hand, if the players are whiz kids who walk right in and formally address the bot, or otherwise seem smugly in control of the situation, make the bot extra paranoid and uncooperative, or make the process of ordering the correct replacement part even more challenging. Adjust your level of fiendish cruelty to accommodate the cleverness of your players and their tolerance for frustration.

5. Make this a fast-moving, short mission—two hours maximum. If the PCs are not progressing satisfactorily at the end of the first hour, give them hints. If the players are inclined to be cautious and fiddly, present them with immediate challenges, either through the meddlesome intrusions of The Computer or through the apparent menace of Robot Imana-665-C. Keep things moving! Don't let the mission drag!

PARANOIA in the real world: Fly Amsterdam to Seattle—in 28 Hours

Thu Dec 30, 2004 7:55 AM ET (Associated Press)

SEATTLE — In an ordeal that made some passengers feel like hostages, about 300 people aboard an Amsterdam-to-Seattle flight were delayed for 18 hours on the ground, unable to leave the plane for much of that time, as food and water ran out and the toilets stopped working.

Northwest Airlines Flight 33 finally arrived at Seattle-Tacoma International Airport on Wednesday morning, 28 hours after takeoff, after being held up by a nightmarish combination of fog, work regulations and mechanical trouble. [...]

Heavy fog had prevented the flight from landing in Seattle as scheduled Tuesday afternoon, forcing the pilot to circle the airport until fuel ran low. The plane was then diverted to an airport in Moses Lake, Wash., where it sat on the runway for hours as another crew was sent from Minnesota. The airline has regulations on how many consecutive hours crew members are permitted to work.

The flight from Minnesota was delayed because of mechanical problems. After the new crew arrived, Flight 33 had to wait again because of bad weather. Food and water ran short, and the toilets stopped working as the hours dragged on.

'It's like we're hostages without being in any kind of hostage situation,' passenger Misha Shmidt told the Seattle Times from the plane Tuesday night. [...]

Passengers initially were not allowed to get off the plane because the Grant County International Airport was not equipped to screen international travelers. The passengers were finally allowed off Tuesday after officials temporarily cleared a terminal and posted sheriff's deputies at the entrances.

One man had to be taken off the plane by medics, and a second passenger was treated for an undisclosed medical emergency. Northwest spokeswoman Mary Stanik said she had no immediate information about their conditions. [...]

Customs spokesman Mike Milne said: 'We're not doing it to be mean. We're doing it to preserve the security requirements. We're required by law to screen these people when they come to the United States.'

Trouble With Cockroaches

••••• MISSION ALERT •••••

EMERGENCY! Internal Security reports suspicious activity in cubicle TY-33, Level 3, Zone Five, MEM Sector:

- **Citizens crouched on floor in furtive fashion.**
- **Surveillance camera lines of sight blocked by standing citizens.**
- **Audio reception obscured by loud conversation.**
- **Large number of citizens from other residence zones present.**

Send armed-and-armored trooper squad to investigate immediately! Thank you for your immediate cooperation.

Beulah-Y-NOO-3, Acting Chief of Staff, MEM Sector Dispatch reporting:

Trooper squad and all Troubleshooters of Clearance YELLOW and higher are on emergency assignment in the food vats. No suitably armed Troubleshooters available. Request advice.

Send all Troubleshooters available. Immediately.

SECURITY OVERRIDE!

Permission is granted to assign heavy weapons from MEM Sector weapon locker, REGARDLESS OF SECURITY CLEARANCE. You have been selected to lead this mission. Congratulations, Troubleshooter! We eagerly await your report. Thank you for your cooperation.

Mission overview

The Troubleshooters are outfitted with awesome weapons and sent to investigate suspicious activity in a residence cubicle. They discover a hive of Sierra Club secret society traitors in a plot to introduce wildlife—the stately cockroach—into MEM Sector. The PCs must apprehend the traitors and foil their villainous plot.

'Give me cockroaches, or give me death!'

Internal Security has stumbled onto the final stages of a plot by a group of traitorous YELLOW and GREEN Troubleshooters—all members of the Sierra Club, Humanist, Romantics and Mystics secret societies—to infest the entire sector with cockroaches. The traitors have raised these cockroaches in spare laser barrels for the last two weeks. What appeared to surveillance cameras as routine weapon maintenance was actually insect husbandry. Knowing they face execution if caught, the traitors plan to escape the Complex immediately after releasing the cockroaches at strategic points throughout the sector. The guards at Exit 4 are both Sierra Club members and will join the other conspirators in escaping to the Outdoors.

The Sierra Clubbers have been ready for several days, waiting for the right moment. When the leader of the conspiracy discovered that practically all Troubleshooters assigned to MEM Sector Security duty would be unavailable on this day, he immediately set the long-established plan in motion.

The group the PCs discover in cubicle TY-33 is one of four groups participating in this operation, but Internal Security doesn't become aware of the other three until later in the mission.

Most of the traitors participating in this plot are Sierra Club members, but representatives from the friendly Humanist, Romantics and Mystics secret societies are also participating in recognition of their shared objectives and to provide some specialized skills necessary to the plot. (To the Sierra Club secret society, the cockroach is a symbol of the back-to-nature movement, like the whale, the baby seal or the bald eagle we know; these animals are at most fabulous legends to the citizens of Alpha Complex.)

The Sierra Club and other secret society NPCs in this episode are fanatics who realize capture or surrender will probably result in execution for treason. They must escape from the complex, or die trying. If they must be martyred, however, they hope to go out as folk heroes, inspiring other citizens to follow their examples. Rallying cries like 'Cockroach! *¡Si!* Computer! *¡No!*' or 'Give me cockroaches or give me death!' should ring through the corridors as the valiant revolutionaries try to fight past the PCs to their freedom.

'Arise, ye Legions of Nature, and follow us into the Promised Outdoors!' Expect that some PCs will respond to such stirring rallying cries by joining the revolutionaries and turning their weapons on the loyal Troubleshooters.

Heavy weapons indeed

And, speaking of weapons, the PCs can arm themselves with some pretty awesome stuff.

When The Computer gives permission for the PCs to use any weapons in the weapons locker, regardless of clearance, it is not aware everything has been removed by the other Troubleshooters on emergency assignment in the food vats. What *is* in the locker is interesting. A large, dusty crate contains a selection of R&D experimental weapons, sent here by mistake several years ago. Because The Computer doesn't make mistakes, PLC decided to keep the crate and keep quiet. Because the PCs have the rare authorization to use high-clearance weapons, and there are no other useful heavy weapons to choose from, expect the PCs to cheerfully help themselves to these deathtraps.

The experimental weapons are too powerful to be useful in confined spaces, too complicated to be understood without an appropriate common specialty of 18 or more and too unreliable to handle in anything less durable than power armor. Of course, the PCs don't know this initially, and if they learn wisdom by trial and error, the errors are likely to vaporize them before they can benefit.

Pre-mission briefing

Give the following information to PCs from the designated secret societies or service groups:

Sierra Club, Humanists, Romantics, Mystics: A blow is about to be struck for those who honor the Outdoors and despise The Computer. Be vigilant, and lend your hand if a brother should need your aid.

Production, Logistics & Commissary, Internal Security: Following the treasonous sabotage of food vats containing the sector's supply of Hot Fun and Cold Fun, IntSec is maintaining an all-hours alert in the vats, with heavily-armed-and-armored Troubleshooters guarding the citizens working overtime to replenish the stores of these important foodstuffs.

You may distribute the following rumors among other PCs, if you wish:

- IntSec is offering a large reward for identifying the traitor who put detergent in the Hot Fun and Cold Fun food vats.
- The disturbance in the vats is just a cover screen for a Communist plot to facilitate an assault by a Communist-dominated computer complex.

- The food vats disturbance is an exercise dreamed up by an idle High Programmer to keep Internal Security forces sharp.
- Traitors in Internal Security are creating phony emergency incidents to improve their image as alert, capable guardians of The Computer and its citizens.

Assignment and outfitting

In the Troubleshooter Dispatch station (**Tension 12**), Beulah-Y-NOO-3 is the Troubleshooter temporarily in charge of MEM Sector security forces, and becomes the NPC leader of the team. She reads the mission alert to the other Troubleshooters (the PCs) and, following orders, assumes command. Before rushing off to Cubicle TY-33, Beulah-Y takes the PCs to the weapons locker to let them outfit themselves. When she finds only a crate marked 'Experimental Weapons', she orders the PCs to open the crate, investigate the contents and take what they want. This is an emergency alert. Beulah allows minimal time to examine the weapons or ask questions. Beulah is inwardly panicking, because the responsibility for this whole operation has suddenly fallen on her shoulders and, considering The Computer's request for armed-and-armored troopers, she suspects she will be undergunned and outmanned. Her voice is shrill and threatening, and if the PCs don't respond quickly enough to suit her, she starts waving her laser.

The PCs have all their assigned and personal gear with them. They can't get anything else; a visit to PLC or the IR market is out of the question, let alone C-Bay. The only outfitting they can get is from the box of mystery weapons. As soon as Beulah can get the PCs to pick experimental weapons, she forms them in marching order before her and double-times it to Zone Five. If the PCs are hesitant or indecisive, she'll assign weapons to them at random and drive them out into the corridor like sheep.

The experimental weapons

Autoload cone rifle: This is a standard cone rifle with a cumbersome autoload mechanism. The whole thing weighs about as much as a color TV and is nearly as durable. It comes with two magazines of five shells each. The shells are not labeled. Of course they're all high explosives. The charming feature is that, at the touch of a finger, the cone rifle fires all five rounds in less than two seconds.

If by chance the operator and weapon should survive the first use, the autoload mechanism is greatly disturbed by the shock of the first burst. Of course it jams immediately, and warning beepers sound. All five shells explode in 20 seconds. PCs who leave *immediately* and run hard for those 20 seconds avoid injury.

Bombot: This is a miniature warbot about as big as a prize pig. It follows simple orders like 'Go 400 meters north and blow up.' It ignores all other orders. It contains enough explosive to obliterate a quarter of a city block. Anyone in line of sight of the bombot and within 100 meters is vaporized. Reduce the damage one step for intervening obstacles such as walls or for extended range. (Don't get too technical. Kill them.)

Happygas: This looks like a flare gun with three unmarked canisters. The gas contained therein causes immediate and uncontrollable laughter for (1d20 divided by 4) combat rounds. After the laughter wears off, the victim has amnesia for another one or two rounds. The range of the gun is 50 meters. The area of effect is a 100-meter radius circle around the point of impact. (Sure, we know that includes the point where the weapon user was standing. He's supposed to wear a gasmask. Oh well.)

Psionic trigger: This widget looks like a remote TV control connected by a cable to a heavy backpack. The backpack contains a bewildering mass of wires, meters and widgets unlike anything ever used as a weapon. (It looks something like the Psionic Phenomena detector hardware available experimentally for some multicorder models, but ORANGE-Clearance citizens normally have never encountered such a thing.) It has a dial with ranges marked from 0 to 50 meters and a red and a white button—red for ON, and white for OFF.

This device triggers involuntary use of psionic activity in individuals within the range specified on the range dial. If the victim has a psionic (i.e., weird psychic mental) mutation, he involuntarily and impulsively uses it. Depending on the psionic power, the circumstances and opportunities for mischief, affected PCs and NPCs should have various types of psionic seizures.

If an individual does not have a psionic mutant power, there is no effect other than an immediate and irresistible urge to eat anything within reach and marginally edible.

The device has a power pack good for ten rounds of psionic triggering. If the white button is not pressed, the effect continues until the battery wears out. The battery is a unique design and requires special (uh, nonexistent) equipment to recharge it.

Plasma generator: Exactly like the plasma generator described in the ***PARANOIA*** XP rulebook, except the ball of plasma forms at the end of the hand projector and just sits there. It floats for four rounds, then dissipates. Somewhat disappointing, but okay for melee combat.

Gravitron-X: Close examination of this pistol-shaped object reveals it is no more than a device for bringing two tiny pellets into contact inside a tiny chamber when a trigger is pulled. There is no hole for projectile fire, though the design of the object suggests it is pointed like a pistol.

When the trigger is pulled, one pellet zips down though the gun material, the floor and anything beneath it, headed for the center of the earth. The other pellet zips through gun material and up through the ceiling into the illimitable wastes of space. When the trigger is released, the pellets return.

Unfortunately, the ammunition is only one use, and apparently no reloads came with the weapon. We think this weapon has something to do with gravity, but we're not sure. At any rate, it doesn't work any more, so don't worry about it.

Cubicle TY-33

Review the layout of Level 3, Zone 5, MEM Sector (**Tension 6**). Cubicles 30–39 are identical: Each has four bunks on opposite walls of the main living space, a table and four chairs, four small cubby holes for personal effects and a separate cramped hygiene stall. When Internal Security surveillance sent the emergency mission alert, it remotely locked the door to cubicle TY-33. IntSec has evacuated all other citizens from the area and locked their cubicles.

Here the PCs spot their first cockroach. This may require an Insanity check, or to keep things

Communist agents occupying Computer property

moving smoothly you can let the players get away with a few ritual expressions of revulsion.

The smell of burning plastic greets the PCs. The Sierra Clubbers are using hand lasers to cut open the door lock. Beulah-Y panics and orders the PCs to go in after them.

This is a bad plan. It would be much better to shoot at the traitors from cover as they step out into the corridor. If the PCs attempt to argue for a better plan, Con Games or Bootlicking skills may be appropriate. Alternatively, they may refuse to obey, or stall elaborately, asking for clarifications and suggestions. They might just shoot Beulah and pretend she got caught in a crossfire.

Don't give the players much time to fool around. The Sierra Clubbers burn their way out within two minutes of the PCs' arrival.

When the Sierra Clubbers discover the PCs, they first retreat back into Cubicle TY-33 to reorganize. From inside the cubicle they loudly exhort any comrades to change sides and join the revolution. 'Brothers of the Earth, arise! We are going Outdoors! Follow us, and be ever free of the tyrant Computer!'

They let this sink in, then burst out in a suicide attack, shouting Sierra Club slogans. They charge down the corridor, trying to get into the elevator, close the doors and ride up to Level 14. Level 14 is normally accessible only to Clearance BLUE, but, once secure in the elevator, the Sierra Clubbers plan to open up the control board and wire past the security lock. Because each member has been briefed on the procedure by a skilled security tech, each has Security Systems 10. However, bad luck, and the demands of GM scripting, mean the poor revolutionaries have trouble with the lock, and the loyal PCs get to Level 14 first.

If any PCs join the revolutionaries, run the traitor and loyalist parties separately from the point where the Sierra Clubbers enter the elevator until they arrive on Level 14 at Exit 4. (The Sierra Clubbers fill in the traitor PCs on the escape plan as they struggle to defeat the elevator security locks.)

If the PCs don't manage to stop the Sierra Clubbers before they reach the safety of the elevator, they must use the emergency stairway to pursue. Even if they do manage to take care of all the traitors on Level 3, they receive an emergency mission alert to proceed to Level 14, where the other three Sierra Club groups are expected to try to shoot their way to freedom in the Outdoors.

Going-away party

Review the layout of Exit 4, Level 14, Zone 5, MEM Sector (**Tension 10**). Note particularly the cartons of used coveralls, plastic cups and toilet paper, and the plastic drums of detergent. These supplies are temporarily stored here on a permanent basis. Troubleshooters have to pay for any supplies damaged in a firefight. (By incredible coincidence, the replacement cost will add up to *exactly* the bonus the PCs earn for this mission.)

Every flat surface—floors! walls! ceiling!—is absolutely crawling, literally, with cockroaches. *Now* you can roll the Insanity checks....

The PCs arrive on Level 14 to find themselves alone with the two guards, who pretend to be glad to see the PCs, repulsed by the roaches and fearful of the coming attack by the Sierra Clubbers. 'Did you see any of them? Are they well armed? How many of them are there?' Because the guards are RED Clearance, the PCs are responsible for organizing the defense of the exit. The guards are apparently cooperative and take whatever duty or position assigned by the PCs.

However, when the **first Sierra Club group** appears from the **southwest corridor**, the guards turn their weapons on the PCs and attack. The guards and Sierra Clubbers fight to control the exit hatch. They have already defeated the hatch security. When the first Sierra Clubber reaches the door, it swings open easily and he dashes up the ladder toward the surface. The traitorous guards remain to cover the retreat of the less well-armored revolutionaries.

The **second group** to arrive is the one the PCs already encountered on Level 3 (presuming some survived). They pop out of the **elevator** and fight their way to the exit. The **third group** also arrives from the **southwest** corridor, and the **fourth group** arrives from the **southeast** corridor.

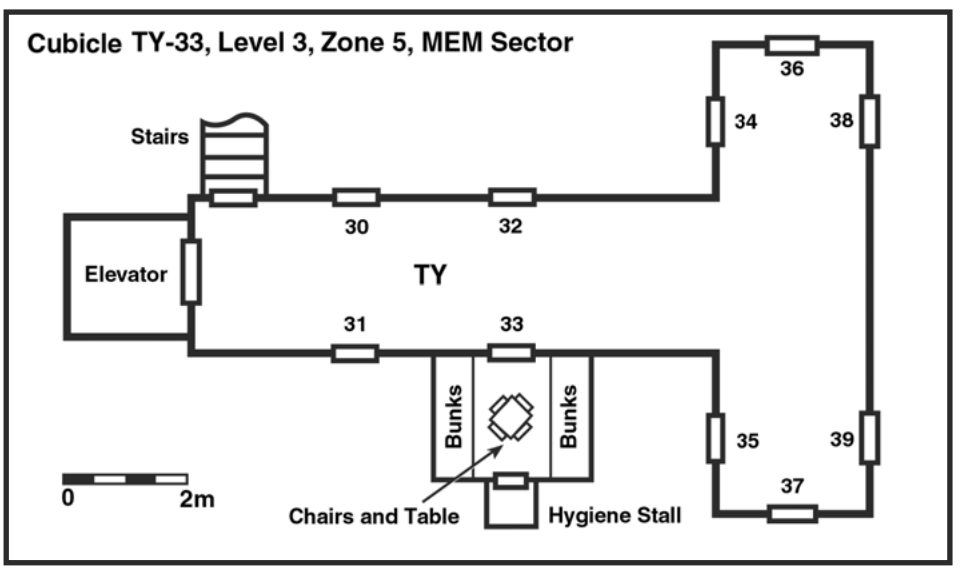
Running the shootout

The PCs should have a few minutes to plan and deploy their forces before the first group of Sierra Clubbers arrives. When the first group arrives and the guards reveal themselves as traitors, confusion reigns, and the PCs' first concern should be getting to cover. In the confusion, most of the first group should make it out the exit with relatively little resistance.

Once the first group has escaped, give the PCs a brief pause to reorganize. The guards remain at the exit to cover the escape of the following group. The PCs may attack the guards, or they may wait until the following groups arrive.

Imprudent or inspired use of an experimental weapon may at any point completely alter the circumstances of the battle. For example, the PCs might use the bombot to seal the exit, in which case they need simply hold out in defensive positions until reinforcements arrive. Or the autoloader cone rifle could bring the whole mission to a premature close.

Though this situation strongly favors the Troubleshooters, you can enhance the dramatic atmosphere by having the Sierra Clubbers behave heroically. They can rescue wounded comrades, take hostages and shout stirring slogans. In parley they may try to convince the PCs to join them in the Outdoors, or to let them escape. They may pretend to surrender, then double-cross the PCs.



In the background The Computer should occasionally intrude, sadly admonishing the 'poor misguided dupes of fiendishly inspired Communist propaganda', and encouraging the shell-shocked PCs:

'Be cheered! When your ammunition runs out, you can always use your weapons as clubs!'

'Your noble exploits will be praised in every sector tonight. Beloved entertaininer Teela-O-MLY sends her personal regard for your admirable valor.'

'With modern medical care many of you may once again lead at least marginally productive lives.'

Completing the mission

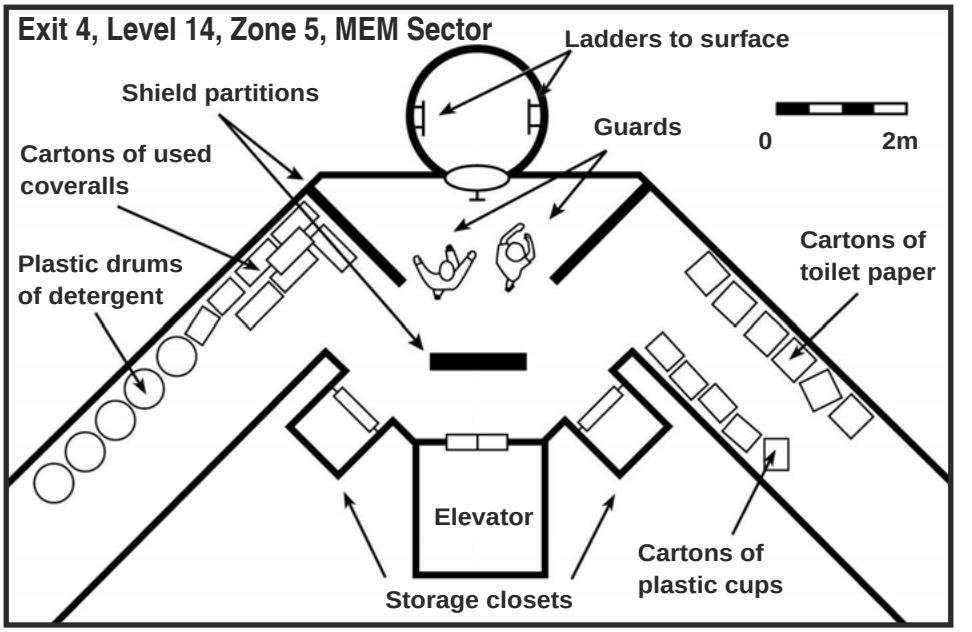
The mission is not complete until every PC is dead or incapacitated, or until all four groups of Sierra Club traitors have escaped or have been killed or captured.

Debriefing takes place after all PCs have received medical treatment. The Computer asks for individual reports, then the group leader report. It then considers the evidence and makes judgements on the loyalty and service of the PCs.

Any PC who manages to escape with the Sierra Clubbers becomes a Gamemaster-controlled NPC, but the PC's next clone receives a two-degree promotion in his secret society for being connected with such a revered folk hero—a citizen who made it Outdoors!

If the PCs succeeded in apprehending any of the Sierra Clubbers, the survivors receive an Official Commendation and a 100cr bonus. If they stop more than one group, escalate rewards accordingly. For example, if the PCs prevented all four groups of Sierra Clubbers *and* the two traitor guards from escaping, you might give them up to a 500cr bonus apiece for outstanding performance. All PCs who showed particular loyalty or bravery, or who received serious injuries, get additional bonuses of 500 credits or more.

Secret society enemies of the Sierra Club and the other secret societies represented by the traitors (for instance, First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer) may earn promotion for appropriate actions in either aiding or thwarting the Sierra Clubbers.



Staging the episode

1. Play on your PCs' emotions. Portray the first wave of Sierra Clubbers as passionately inspired flower children. Have them march arm in arm singing 'We Shall Overcome'. Or have the charming Mawgie-G (see the NPC roster) plead with the PCs, begging for the chance to see a sunset once before she dies.
2. Four secret societies are represented among the Sierra Club traitors. There are only 16 secret societies in the game. Therefore some PCs are probably sympathetic with the revolutionaries. Tease those player characters into turning their weapons on their teammates and joining the revolution.

   For example: When a Sierra Clubber dies, have him die at the feet of a PC from a friendly secret society. Make his last words a moving plea, a challenge to honor and a promise of freedom from the domination of The Computer. Encourage the PCs to wonder about each others' secret society membership. Each PC should be constantly alert against betrayal by another PC. (So what else is new?) Shrewd Sierra Club revolutionaries sow seeds of doubt among the loyal Troubleshooters:

   NPC Sierra Clubber: Come, Polly-O, you can conceal your true allegiance no longer!

   Polly-O *[a PC]*: *[Looks around nervously.]* Gee, I wonder what he's talking about!

   NPC Sierra Clubber: C'mon, Polly-O! Your fellow Sierra Clubbers will provide covering fire! Run for it! *[Polly-O looks at the other PCs. Should she remain silent? Protest her loyalty to The Computer? Should she run for it?]*
3. To avoid overemphasis on shoot-'em-up, remember the Sierra Clubbers are eager to avoid combat. Whenever possible they try to slip past the PCs toward the exit and Outdoors. They may pretend to surrender, then make a break for it. Setting fires, tossing smoke bombs, shooting out the lights, sabotaging the power supply—any of these tricks are available

Sierra Club NPC roster

Name	Mutant power	Weapon	Skill	Secret society	Roleplaying notes
Group #1					
Mawgie-G	Telekinesis	Laser pistol (W3K) Unarmed (O5K)	Energy Weapons 10 Unarmed Combat 10	Sierra Club	Heart-breakingly beautiful; Con Games 14; stirring pleas to PCs; ruthless; heroic martyr type
Jeeter-Y	Telekinesis	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	Sierra Club	Fanatic; dim-witted; devoted to Mawgie-G
Luke-Y	Telekinesis	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	'Sierra Club'	Actually Illuminati; shrewd self-preservation; sneaks away if possible
Homer-Y	Deep Thought	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 15	Humanists	Loves guns and noises; shouts 'Boom! Bang!' and other sound effects to augment silent lasers
Lucy-Y	Deep Thought	Stun gun (Stun)	Field Weapons 10	Mystics	Peacenik; loudly advocates non-violence and love
Group #2					
Ralph-G	Empathy	Laser pistol (W3K) Unarmed (O5K)	Energy Weapons 10 Unarmed Combat 10	Sierra Club	Philosopher; charismatic hero/deep thinker; cockroach infestation was his idea; Oratory 14
Giselle-Y	Empathy	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	Sierra Club	Groupie/follower; echoes Ralph-G's oratory slogans
June-Y	Empathy	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	Sierra Club	Groupie/follower; echoes Giselle-Y's echoes
Luther-Y	Empathy	Slugthrower w/solid slugs (4 magazines of 6 slugs each - W3K)	Projectile Weapons 10	Romantics	Sees himself as John Wayne/Clint Eastwood type (go ahead—try your John Wayne or Clint Eastwood impersonation)
Candy-Y	Charm	Stun gun (Stun)	Field Weapons 10	'Mystics'	IntSec plant; ordered to avoid blowing cover unless absolutely necessary
Group #3					
Clark-G	Regeneration	Laser pistol (W3K) Unarmed (O5K)	Energy Weapons 15 Unarmed Combat 15	Sierra Club	Former Vulture Squadron trooper; tough; good tactician; lots of deployment orders
Barry-Y	Regeneration	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	Sierra Club	Idolizes Clark-G; clumsy, but willing
Link-Y	Regeneration	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	Sierra Club	Also Death Leopard; helter skelter
Charo-Y	Chameleon	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	Humanists	Sneaky; hides and surprises; twisted jokester
Group #4					
Hamilton-G	Pyrokinesis	Laser pistol (W3K) Unarmed (O5K)	Energy Weapons 10 Unarmed Combat 10	Sierra Club	Pyromaniac; more for fun than good tactics; charming, but poor leader
Farrah-Y	Pyrokinesis	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	Sierra Club	Still has 10,000 cockroaches in backpack; will release them, then guard them fanatically
Mack-Y	Pyrokinesis	Laser pistol (W3K) Knife (S5K)	Energy Weapons 10 Hand Weapons 18	Sierra Club, Free Enterprise	'Mack the Knife'; whistles a lot; tough guy; sneaky
Neal-Y	Pyrokinesis	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	Romantics	Delicate nerves; hides and whimpers
Tammy-Y	Telepathy	Laser pistol (W3K)	Energy Weapons 10	'Mystics'	Psion plant; main objective is to get 'Out' with Sierra Clubbers; avoids combat
Guards					
Billy-R (Kevlar/mylar armor – I3)	Charm	Laser pistol (W3K) Laser rifle (W3K) Stun gun (Stun)	Energy Weapons 10	Sierra Club	Pretends to be obsequious and timid; very cooperative; waits until PCs' backs are turned and Sierra Clubbers arrive, then guns PCs
Toomer-R (Kevlar/mylar armor – I3)	Deep Thought	Laser pistol (W3K) Laser rifle (W3K) Tangler (Tangled)	Energy Weapons 10 Field Weapons 10	Sierra Club	Says nothing; Billy-R does all the talking; concentrates on controlling angles of fire that guard the exit

Assume all NPCs have Violence skill 10.

to the Sierra Clubbers if you tire of unsubtle cannonades.

Note also the cartons of coveralls, toilet paper, plastic cups and the drums of detergent stored in the corridors of Level 14. (See the map of Exit 4, Level 14, Zone 5, MEM Sector.) Toss these around, tear them up a little, form barricades, pour slippery detergent on the floors. Make a big mess, and make the PCs deal with it. Show the PCs these things are more fun to play around with than guns.

One final, vitally important note: To maintain the PCs in the proper mood of fear and ignorance, ignorance and fear, take your time revealing the issues that will confront the PCs during debriefing. They're just little things—like going into debt unto the second clone backup to pay off the damage they did during this mission. High explosives should never be labeled, and should always be encased in dusty boxes that look somewhat worn down. PCs should be kept in the dark, and the prime players who control the knobs and buttons, such as High Programmers, should lurk in the background, dark and mysterious. Rarely, if ever, will PCs even meet the guy who does their laundry, let alone the ULTRAVIOLET themselves.

Das Bot:
Nearly a dozen meters beneath the sea

••••• MISSION ALERT •••••

Report to Reggie-G-MEM-4, Under-Supervisor-in-Training, Mapping and Records, Housing Preservation and Development & Mind Control, for immediate assignment Outdoors. Bring no personal equipment other than weapons and reflec.

WARNING: This assignment is Top Secret, Security Clearance GREEN. Revealing knowledge of this assignment to anyone but Reggie-G-MEM-4 is treason, and subject to immediate execution.

Mission overview

The Troubleshooters investigate an underwater structure. Their assigned submarine and diving equipment are obsolete and inadequately maintained. The creatures manning the underwater structure are genetically altered humans with mutant powers from an ocean-bottom research installation presumed destroyed in the Commie Invasion, Year 1 of The Computer.

The underwater structure

Armed Forces intelligence examined aerial photos taken by their surveillance flybots, then sent them to HPD&MC for routine mapping reference and filing. When HPD&MC examined a recent batch of photographs, they discovered something Armed Forces Intelligence had apparently overlooked—an underwater structure in a shallow river channel. No associated land-based installations were visible in a 30km radius. There was no hint of the origin of the structure, though HPD&MC suspects it may be an advance base of a treasonous Alpha Complex.

If HPD&MC can investigate and report on this structure before Armed Forces discovers it, they will gain an important political advantage over the powerful Armed Forces service group. This is why HPD&MC has classified the mission top secret—to prevent Armed Forces from getting wind of it and sending their own investigating group first.

The obsolete u-bot and diving suits

To put it kindly, HPD&MC lacks the political clout to gain top priority on research and exploration vehicles. More baldly stated, HPD&MC is at the dead bottom of the priority list. The Troubleshooters must make do with whatever the responsible transport service firm (GottaGo TS) has available.

Predictably, when HPD & Mind Control tries to request a u-bot, they are all either: (1) 'in for maintenance' (a polite euphemism for completely useless), (2) 'on extended patrol' (either lost or on secret missions), (3) 'reserved for Complex defense' (available only to Armed Forces), or (4) 'reserved for priority missions' (available only for High Programmers' pet projects). GottaGo finally pulled a u-bot Model 416 out of mothballs. Having no other choice, HPD accepted. The u-bot Model 416 was obsolete two centuries ago. The PCs may have some trouble with it.

To complicate matters, HPD obscured their intent by requesting space suits instead of normal diving suits. They figured such suits could probably be used interchangeably. (To folks who spend each day creating action vidshows for a drugged audience, this thinking makes sense.)

Production, Logistics & Commissary was eager to cooperate, but said, 'All our space suits are either in for maintenance (wink-wink), not up to current safety standards (wink-wink) or on assignment (being displayed as decorative items in High Programmers' residences). Oh, wait a minute! Now that I think about it, we *do* have some never-used space suits that should do just fine.' Having no other choice, HPD&MC accepted.

Why were the suits never used? The Troubleshooters will find out soon enough.

Mutants from the briny deep

In the late 2050s the Polity established a research station and habitat, Oceania Base, on the ocean floor near the city that is now Alpha Complex. The project was to determine whether genetically altered humans could live on the ocean floor. The station survived the asteroid strike and has continued to develop over the past two centuries. Given the station's small population and limited resources, survival was their primary concern for many years, but recently Oceania has invested staff and materiel to explore the radically altered coastline.

The denizens of Oceania have adapted to the considerable water pressures at depths of 350+ meters, and they must wear pressure suits (or rather, anti-pressure suits) to visit the comparatively shallow continental shelves. As yet they have not ventured onto land. The underwater structure the PCs have been assigned to investigate is a six-person research station similar to an early orbital space station. The Oceanians there have been studying and scavenging the submerged ruins of coastal cities inundated when the asteroid strike melted the ice caps.

Oceanians are mellow and humanistic pacifists, and would be happy to make contact with land-based civilizations. Unfortunately, from all indications, the surviving land-based civilizations have either fallen into savagery or have become totalitarian fortresses like Alpha Complex, so at this time the Oceanians wish to avoid contact with other societies.

From the perspective of The Computer, the Oceanians are obviously treasonous Communists. Their unregistered mutations would automatically qualify them as traitors, apart from their willingness to remain unenlightened by The Computer's wisdom. However, certain secret societies (Psion, PURGE and Humanists in particular) find much in common with the Oceanians, and may find them potential allies against the domination of The Computer.

Pre-mission briefing

Members of the following service groups may have heard the following rumors:

HPD&MC: If a PC inquires concerning the secret mission via the grapevine, he receives no information, but at the end of the mission HPD administrators level treason charges for discussing top-secret HPD activities.

GottaGo: HPD & Mind Control made a highly unusual request for a u-bot, but none were available.

Production, Logistics & Commissary: HPD & Mind Control made a very unusual order for space suits. Since they have no spaceships, what do they want with space suits?

A few general rumors to distribute at random:

- Top secret missions stay top secret best when the Troubleshooters involved don't return from the mission. Beware of a double-cross.
- This message comes down through your secret society's communication channels. 'Your service to the society has been judged to be half-hearted and insincere. Unfortunately, you know too much, and cannot be allowed to withdraw from the society. Unless we see an immediate token of your loyalty, your membership may be canceled. Permanently.'
- In the popular vidshow *Battle Beyond*, Brad-R and Muffy-R have triumphed over the Communist Jellyfish from the planet Burrito. Brad-R is eager for more adventure, but Muffy-R wants to return to Earth and liberate Alpha Prime from the insidious Communist conspiracy.
- Pick a relatively sleek and prosperous player character and spread rumors he has earned his status by fabricating treason charges against his fellow Troubleshooters.

The assignment

Reggie-G-MEM-4 greets the PCs in his private office (**Tension level 8**) and explains the details of the assignment. He explains how the structure was located and that no further information is available.

The Troubleshooters are to approach the structure in their u-bot, then investigate the structure in diving suits. If they encounter Commie invaders, the Troubleshooters should capture them for interrogation if possible; if necessary, the PCs have permission to kill the traitors. They must capture the underwater structure intact.

The cover story for this expedition is that the PCs are looking for a good location to shoot an episode of the popular vidshow *Battle Beyond the Stars*, where Brad-R and Muffy-R visit a water-covered planet teeming with Commie traitors. To support this cover story, a well-known HPD Multicorder specialist (Emguli-O) will accompany the PCs, along with all necessary gear to shoot test footage. Emguli-O doesn't know the mission's real objective, and will believe that happening on the undersea structure is purely coincidental.

The PCs are warned that Emguli-O's behavior is a little eccentric, but his presence is essential to the mission's cover story. They are welcome to persuade Emguli-O to behave properly, but they are not to execute or turn him in as a traitor unless he jeopardizes the mission. Reggie-G brevets the team leader to YELLOW Clearance to keep Emguli-O firmly in hand.

The PCs are to make regular fake radio reports as though searching for shooting locations. They must record all reports on the underwater structure on the multicorder and bring them back to Reggie-G in person. Under no circumstances should they mention the undersea structure over regular communications channels! This means while the PCs are investigating the structure, they must be out of direct contact with Alpha Complex and The Computer.

Emguli-O will bring his own gear and meet the PCs at GottaGo Terminal 5. From here they will be shuttled to the u-bot bays where the rest of their gear waits. Reggie-G assures the PCs that everything they need has been provided, but he may agree to special outfitting requests if the PCs are persuasive.

The u-bot bays

When the PCs arrive at Terminal 5 (**Tension 5**), Emguli-O is waiting with four bulky crates of equipment. Two GREEN-Clearance goons stand nearby looking sourly at Emguli-O. Emguli-O wears a nonstandard black beret, has a three-day growth of stubble, awful breath and a European accent and temper modeled on stereotypes he has studied in videos of classic films from the 20th and 21st Centuries.

Emguli-O is a self-proclaimed 'artiste' and extremely temperamental. Such bizarre behavior is tolerated in the Entertainment division of HPD, because The Computer has been led to believe eccentricity and creativity go hand in hand. Emguli-O pushes this tolerance to the limit; though he is one of the best Multicorder operators in MEM Sector, he is still only ORANGE Clearance.

Emguli-O orders the PCs to carry the crates. He assumes he is to be the mission leader, regardless of security clearances, because he is clearly the creative focus of this project. Emguli-O is obnoxious. Savor this opportunity to torture your players with outrageous French and Italian accents, the artistic temperament and egomaniacal abuse. 'Zis is an outrage! How can I shoot ze good footage if I haf such monkeys for assistance? Zis is intolerable! *Zut alors!* I needz competent technicians, not gun-toting mass murderers!'

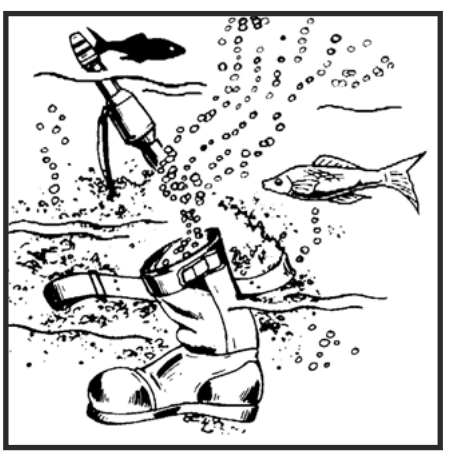
If you do your job properly, the PCs will want to kill Emguli-O immediately. If they do, or they try to turn him in as a traitor, GottaGo guards take them into custody and march them off to Reggie-G, who chews them out, assigns a few fines, activates Emguli-O's clone backup and resumes the mission.

The PCs can use persuasion skills (Intimidation, Interrogation, etc.) to convince Emguli-O to behave, or they can wait until he calms down. Thereafter he cooperates just enough to keep the mission moving, though he pouts, makes offensive comments and makes himself generally annoying for the rest of mission.

The u-bot

The two GREEN-Clearance guards are the team's escort through the Vehicle Service section to the u-bot bays (**Tension 4)**. When they arrive, Apprentice-In-Training Traffic Dispatcher Zim-R-MEM-6 greets them and shows them to the ship where the u-bot Model 416 is docked. The u-bot itself is seven meters long, and the personnel compartment is about as spacious as the interior of a subcompact car.

Several large cartons marked 'RX-1' sit on the dock next to the u-bot—one for each PC and one for Emguli-O. Zim-R explains these are the space suits the PCs requested. When the crates are opened, the suits are covered with dust, and the PCs can find no manuals. The Computer's response to questions about the suits is 'I'm sorry. That information is not available at this time.' The information is not available because no manual has been discovered and the suits have not been used in the past century. They are cumbersome, not adequately maintained and quite unsuitable for undersea diving.



Das Boot ist kaput.

There is enough storage space in the u-bot for the space suits, but not enough room for Emguli-O's four crates. The PCs must convince Emguli-O to abandon the crates. He protests that he desperately needs the equipment in the crates, but in fact he can get by with his Multicorder 2. Of course, the PCs are in charge, but Emguli-O does not shut up until he is looking down a laser barrel.

When the PCs inquire about an operations manual for the u-bot, Zim-R explains he has no access to the manual because he is a RED-Clearance citizen, but he has been assured the autopilot is perfectly reliable, and if there is any problem, the PCs need only contact The Computer, and it will take over operation of the u-bot. If questioned, The Computer soothingly confirms the reliability of the autopilot and assures the PCs, 'You will be in no danger. Can you doubt The Computer? The Computer is your friend. Now it is time to embark on your mission. Good luck, and good shooting, Emguli-O.'

Zim-R introduces the PCs to the u-bot's autopilot, which introduces itself as 'Lucky'. Lucky's voice should have the tone and clarity of early arcade game computer voices (suggesting the ancient design of the craft) and should have the verbal mannerisms of a senior citizen on the edge of senile dementia. Lucky is ever cheerful and cooperative, but it often misunderstands and misinterprets commands, garbling and jumbling the words and occasionally wandering off into irrelevant readouts of unrelated technical data. Slamming a hand on the control panels is enough to bring back the bot, but picking up where you left off is no easy feat.

Zim-R helps the PCs load up and get underway, and waves cheerfully from the pier as the u-bot lurches clumsily from the dock and wallows gracelessly toward the exit tunnel.

A little bot ride

The U-bot Model 416, 'Lucky' (**Tension 0**), proceeds from the u-bot bays through a long subterranean tunnel until it reaches a point where the roof of the tunnel slopes down to water level. Lucky politely suggests everyone keep their fingers and toes inside the cockpit, because it is going to close the canopy and submerge so it can leave the concealed underwater exit. Everything goes smoothly—except there is a faint sound of trickling water somewhere forward of the control panel. When questioned, Lucky confidently assures the PCs it is nothing more than the normal sound of water rushing along the hull. Indeed there is no sign of water in the cockpit, and the u-bot continues merrily, if a bit slowly, on its way.

Lucky cruises along toward its destination at about four knots at a depth of 25 meters. It releases a small radio buoy so the PCs can stay in contact with Alpha Complex and The Computer.

Encourage the PCs to respond to the unique experience of being underwater in a vehicle with a transparent canopy. Describe the ocean floor, the kelp, the fishes, the sun filtering through the water, the whole Jacques Cousteau bit. This may keep their minds off the continuing sound of trickling water. In the beginning Lucky keeps up a chatty travelogue narrative, but somewhere in the third hour it suddenly stops in mid-sentence and becomes very quiet. When the PCs ask what is the matter, there is a long pause; then Lucky says, 'Gee, fellows, I think we have a little gkkkkkkkkffdzprbizl. Hissssssssss. SqueeeeeeeeeeEEEEEEEEEL! (pop).'

At this point the u-bot lists slightly to port and begins to sail in lazy circles, descending gradually toward the ocean floor. Lucky's responses to the PCs' questions are broken up by hissing and whistling and long silences, with occasional fragments of understandable speech.

What's wrong? Well, that forward leak isn't big, but big enough to get water into Lucky's autopilot and brain circuits. Right now the autopilot is completely useless, and Lucky's brain is suffering from intermittent short circuits. When the PCs contact The Computer and ask for guidance, The Computer politely explains the PCs must shift to manual and guide the u-bot to its destination. When the PCs ask for directions in mastering the manual controls, The Computer says, 'Certainly. I shall connect you with GottaGo. I'm sure they will be able to help you.'

Shortly Zim-R comes on the radio. He reminds the PCs he does not have a manual describing the operation of the Model 416, but he will be happy to help the PCs in whatever way he can. If the PCs ask to speak to someone more experienced, or someone who knows something about the Model 416, Zim-R says he will look for someone immediately. This is somewhat futile, because no one knows anything about the 416. Zim-R eventually gets in touch with an INDIGO-Clearance Vehicles Services expert who suggests trying to get a copy of the manual from The Computer. The Computer indicates the manual is not in data files, but a copy is surely in the document files. From here the request goes to HPD & Mind Control, where file clerks pass the request around for a while and express confidence in locating these ancient files in less than a fortnight.

In the meantime the u-bot is slowly spiraling toward the ocean floor. The PCs must try to figure out the controls on their own.

Zim-R may make suggestions, but it is basically a matter of trial and error. To help you visualize the problem for your players, see the diagram 'U-bot Model 416 Control Panel' at the end of this mission. Give the diagram to the players and encourage them to play with it.

Here are the actual functions of the control panel.

1. **Gauge with needle indicator:** This shows the remaining battery charge. It starts at the maximum charge of 24 hours.
2. **Gauge with needle indicator:** This shows the CO_2 content. After six hours the needle enters the red zone (five minutes to death). To replenish the oxygen the players can either replace the air (see part number 22), or surface and open the canopy.
3. **Gauge with needle indicator:** Unfortunately this critical gauge is already in the red zone. What does it represent? Who knows? Be creative.

4. **Foot pedal:** This controls the anchor. Push it once, the anchor drops; push again and the anchor is retrieved. But don't be so technical with your players. For example:
   Earl: I push pedal number 4.
   GM: It sounds like something big fell off.
5. **Foot pedal:** Emergency Crash Dive (canopy armor goes up, blows ballast, bow down at sharp angle, engines full ahead). To abort the crash dive the PCs must pull the bow up and shut off the engines. During the crash dive remember to keep yelling 'Ah*ooo*gah, ah*ooo*gah!'
6. **Foot pedal:** Fires torpedo. There are two torpedoes.
7. **Foot pedal:** Roll the dice, look concerned and tell them it's stuck. No matter what they try it remains stuck. No effect on u-bot operation.
8. **Steering wheel:** Turns the u-bot left and right. Tricky, eh?
9. **Knob:** If they are underwater, a warning flashes on the display screen: 'WARNING! DO NOT OPEN CANOPY UNLESS PERSONAL BREATHING APPARATUS IS OPERATIONAL!' They'll have three seconds to push the knob back in.
10. **Knob:** When pulled out until it clicks, the canopy glass opens if they are on the surface. (To open glass underwater use 9.) Push back in to close glass canopy.
11. **Knob:** Pull out to close the armored canopy, push in to open. Remember, when the armored canopy is closed, the players must rely on the sensors and the display screen (number 25).
12. **Knob:** When this is pulled, it comes off. (This disengages the autopilot.) Push back in to give control to Lucky.
13. **Plastic bubble:** Warning light. Have this start flashing if there's trouble.
14. **Plastic bubble:** Warning light. Have this one flash if there's double trouble.
15. **Button:** When pushed, the forward guns fire. If the armored canopy is up, the players won't see this. They just keep hearing a 'tapocketa-pocketa' sound. To turn off the guns, they must press the button again. However, if they don't figure this out within five seconds, tell them not to worry because they're out of ammo anyway.
16. **Glove compartment:** Access to Lucky's brain.
17. **Slide control:** Left to middle to right = reverse to neutral to forward.
18. **Slide control:** Engine speed. Left to middle to right = full to half to stop.
19. **Slide control:** When this is pushed, sparks fly out of the panel, followed by a brief humming, a puff of acrid smoke, then silence. Roll the dice and grin mysteriously.
20. **Switch:** Starts at the middle setting but can be pushed up or down. 'Down' blows ballast and causes the u-bot to rise. 'Up' takes on ballast and causes the u-bot to sink.
21. **Switch:** Warning flashes on the screen. 'WARNING: SELF-DESTRUCT SEQUENCE IS NOW IN PROGRESS!' At this point say '60'. The players probably push the switch back in place. Wait ten seconds and say '50'; from this point count down every second. This switch will not stop the countdown. (See button 23.)
22. **Small panel with 3 buttons:** Each of these buttons is linked to an air-replenisher canister. Whenever one is pushed, the canister replaces the air in the u-bot with fresh air. **Note:** Each canister can only be used once.
23. **Button:** This stops the self-destruct sequence.
24. **Gear shift:** Diving planes. Push forward to dive, pull back to rise.
25. **Circular screen:** This is the display screen. Here is where all maps, sensor data and messages from The Computer appear.

Please don't be impatient if we don't intimately explain the technical details of operating submarines. We are assuming you have watched a few WWII submarine movies. That's where *we* learned all about submarines. If the subject is new to you, slip down to the public library and get some kids' books on the subject. They're quick reading and lavishly illustrated.

The following example suggests how we expect this episode of the mission to go:

GM: Okay, folks, the u-bot is slowly circling toward the ocean floor. Do you want me to tell you what happens when you plow into the muck at four knots, or would you like to play around with the controls?

Doug: Computer, do you have any suggestions?

The Computer (GM): At your service. It is estimated that if you strike the sea bottom at your current speed, there is a 45% chance that your craft will split open. This is projected as having a negative effect on your chances of completing the mission.

Nick: That's swell. How about telling us how to disable the autopilot?

Zim-R: The Model 516 autopilot is turned off by removing a cylinder from the control panel. Is there anything like that on your panel?

Troubleshooter survival rates in haywire subs

As we edited this 1985 mission for *PARANOIA Flashbacks*, it occurred to us that in 20 years, though we have heard many players lovingly recount their experiences playing 'Das Bot', none of them ever completed the mission. Not one. It generally played out like this: The u-bot has its stroke; the Troubleshooters (assuming they didn't laser each other the instant they got Outdoors) start fooling with controls; they trigger the crash-dive sequence or the self-destruct sequence, or they open the canopy; The End.

As written, there's no replacement u-bot. There's no way to get new clones out to the Continental Shelf. You and the players look at each other and say, 'Well. So what's on TV?'

(This may partly explain why no one ever got concerned that this mission introduces a bunch of human-Sea-Monkey Outdoors super-scientists into ***PARANOIA***: No one ever survived long enough to meet them.)

This is fine. ***PARANOIA*** players expect Total Party Meldown. But if you were looking forward to roleplaying Science Sea Monkeys, what might you do to get the mission back on track?

The point of the u-bot sequence is to panic the players in a quintessentially paranoid way. Once you've instilled the fear and made your point, you might then find it acceptable to give the Troubleshooters a break—a tiny, strictly limited break!—only as needed!—so they can encounter the mission's subsequent deathtraps.

If you buy this reasoning (and many hardline ***PARANOIA*** GMs are even now snorting in contempt), you could envision Traffic Dispatcher Zim-R, back in Alpha Complex, flailing through his database just as frantically as the Troubleshooters are flailing at the controls. Just as the u-bot is about to split open, Zim-R uncovers an ancient control protocol and puts the u-bot under remote control. He activates Lucky's autopilot routines and returns the u-bot to its correct path.

For an even more contrived solution, have Emguli-O produce a bot brain repair kit he uses to fix his cambots. A PC with a good Hardware skill can fix Lucky on the spot. If your players sneer at this blatant plot device, stare them down and *dare* them to complain.

Then there's the leaky space suits. The number of ways the PCs can die in these things is impressive, but the fun is in the anxiety, not the actual death. You may wish to have the Oceanians dramatically rescue drowning PCs, then vanish mysteriously back into their lab.

We know—talking about ways to keep Troubleshooters alive is vaguely creepy.

Doug: Yeah, there are a couple of knobs that could be pulled out. Let me try a few. *[Pulls one of them. Warning flashes, 'WARNING! DO NOT OPEN CANOPY UNLESS PERSONAL BREATHING APPARATUS IS OPERATIONAL!']* Oops! That's not it.

Ken: Here, let's try this one. *[Pull another. U-bot stops dead in the water. No sound from the engines.]* Aha! Got it.

Doug: Okay, now we need engine and steering.

Nick: Well, with my training in GottaGo, what seems to be the engine control?

GM: *[Makes a die roll.]* Hmmm. What you're looking for are two controls close together, one for engine speed and the other for propeller direction.

Ken: Huh?

Doug: Forward and reverse. *[Tries typical automobile pattern—accelerator and gear shift. Torpedo fires and diving planes go up and down suggestively.]* Nope. How 'bout this?

And so on, as the PCs experiment with controls and observe the results. If they get frustrated, you can give them hints through The Computer, Zim-R or occasional flashes of lucidity from Lucky. Treat Lucky as if he has had a major stroke. He has lost major functionality, but much of his memory is intact, if he could only access it.

Sooner or later the PCs will try the brake, and the crash dive sequence starts. Depending on the PCs' reaction speed and your impish mischievousness, they may get the ship under control or they may bury the bow in the ocean floor. Keep yelling, 'Ah*ooo*gah, ah*ooo*gah!' in their ears to help them concentrate.

Once the PCs have the controls figured out, The Computer can help them navigate to their destination. The map with the marked destination appears on the display screen with a blinking dot that represents the u-bot. The PCs can then steer the u-bot for their destination as in a video game.

The Oceanians' sea lab

The Oceanian lab (**Tension 0,** of course) sits in 15 meters of water in an estuary. As the PCs approach the underwater structure, they notice no signs of life nearby. Draw the rough outlines of the lab on a piece of paper, noting the single pressure hatch on the top of the central sphere.

To investigate the lab, the PCs will have to don the space suits and leave the u-bot. They can either surface and open the canopy to suit up, or they can struggle in cramped quarters while submerged, then open the canopy.

Note that none of the standard ***PARANOIA*** weapons work underwater. This may not occur to the PCs, and the resulting malfunctions may be harmful to their health. Knives and swords are at least theoretically useful, but the PCs' lack of experience in underwater maneuver and combat should prevent them from presenting a threat to anyone but themselves if they play with pointed objects. On the other hand, the Oceanians are perfectly at home in the water. Though they are pacifists, and no more competent at underwater melee than the PCs, their agility underwater will prevent the PCs from getting anywhere near them under normal circumstances.

Oceanians NPC roster

Jacques, Oceanian extraordinaire

Management 14, Stealth 12, Violence 01, Agility 16, Swim Like a Fish 18; Power 18

Mutant powers: Deep Probe, Mental Blast, Rubbery Bones, Slippery Skin, Telepathy,Teleport and whatever else you need to move the story along.

Pierre, his friend

Management 10, Stealth 12, Violence 01, Agility 16, Swim Incredibly Fast 18; Power 14

Mutant powers: Mental Blast, Rubbery Bones, Slippery Skin, Telepathy

Roleplaying notes

Both Jacques and Pierre follow orders and avoid contact with the PCs at all costs. They observe from hiding as long as possible. They want to learn more about Alpha Complex, and specifically what degree of threat it represents to Oceania.

If threatened with capture or injury, they use their powers and agility in the water to escape from the PCs. They do not talk or telepathically signal the PCs unless captured. However, if a PC makes secret contact and offers convincing gestures of friendship, the Oceanians may cooperate with that specific Troubleshooter.

The space suits

The suits are ancient, cumbersome hardsuits with air recirculation and powerful heating/cooling systems. The controls for these systems are located on the chest of the suits. The suits have a hefty negative buoyance (i.e., they sink like lead), and the PCs have a swell (i.e., impossible) time trying to swim back up to the u-bot if they don't park it on the seafloor. The charge in the batteries for the recirculation and heating/cooling systems is quite low after years of storage, but it's good for about one hour of operation if nothing else goes wrong. (Fat chance.) Unfortunately the gauges only indicate the strength of the battery charge, not how long it lasts, so the PCs must keep an eye on the gauges and pay close attention to warning lights. An amber light flashes in the helmet faceplate when 15 minutes of normal operation remain, and a red light flashes when there are five minutes left.

During the episode, these old suits may have some entertaining malfunctions. Some suggestions:

- The heating/cooling system, set normally at default for human body temperature, suddenly kicks on at full power. A sensor has shorted out, reading the suit temperature as too hot or too cold, and the suit tries to adjust. Bake or freeze the PC at your option, and remind him the heating/cooling system is using the battery charge at a frightening rate. Any PC with a Hardware skill rating of 06 or higher can disable the heating/cooling system, but the repair cannot be made underwater.

- The recirculation system doesn't scrub the carbon dioxide properly and the PC starts getting drowsy. The PC has five minutes to get out of the suit and into breathable air, or he slips into unconsciousness. The fault is cracked insulation on a sensor wire, and anyone with a Tech Services background and the repair kit aboard the u-bot can repair the suit. Other PCs can roll their Hardware skill or related specialties to make the repair.

- A leak fills the suit with water up to the PC's neck. Though air pressure in the helmet prevents the PC from drowning, any electronic gear he is carrying inside the suit (including his laser pistol) is useless until it has been serviced. The suit leak can be patched easily once it is off the PC and out of the water.

The lab

Of the five Oceanians that staff the underwater lab, three are several miles upriver with the two small research submarines. They detected the u-bot as it approached the lab, and the two remaining staff members are laying low, hoping it will go away. If the PCs attempt to enter the station, the scientists try to sneak around and hide inside the lab. The Oceanians are dedicated pacifists: They have no weapons aboard, and they don't use their mutant powers unless absolutely necessary for self-protection, and then only to disable or capture a dangerous attacker.

Review the sea lab diagram on the next page. The lab has three access hatches: (1) the hatch on the top of the central sphere; (2) an emergency escape hatch in the residence module; (3) bay

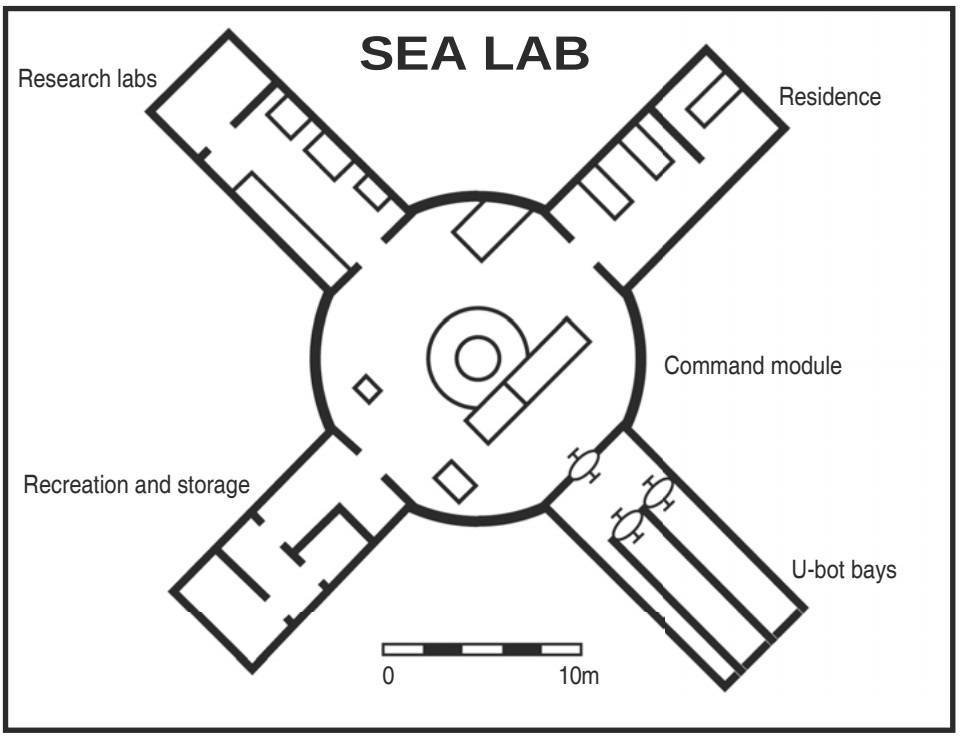
doors for the two mini-subs. None of these entrances are locked, and their simple opening mechanisms are similar to those used in Alpha Complex. The first two hatches are airlocks; the u-bot bay doors open directly into the u-bot bays, with an airlock inside the bays for entry into the lab itself.

Outside each inner and outer airlock door, a gauge shows the air or water pressure on each side of the door. The chambers of hatches 1 and 2, and the lab itself, are filled with air at twice the air pressure found in Alpha Complex, and the chamber of the u-bot bay air lock is filled with water at a pressure equal to that of the surrounding water.

These pressure gauges represent the first warning that PCs could be in trouble if they open their suits inside the lab. The second warning comes when they try to take off their helmets. Their voices seem high-pitched and the air tastes funny. If they quickly close their helmets, there are no serious side effects. Otherwise the PCs have periods of dizziness and light-headedness in the helium-oxygen atmosphere of the lab.

The PCs can learn nothing about the origin and culture of the Oceanians by searching through the lab. There are no paper documents, and the PCs are unfamiliar with the computer systems aboard and cannot access their programs or data. The only way they can learn about the Oceanians is to capture and interrogate one. This is harder than it looks.

The Oceanians have put on their pressure suits so they can leave the lab if necessary. They hide in the residence module and observe the PCs as they poke around in the command module. If the PCs approach the residence module, the Oceanians stun them with mental blasts and run for the emergency air lock. The Oceanians are at home in the water and can easily outdistance any clumsy pursuit. They wait outside the lab for the return of the two minisubs, whereupon they abandon the lab and immediately return to their deep-sea civilization to report their experiences to Oceania.



If the PCs are shrewd, and they locate and watch or seal all the possible exits, they have a chance to surprise and capture an Oceanian. The Oceanians have no combat skills at all, and any attempt to physically overpower them succeeds automatically. Any wound result immediately downs an Oceanian, because they are psychologically unprepared for violence. They faint more from shock and horror at such barbaric behavior than from pain. The Oceanians use their mutant powers to defend themselves, but psionic attacks are exhausting, and the PCs may be able to resist the other mental powers the Oceanians have.

If the PCs manage to capture an Oceanian, he freely volunteers the information about Oceania listed in the 'GM Background' section. Beyond this, the Oceanian divulges no other information about his culture or the objectives and function of the sea lab. The PCs can take the captive back to Alpha Complex for IntSec interrogation.

Completing the mission

Visiting the sea lab, observing the Oceanians and returning to Alpha Complex with a report pleases The Computer. It records an Official Commendation for each PC. If they return a live captive to Alpha Complex for interrogation, The Computer issues an Official Commendation and a 500cr bonus to the responsible PC.

Failure to maintain security (blowing the cover story about being out in the ocean looking for camera locations) merits an Official Reprimand for failing to follow the commands of a superior. Destruction of the sea lab prompts an Official Reprimand plus a stiff 1,000cr fine. The Computer may award credit bonuses of 700–1,000cr if the sea lab is captured intact. Damage to the u-bot Model 416 or the RX-1 suits may cost 700–1,000cr, but persuasive excuses during the debriefing may convince The Computer to reduce or even waive the fines.

The Computer sternly issues an Official Reprimand to all PCs for conspiracy to conceal information from the Armed Forces service group, even though a superior ordered them to do so. Catch-22.

Certain secret societies, notably Psion, would be very interested in the cooperation of the psionic Oceanians. Other secret societies, notably Anti-Mutant, would be equally interested in eliminating all psionic traitors. PCs might earn promotion by either making a friendly contact with the Oceanians or by revealing them as the treasonous mutants they are.

What about Emguli-O?

Say, wasn't there a French filmmaker aboard? Whatever happened to him?

Emguli-O can fulfill a narrative role above and beyond just annoying the players. The HPD&MC official sizes up the Oceanians for propaganda value to The Computer, political value to HPD and, foremost, immediate financial opportunities for himself. He plans to film the Troubleshooters capturing or killing these obvious mutant traitors, then splice in 'covering' footage (to be shot later) that portrays himself, Emguli-O of HPD&MC, as supervisor and mastermind of this triumph. Then he'll make a killing selling the vid on the IR market.

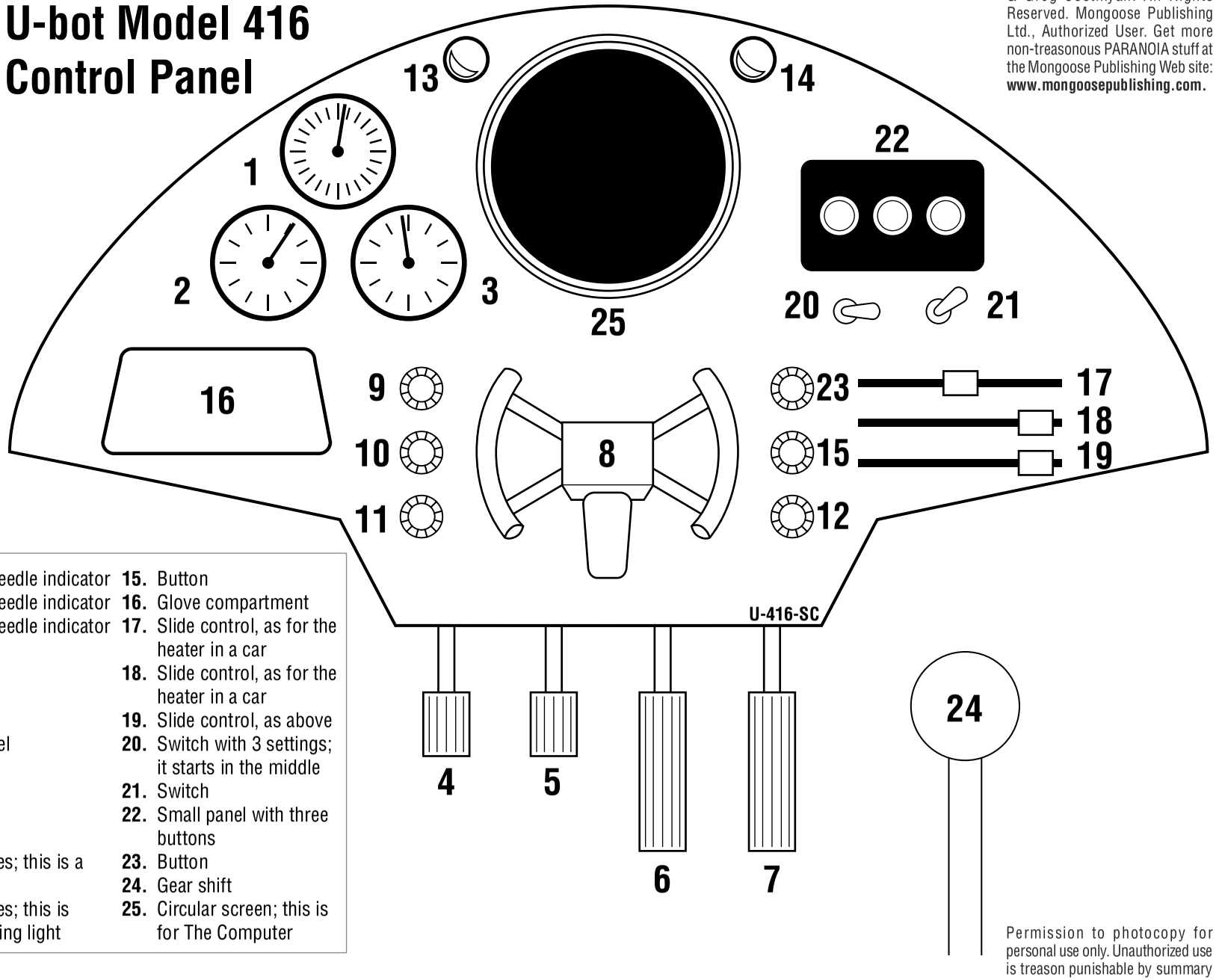
What? The Troubleshooters didn't kill or capture the Oceanians? They plowed their u-bot into the ocean floor, blew open their space suits and generally made a mess of the whole thing? Some PCs may actually have helped the traitors flee? *Sacre bleu!*

All right. There are financial opportunities everywhere. For instance: blackmail.

Before each individual Troubleshooter enters debriefing, Emguli-O finds a chance to take him aside. That footage the director shot? The stuff that shows the PC bungling everything? It would be a *shame* if that vid found its way to The Computer... *non?*

From 'Das Bot', a mission in *PARANOIA Flashbacks*. Copyright © 1983, 1987, 2005 by Eric Goldberg & Greg Costikyan. All Rights Reserved. Mongoose Publishing Ltd., Authorized User. Get more non-treasonous PARANOIA stuff at the Mongoose Publishing Web site: **www.mongoosepublishing.com.**

U-bot Model 416 Control Panel



Key

1. Gauge with needle indicator
2. Gauge with needle indicator
3. Gauge with needle indicator
4. Foot pedal
5. Foot pedal
6. Foot pedal
7. Foot pedal
8. Steering wheel
9. Knob
10. Knob
11. Knob
12. Knob
13. Plastic bubbles; this is a warning light
14. Plastic bubbles; this is another warning light
15. Button
16. Glove compartment
17. Slide control, as for the heater in a car
18. Slide control, as for the heater in a car
19. Slide control, as above
20. Switch with 3 settings; it starts in the middle
21. Switch
22. Small panel with three buttons
23. Button
24. Gear shift
25. Circular screen; this is for The Computer

Permission to photocopy for personal use only. Unauthorized use is treason punishable by summary execution.

PARANOIA Vapors Don't Shoot Back

CURTIS SMITH
WITH GEOFF VALLEY
Mission design

KEN ROLSTON
1st Edition editing, development & mind control

JIM HOLLOWAY
Illustrations

DOUG KAUFMAN
PAUL MURPHY
Additional bad ideas

ERIC MINTON
Troubleshooter PC conversion

ALLEN VARNEY
PAUL BALDOWSKI
Information Inquiry Form

THE COMPUTER
Political orthodoxy & benevolent supervision

Introduction 26
1. Standard tournament elimination round 27
2. The cheating begins 35
3. The finals 43

Charts, tables and resources

General rumor table 27
Mission 1 equipment list 29
Mission 2 equipment list 37
Mission 3 equipment list 44
Information Inquiry Form 50
Pregenerated PCs 51
NPC roster 55
Bot roster 55
Outdoors arbitrary encounter tables 56

Welcome Gamemaster! The ***PARANOIA*** XP rulebook is packed with important and interesting information, such as how to play ***PARANOIA***. Read those rules before playing this mission. Failure to do so is treason, punishable by summary execution. Your players should already be familiar with the Player section of the rulebook (how else did they advance to ORANGE Clearance?). Study this whole mission before running it. All these requirements may sound like a homework assignment, but they're for your own good. After all, you can't maintain the proper atmosphere of fear and ignorance if you don't know what's going on.

Mission background

Almost without exception, High Programmers are high-strung and very, very competitive. Fierce political conflicts as well as friendlier struggles are common among them. Of course, disputing High Programmers never face each other directly. They are under careful surveillance by Internal Security agents and The Computer itself. Instead, these mental knights joust by manipulating data, distorting information, diverting resources and otherwise contributing to The Computer's vast efficiency. After all, what are High Programmers to do when real work on The Computer is treasonous?

A small number of the most eccentric and competitive High Programmers, each head of a program group, annually practice their own form of entertainment known as 'the Tournament'. After preparing for most of the year (and covering up the effects of the last tournament), these programmers duke it out in a complex, dangerous contest that is completely hidden from The Computer (they hope).

The tournament evolves every year. Long ago, participants merely threw their pet programs into a subsystem to fight for control until all were purged except one. That soon became boring. The latest rage is much more exciting—pitting teams of Troubleshooters against each other! Of course, the Troubleshooters never know their missions are really part of a tournament.

While aiding and protecting his own teams, each High Programmer attempts to uncover, delay, expose, confuse and terminate his opponents' teams. However, the High Programmers can't spend all their time playing. Whenever The Computer gives them a direct assignment, or Internal Security gets too close, the High Programmers are forced to abandon their teams temporarily. Unfortunately for the Troubleshooters, if their High Programmer is caught, they'll probably be punished also, without knowing why.

The risks and dangers of the tournament are numerous and grave. The rewards are…well, they are slim and appealing only to those insane enough to take the risks. Few of the participating High Programmers know their opponents, who may work far away or in the next room. If one of the contestants falls under suspicion, he's on his own, and usually not for long. The others, however, pool their vast resources to ensure the game goes on. One of the greatest dangers is from other High Programmers who are unaware of the game. If one discovers it, he may feel left out and report everything to The Computer.

If the tournament gets out of hand (if too much valuable Computer property is destroyed, for example), other High Programmers, Internal Security and The Computer become suspicious. Consequently, the contestants, by common agreement, only use low-clearance Troubleshooters who are less valuable to The Computer and fairly inconspicuous, since low-clearance Troubleshooters are always running around performing odd missions anyway.

Directing a tournament team from one's workstation is a good way to become laser-bait. Most contestants direct and monitor their teams from secret strongholds. These places are well-hidden, well-defended and extremely treasonous.

The defending tournament champion is Neil-U-RSB-6, an amazingly laid-back citizen. His power base is centered in the vast RSB Sector, where he has great influence, and, some claim, complete control of several Computer subsystems.

This year, Neil-U entered several teams in the tournament. Before it was wiped out, his welterweight team got him into the finals to face his archrival, Buck-U-XVB-5. We join the plot as Neil-U quickly sends in a replacement team composed of ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooters. You guessed it—the player characters!

Mission summary

The PC Troubleshooters (the players) do not know their missions are part of a tournament, serving the whims of High Programmers rather than The Computer. The PCs always get fake, distorted or incomplete explanations for their missions.

In this mission, the PCs face three episodes, each under Neil-U's invisible but firm control. First, armed to the teeth, the Troubleshooters enter an abandoned warehouse complex to exterminate a dangerous group of traitors. Simultaneously, Buck-U's team, the Hotshots, enters the other end of the warehouse with the same mission. Unknown to all of them, a gang of PURGE saboteurs is already in the warehouse. Then the security combots wake up.

A knight of the round console.

During the warehouse battle, Buck-U finally locates Neil-U's most valuable possession, an independent and quite robust personal computer. This illegal device is hidden outside Alpha Complex in an Old Reckoning weather station. Hoping to distract Neil-U long enough to clinch the tournament, Buck-U decides to cheat and tips off The Computer about the personal computer, but can't link it to Neil-U without exposing his own treasonous activities. Jealous and suspicious of any other autonomous computer, no matter how tiny, The Computer immediately dispatches a small army from RSB Sector to capture the personal computer.

Alerted by an informant, Neil-U sends the PCs on their second mission, to rescue his personal computer. This treasonous race against the Armed Forces promises many obstacles and challenges for the PCs: a trip Outdoors ('there's no ceiling!'), their first flybot ride, their first skydive (and, they hope, parachute landing), earthquakes and a toxic waste dump, just to mention a few. Buck-U pulls ahead in the tournament.

Angered that Buck-U cheated, Neil-U decides to strike back. In the third and final mission, the PCs are ordered to sink Buck-U's stronghold, a converted fireboat moored in the center of the gigantic domed TJC Sector reservoir. A completely unhinged history buff, Buck-U named his fireboat the *Jolly Roger-U* and crewed it with robot sailors. Armed with cutlasses, his crew swabs the decks, hoists and lowers the sails (there's no wind in the dome) and mans (eh, 'bots') the cannons. The PCs (those who can't swim) assault the ship on jet-skis before boarding for hand-to-hand combat.

Slowly, throughout the tournament, the PCs should discover or guess some aspects of the whole scheme, but not much. (Remember: Fear and Ignorance. Ignorance and Fear.) If Neil-U wins the tournament, he greatly rewards the PCs. He may even offer particularly lucky, successful or power-hungry Troubleshooters a position in his program group. If Neil-U doesn't win the tournament, it probably means the PCs are dead (sigh).

Who and where

This mission is designed for a team of ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooters. The pregenerated PCs at the end of the mission should just barely struggle through the mission—with a little help from their clones. The character listings also include personal equipment lists, backgrounds and secret society missions. Every one of those characters has good reason to shoot at least one teammate and distrust several others. (If the PCs get out of hand eliminating each other, make an example of one of them. Execute him for reckless

High Programmer tournaments: Inspirations for your own missions

This whole idea of Troubleshooters unwittingly employed as pawns in the tournament competitions of High Programmers is fertile ground for developing missions and encounters of your own. For example:

Mission idea: A High Programmer tournament event. The cross-complex team marathon. The PC team is one of several trying to fast-talk their way through check-points, sneak through high-clearance shortcuts, commandeer transportation—anything to get to Point B as fast as possible. *Mission cover story:* High Programmer X wants this item delivered to Point B at *[some completely impossible time]*. For each minute the PCs are late, impose a credit fine and an Official Reprimand.

Encounter: Scrubot scavenger hunt. In the middle of a mission, the PCs come upon a team of Troubleshooters carrying a stack of 15 scrubot mop arms, busily engaged in the process of ripping an arm off another protesting scrubot. (The other team has been ordered to collect as many scrubot arms as possible in four hours.) Should the PCs interfere? 'Excuse me, but are you authorized to…' *[Pathetic squeals of terror from the scrubot]* '…er, service this bot?'

Vapors Don't Shoot Back is only one way to exploit this particular bad idea. Of course, we modest designers suggest it is a rather clever exploitation, but don't hesitate to throw away this mission and design your own. After all, we already got your bucks. We can afford to encourage you to exercise your creative gifts.

destruction of valuable Computer property.) If your players use their own characters, you'll have to prepare secret society missions and rivalries for them. (Alternately, consider the 'six-shooter' sets of ready-to-play PCs in the ***PARANOIA*** mission collection *Crash Priority*.)

Tournament rules require six-person teams, so six players are ideal. If you don't have six friends, don't despair. Experienced players can run two characters or, preferably, you can run a character or two as NPCs (which will really make the players nervous). With little adjustment you can play the mission with fewer or even more than six characters.

Stay in command. If PCs blatantly disregard or disobey the orders of The Computer or its appointed representatives (the PC's superiors), don't hesitate to march in two dozen Internal Security Elimination Agents to haul the traitors to the nearest termination center.

The bad guys

Throughout their missions, the PCs encounter a variety of non-player characters (NPCs) and bots. A few of them are neutral, but most fall into the 'bad guy' category (the friendly ones are too few to count). Details of important NPCs and bots, such as their security clearance, skills, weapons and armor, appear in the NPC and Bot rosters at the end of this mission.

Maps

This mission includes three maps. Each mission uses the one that depicts the area where the mission takes place. Much of the text in each mission is keyed to the maps by number.

Pre-mission personal briefings

The three maps, Outdoor Arbitrary Encounter tables and six PC listings are at the end of this mission. Removing these pages is treason. Therefore, your friend The Computer suggests you photocopy the pages after submitting Form 289-B/1.a, 'Permission to Photocopy Personnel Data' to PLC.

Study the six (permissibly photocopied) PCs, then cut them apart and distribute one to each player. Of course you may demand to see a player's sheet at any time if you need it.

With the ***PARANOIA*** XP rulebook in hand, meet with each player in turn for a private conference. Complete all four of the following steps with each player:

1. Make sure the player fully understands his character's secret society and mutant power. You'll probably need to look up some of this information.
2. Read the following text aloud:

   Two weeks ago, The Computer assigned you to a special Troubleshooter team in the vast RSB Sector. When you reported to the RSB Troubleshooter Headquarters, an officer clarified your specific position on the team, and told you to wait for your mission alert. Since then you've had ample time to practice on the HQ target range and work out in the HQ gym.

3. Clarify the character's team Mandatory Bonus Duty, listed on his sheet, and assign the equipment listed in the next subsection, 'Notes on the PCs'. Stress that this equipment is extremely valuable and its loss or damage is a serious offense. The italicized text is for your information only.
4. Give the player a rumor from the General Rumor Table on the facing page.

Notes on the PCs

Team leader: Because the team in this mission selects its own leader (see Episode 1), none of the characters start out in that role. Instead, the team starts with two loyalty officers. Whoever gets the job of team leader keeps his original MBD as well. Won't that be exciting for him?

Roger-O-CWE-2

Access: 01; Power: 10

Tell the player Roger-O was assigned to the team so late his transfer orders might not have been distributed yet, but that Roger-O has been given one Computer printout of his orders.

Roger-O has been assigned a **Multicorder 2** with a special **Radio** program. This program detects strong radio waves and homes in on the source, particularly useful for hunting down (or hiding from) opponents with switched-on radios. Gives direction and range to source. On a 1d20 roll of 10 or less, this locator works. When it works, privately give its operator a rough direction ('over there') and approximate range. When it doesn't work, point in a random direction.

Amos-O-BYA-4

Access: 03; Power: 18

Amos-O's audiovisual recorder has been assigned by Neil-U. Neil-U will use the information it provides to help account for the effects of the tournament.

Cain-O-ATW-2

Access: 02; Power: 13

The RID (**Robot Identification Device**) visually recognizes standard model bots and lists their original capabilities, if known. There's only a 25% chance of this device working on any given robot. When it works, privately give a general description of the bot's speed, armor and armament. When it doesn't work, give the operator false information, such as, 'This bot is always accompanied by seven advanced combots.'

Mortimer-O-TBI-2

Access: 01; Power: 15

Recently, several teams have been wiped out in close-quarter fighting. Mortimer-O should protect his team using the experimental weapon he has been assigned—the **barrel blade**. This device fits on any laser or slugthrower barrel. Functions as a sword (W5K impact). Mortimer-O should understand he may be held accountable if any team member expires in melee.

The **Giant Metal Plate** counts as Armor 3 against energy and impact weapons, but the wearer must make regular Violence checks to avoid exhaustion. An exhausted character moves slowly, halves all Violence checks and must then make more Violence checks to avoid permanent lower back damage.

Terry-O-EUZ-2

Access: 02; Power: 10

StimuGo injections cure wounds and even prevent death! ... temporarily. Wounded, maimed, downed, and even killed characters may get up and act normally, and may spend Perversity as if healthy. However, after 1d20 rounds (roll randomly), characters revert to their actual condition (including death).

Bobby-O-SYE-2

Access: 03; Power: 12

Bobby-O's audiovisual recorder has been assigned by Neil-U. Neil-U will use the information it provides to help account for the effects of the tournament.

The PAB (**Personal Air Bag**) is a device, worn as a belt, that inflates before impact due to vehicle crash, falling, etc. Surrounded by bags of air, the wearer is fairly well protected. Works three times. (Actually, it only works twice, but let the wearer find that out the hard way! It won't save him if his parachute doesn't open in mission 3.)

Information Inquiry Form

Vapors Don't Shoot Back includes an **Information Inquiry Form.** It originally appeared in *Send in the Clones* in 1985, but we needed to fill an empty *Vapors* page in this volume, so we moved it. The form has nothing to do with anything, but makes a nice variation in dealing with players who want to know things. It's on page 59.

When someone asks a question, instead of saying, 'That information is not available at your security clearance', hand the player a copy of this form. If someone fills out the form, say, 'I'll send this through for processing right away.' Then stand up, place the completed form on the seat of your chair and sit on it. The player gets the idea.

For more, see *Send in the Clones.*

1: Standard tournament elimination round

Mission summary

In this round, Neil-U-MYN-6 pits one of his Troubleshooter teams (the PCs) against another High Programmer's team in combat. Confused though it often is, The Computer doesn't usually assign its valuable Troubleshooter teams to fight each other. Consequently, Neil-U and his opponent give their teams legitimate-sounding missions to destroy traitors.

After an unusual briefing, the PCs go to an ancient abandoned warehouse complex beneath the RSB food vat level. This particular site was chosen because, as far as the High Programmers know, The Computer has forgotten about it. No doubt the mission will bring the site to The Computer's attention again.

General rumor table

These are rumors the PCs overhear in a cafeteria, lounge, on the target range, etc. Roll 1d20. Tell the player the rumor below with the corresponding number. If the character has heard the rumor before, tell him he hears it again from someone else. *The italicized 'true' and 'false' notes are for your information only.*

1–2. This mission is fake. The Computer is going to destroy everyone on the team because it knows one member is a renegade traitor, but doesn't know who. *False. Sort of.*

3–4. There's a new program in effect where R&D service firm personnel overhaul all Troubleshooters' weapons before each mission. The last team whose weapons were cleaned by an R&D service firm was wiped out because all their weapons malfunctioned. *True and False. The last team was vaporized en masse, but insufficient evidence remained to determine if their weapons malfunctioned.*

5–6. All ORANGE reflec armor with serial numbers between 2004 and 2851 is defective from waist to neck in back, but the tunic fronts are okay. The famous Troubleshooter Sam-Y-MEJ-3 got fried through the back of his armor a few days ago. Since then, prudent Troubleshooters have been walking everywhere with their backs to the walls. *False and True. The armor is not defective, but this rumor is widespread and many believe it. Of course, smart Troubleshooters keep their backs to the wall anyway. If the character checks his armor's serial number, tell him the tag is faded, but he can just make out the first two digits: '28—'*

7–8. All but one person on your team is really GREEN Clearance in disguise. They're going to use the only ORANGE-Clearance member as bait in a trap for a pack of wild dogs prowling the food-vat levels. *False, but under consideration for another mission. Internal Security may take an interest in anyone showing sympathy for the dogs.*

9–10. Security around the RSB Sector food vats is tightened because the infamous PURGE terrorist 'Vatman' promised to make one of the giant vats 'vanish' within a few days. *True, and it's going to be spectacular.*

11–12. *(If Mortimer-O hears this rumor, tell him he hears it from someone who doesn't know he's one of the team's loyalty officers.)* Your team's loyalty officer is really an Internal Security agent posing as a Mystic, but his disguise is so thin it's practically transparent. *False and True. Mortimer-O is not IntSec; he is an Illuminatus. His Mystic disguise is purposely thin.*

13–14. Tech Services is clearing vagrants and traitors out of an abandoned warehouse so it can set up its own research and testing lab. After discovering several R&D spies, Tech no longer trusts anything R&D sends them. R&D may send in a team of its own to keep the Techs out or even blow up the place to keep the Techs from using it! *False. The Techs aren't smart or brave enough to set up their own lab.*

15–16. An entire Vulture Squadron heavy weapons platoon mutinied in TJC Sector, and are fighting their way toward RSB Sector. They're ambushing and vaporizing every Armed Forces, Internal Security or Troubleshooter team that comes near them. *False, but if you need an excuse to wipe out the team, this works.*

17–18. The power struggle between Tech and R&D is getting worse. There may even be open warfare soon. *False. The power struggle between Tech and R&D couldn't get any worse—unless open warfare breaks out, but that won't happen because neither side wants to face The Computer's wrath.*

19–20. The Computer knows someone on your team is a mutant. Whoever it is better 'fess up before the mission because after the mission The Computer's going to root him out. *False, although The Computer always suspects everyone.*

As the PCs enter the warehouse from the south, their opponents, who have worked themselves into a fighting frenzy, enter from the north. Back at the ranch, Neil-U and his opponent wait anxiously for the survivors to emerge, determining this tournament round's victor.

Unknown to everyone, a gang of PURGE saboteurs is already in the warehouse complex, preparing to blow the floor out from under some food vats. Being experienced paranoids, these PURGErs assume they are the Troubleshooters' target and resolve to go down fighting. Then some old security combots and forkbots reactivate and join the fray. Needless to say, the fur should really fly down there.

Unexpectedly, Neil-U aborts the mission so he can send the survivors (or their clone replacements) on Mission 2.

Mission alert

Each PC receives the following message from The Computer:

••••• MISSION ALERT! •••••

Rejoice, Troubleshooter! Another opportunity to serve The Computer is upon you! This is evidence of The Computer's trust in you and appreciation of your value.

As part of a special Troubleshooter team, you must track down a dangerous band of traitors. Your important duties include the summary execution of those traitors on sight. The security and safety of RSB Sector depends on the successful completion of your mission.

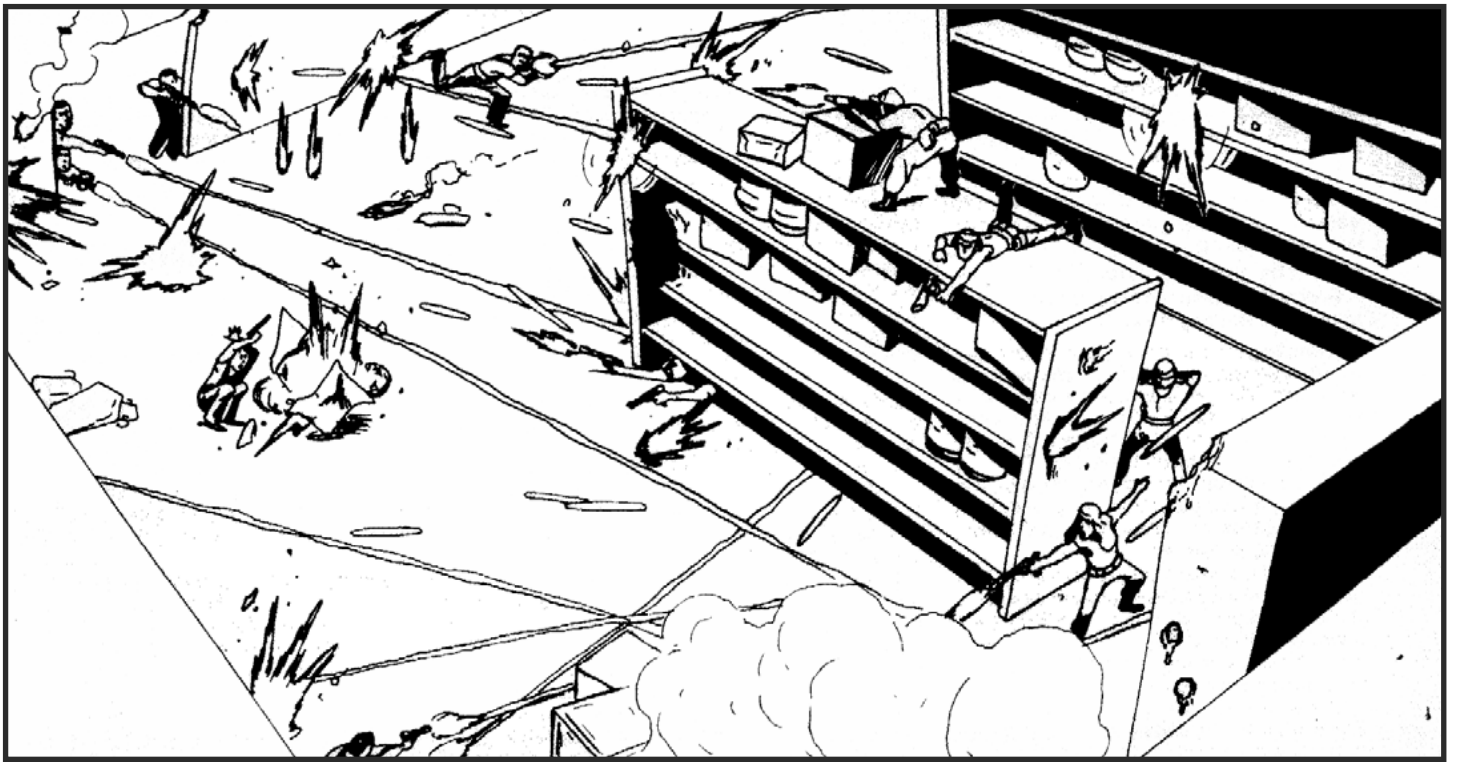
Report immediately to Briefing Room C in RSB Sector Troubleshooter headquarters for your pre-mission briefing. Your cooperation and loyalty will be rewarded!

Stay alert! Guard against treason. Trust The Computer. The Computer is your friend.

Characters who do not report for the briefing are hunted down, seized and suitably punished by a vengeful Computer. You can implement the details yourself.

RSB Sector Troubleshooter Headquarters

Troubleshooter headquarters are generally secure areas, impenetrable citadels of The Computer's immune system. RSB Sector Headquarters is no exception. Huge armored



doors, security combots, Vulture Squadron guards and bomb-sniffing dogbots ensure only authorized personnel pass the entrance checkpoint. (**Tension level 15**.)

Every reporting Troubleshooter must register with The Computer at the checkpoint and wait for clearance while The Computer runs a security check. This check is standard procedure, but provides an early opportunity to instill paranoia. The Troubleshooters present themselves for registration, and The Computer responds, saying, 'I'm sorry, you are not authorized to enter this area. Please wait as directed by the guards while I conduct a complete check.' The character is immediately surrounded, disarmed and led to a windowless cell. After several tense, fearful minutes, the character is released without explanation.

At the checkpoint, each character is asked to turn over all weapons, an unusual request since a Troubleshooter on duty is supposed to keep his assigned weapons with him ('Keep your laser handy') at all times. The only explanation the duty officer can offer is, 'Those are my orders, bub.' If the character balks at or refuses the request, the burly Vulture Squadron officer makes his request an order. Naturally, the checkpoint personnel and combots have enough skill and firepower to disarm a mere ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooter. Doing so would perk up an otherwise boring day. Each character gets a proper receipt for his weapons.

The guards then escort the entire team through an armored door and into Briefing Room C (**Tension 16**).

The briefing room

Read the following text aloud to the players to describe Briefing Room C:

Briefing rooms, as you know them, are usually ugly and sparse. They need paint and smell bad. The carpeting, if any, is worn and stained. The furniture is uncomfortable (as most benches are), and the walls are usually scarred by laser fire. The only thing to count on is the hot, bright lamps that ensure The Computer sees any traitorous facial expression. This briefing room, however, is different.

The shiny, metallic stripe on the door is dark blue and continues around the room at waist height, accenting the light blue walls. Blue filtered light shines from lamps recessed in the ceiling, giving the air a cool, hazy appearance. Eight plush high-backed chairs face a platform against the far wall. The chairs are arranged in two staggered rows so each has an unobstructed view of the podium rows on the platform. Perhaps The Computer is showing you an example of the luxuries you will enjoy—if you survive to higher rank.

The room would not be complete, however, without a few law-and-order representatives of the Vulture Squadron. A loutish, watchful guard stands in each corner, wearing BLUE reflec armor. Three of them affectionately cradle strange slim weapons in their arms. The fourth, and by far the meanest-looking of the bunch, carries no visible weapon, but wears a spiked collar around his neck. The looks on the guards' faces leave no doubt that the slightest breach of protocol will be rectified immediately.

The briefing personnel

If the PCs for any reason attack the guards, the briefing officer or each other (it happens), the guards respond immediately. These fellows are not only armed, but are of a much higher caliber than the PCs, and they waste no time proving it. The three armed guards skillfully employ their BLUE laser rifles (W3K energy), while the fourth leaps into the fray, snarling and growling in a truly awesome display of unarmed combat (he's a Vulture Squadron Unarmed Combat instructor). If the PCs are particularly inventive and put on a good show, let them take out one of the guards before learning the folly of their ways. In such a case, adjourn the meeting until all clone replacements arrive.

Soon after the PCs enter the briefing room, the briefing officers, Steve-G, Ben-B and Gary-V, walk in, appropriately attired in the colors of their ranks. Steve-G and Gary-V wear the CPU Service Group insignia on their uniform. Ben-B wears a Tech badge. Throughout the briefing, all three officers whisper among themselves, obviously discussing the PCs. Initially, however, only Steve-G talks to the PCs.

Beginning the briefing

Steve-G introduces himself and the other two officers, then presses a button behind the podium. A nervous, RED-jacketed waiter hurries in, carrying a platter of steaming drinks. Try to make the players as suspicious as possible of this waiter. While the waiter distributes mugs of the thick black liquid to the PCs, Steve-G explains that The Computer only recently perfected the synthesis of an old beverage known as 'java'. Although neither he nor the other officers accept any of the foul-tasting coffee, Steve-G warns that refusing a drink will insult and anger The Computer.

Steve-G then takes roll call, asking for each Troubleshooter by name and title—except Roger-O-CWE-2. When Steve-G finishes the roll call, he angrily demands to know who Roger-O is and what he's doing in this highly restricted area. Ever alert, the guards roast Roger-O if he doesn't quickly present his orders from The Computer.

If Roger-O hands over his orders in time, Steve-G, Ben-B and Gary-V huddle over a Computer terminal in the podium, shaking their puzzled heads. Eventually their frowns become knowing nods, and Steve-G announces that, in its infinite wisdom, The Computer assigned Roger-O to the team at the last minute as Communications Officer. The idea here is to make the other characters suspect Roger-O is an Internal Security agent or some other agent of The Computer—a dangerous man, but with friends in high places.

After loudly clearing his throat to get everyone's undivided attention, Steve-G makes a proud announcement. Read the following text aloud:

> **'At this very moment, a special team from R&D is overhauling your personal weapons, stripping them down and cleaning them thoroughly. This preventive maintenance is part of a new effort to improve weapon reliability. Aren't you thankful yours is one of the first teams to receive this special service from The Computer?'**

Other than a new high polish, the weapons are unaffected, but the PCs have no way of knowing that. Repeated sly references to the 'nice, clean weapons' should make the players properly nervous.

Assigning mission equipment

Steve-G then draws the Troubleshooters' attention to the wall behind him. Part of the wall slowly swirls into a Computer screen listing the additional equipment assigned to the team for this mission. Read the Mission 1 equipment list to the players slowly so they can copy it down. Give them a few minutes to divide the equipment among themselves, reminding them that someone must sign for every piece of equipment.

Make sure the players understand that every citizen is fully responsible for the valuable Computer equipment entrusted to him and must account for it at the end of the mission. Unnecessary equipment damage is a serious offense; equipment loss is evidence of irresponsibility and treasonous incompetence. To really make this point sink in, ask each player to jot down his character's name and additional equipment on a slip of paper. (You'll collect them later, when the equipment is issued.)

If anyone suggests waiting until after they know what the mission is to divide the equipment, fine him 50 credits for questioning the competence of his superiors. There is no time to requisition items not on the list.

One of the laser rifles on the list is useless, except perhaps for Intimidation or use as a club. The PC responsible for this weapon will have to make a pretty impressive speech after the mission to persuade The Computer that the weapon was non-functional when he received it. The rest of the equipment on the list is in fine condition—subject to normal malfunctions, of course.

Choosing the team leader

Ben-B rises from his chair and announces the time has come to assign a team leader. In an increasingly emotional monologue he outlines the extra responsibilities and risks the leader must take on. Bruno punctuates his speech with trick questions, as though trying to determine who will make the best leader.

Leader responsibilities: The leader must maintain team unity and morale. He must protect The Computer's valuable equipment and agents on his team and account for all losses and injuries. After the mission, the leader must submit a written and oral report detailing and explaining everything that happened. Essentially, the leader shoulders much of the responsibility if the mission fails.

In addition, the leader must carry an experimental Multicorder device to record all that happens during the mission. This device simultaneously broadcasts its findings so The Computer can monitor the mission's progress. The device, resembling a helmet, is worn on the head. The leader must ensure the device clearly records all important events. (In fact, the device is not connected to The Computer. It broadcasts to Neil-U-MYN-6 and creates a permanent record of this tournament round for his laser disk collection. In an emergency, Neil-U-MYN-6 (as The Computer) can also contact the leader through the device (which, incidentally, is nearly indestructible).

When he finishes, Ben-B unexpectedly tells the PCs they must choose their own leader, explaining that The Computer wants them to learn responsibility. Encourage discussion and debate among the PCs, but don't give them too long to make a decision. Of course, if you don't agree with their decision, use Ben-B or The Computer to veto their choice and assign someone else.

Only after the leader is chosen does Ben-B reveal the benefits of being leader. The leader is temporarily breveted to YELLOW Clearance (with additional pay), given YELLOW reflec and assigned two YELLOW laser barrels. Furthermore, the other members must obey the leader—as long as his orders logically pertain to the mission.

Mission 1 equipment list

(6) Pairs of warm gloves
(4) *Winter survival parkas
(2) Laser rifles
(4) ORANGE laser rifle barrels
Sonic rifle
Sonic weapon power pack
Slugthrower
(5) 10-round clips of solid slug ammo
(5) 10-round clips of HE slug ammo
(2) Boxes 20 high-explosive grenades
Bullhorn
Hottorch (combination fire-starter and cutting torch)
InfraSpecs (IR goggles)
Suit of Kevlar armor with mylar coating
**4, or 2 less than the number of Troubleshooters*

Spike-B loves his work.

Mission assignment

Now the Troubleshooters find out all about their mission. Well, not really. But they learn a little bit. Read the following section out loud to the players:

Gary-V, the highest-ranking person you've ever met, stands slowly and surveys the room. His eyes linger on each of you, giving the impression he can see through to your thoughts. Over his crisp-lined VIOLET tunic he wears a shoulder holster carrying a weapon of such exotic design it's hardly recognizable as a laser pistol. Everything about him radiates confidence and capability.

Finally, he begins speaking. His icy voice is steady and devoid of emotion. 'Troubleshooters, I will be brief… and I do not expect to repeat myself. Someone else has already completed the difficult part of this mission—tracking down a dangerous group of traitors, now hiding in an unused warehouse complex. Your assignment is much simpler—eliminate the traitors. You will receive the proper execution vouchers at the end of the briefing.'

He pauses, watching your faces, before continuing. 'These traitors never stay put for long, so you must depart immediately if you are to catch them. After picking up your equipment you will be driven to a single-shaft elevator, the only entrance to the complex. Your driver, Frank-O, will unlock the elevator. A tunnel once led into the complex, but it caved in long ago. The current status of the complex is not known.

'I caution you, these traitors are masters of disguise. They may appear as anyone or anything. Other than yourselves, no one is authorized in the complex. You may shoot on sight.

'Twenty-four hours after your departure, the elevator will return for you and the traitors' remains. I see no justifiable reason for not completing this simple task. That is all. Questions?'

Gary-V will only answer a few questions, and then only if they are insightful and pertinent. He will not give out any more information about the warehouse complex. If asked how many traitors there are, he responds, 'The exact number is, of course, classified, but it's between five and 15.' If asked what these traitors did or how they got into the warehouse complex, Gary-V answers, 'Possession of that information below BLUE Clearance is treason.' As for the people who tracked down these traitors, Gary-V explains, 'They go to a better life!' an obvious reference to promotion.

Loyal citizens cooperate cheerfully with R&D test procedures.

Ending the briefing

Steve-G takes over, ordering everyone to stand as Gary-V and Ben-B leave the briefing room. Then Steve-G orders the characters to follow the guards back to the checkpoint to pick up their gear. Steve-G does not leave the room.

The mission

At the checkpoint, the characters' weapons are returned. Additional equipment is distributed as assigned. Collect each player's slip of paper listing the equipment he is responsible for. The team leader is issued his special gear and handed a termination voucher for five to 15 unnamed traitors, valid for 24 hours.

Wearing complete crash gear, their driver, Frank-O, waits impatiently in a modified autocar (**Tension 4**). See the NPC roster at the end of the mission for details about Frank-O.

The car was extended to hold an entire team and its gear. The roof is completely gone, though its supports remain, perhaps intended as roll bars. Two long benches are bolted down the center of the vehicle behind the padded driver's seat. The characters must sit back-to-back on the benches, facing outward with their gear at their feet and under the benches. There are no seatbelts on the benches, but Frank-O is strapped in a literal web of belts and harnesses.

The ride to the elevator

Frank-O drives like a man who can't comprehend the consequences of a car crash. Leaning on the blaring horn all the way, he maneuvers and accelerates as quickly as the buried control and guidance tracks allow. Frank-O must also have a deal with Internal Security, because he passes several officers who neither stop nor pursue him. They just point at his passengers and laugh.

Stress to the players that their characters are in grave danger of never reaching the elevator. To cling to the car, each PC must make an Violence/Agility check as the vehicle careens along the hallways. Failure means the PC slips off and is wounded. Then Frank-O discovers the missing PC, screeches to a halt, wheels around and accelerates back toward the PC at top speed. The grounded PC must instantly evade, making an Agility roll to avoid being run down. PCs who make their Agility checks to stay on the car should make further Violence checks to avoid losing their lunches. (**Note:** Citizens may be fined for contaminating a public thoroughfare.)

The Troubleshooters cannot intimidate Frank-O. He's dealt with dozens of teams before and knows all their tricks. If necessary, he reminds the Troubleshooters he's the only person wearing crash gear. If the PCs distract him and cause a crash, The Computer holds them responsible for the autocar as well as their own equipment.

Just before INFRARED Dining Room 12, Frank-O disengages from the 'spine' (control and guidance track) and takes full manual command of the autocar. He soon turns onto a little-used roadhall, where, despite his best efforts, two INFRAREDs barely avoid becoming hood ornaments. At the last possible second, he screeches to a halt at the end of the roadhall, just tapping the elevator doors with the front bumper.

The remainder of the action takes place in the warehouse complex (**Tension 0**) depicted on Map 1 at the end of *Vapors Don't Shoot Back.*

Area 1. Warehouse elevator

Everything about the elevator should worry the PCs. From the moment they step into the elevator they should fear for their lives. The trip down should only intensify their terror.

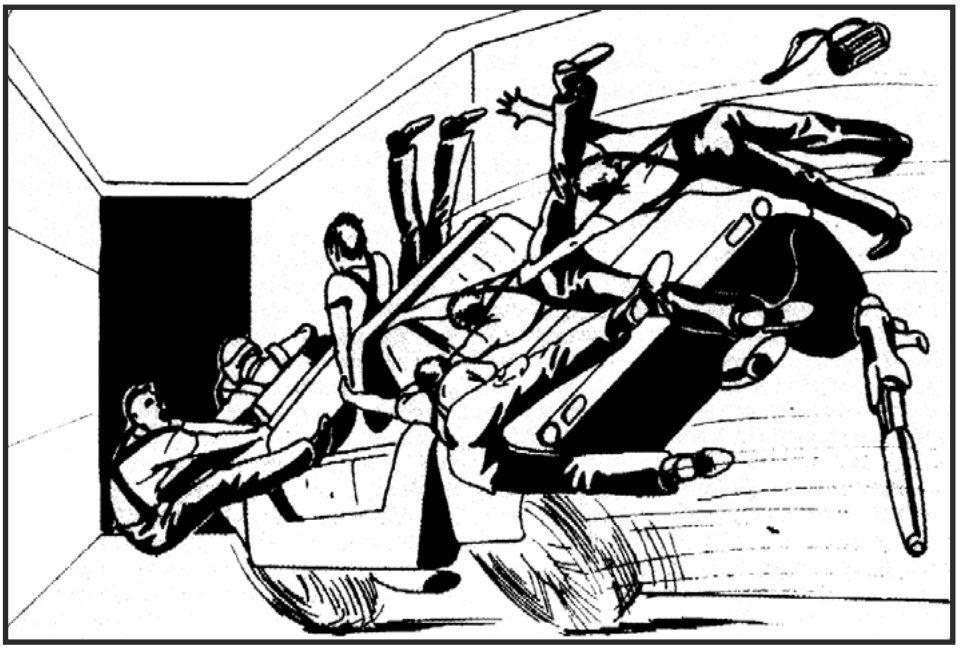
A diagonal violet stripe, chipped and faded, crosses the elevator doors, which are dented and rusty. One tiny button rests in a small panel to the right of the doors. An arrow on the button points down. A power panel is set in the wall about one meter from the control panel. Particularly observant characters should note that, oddly, no Computer cameras are visible in this hallway.

While the PCs put themselves back together and shoulder their gear, Frank-O starts up a noisy portable generator in the trunk. He drags two insulated cables, one red and one black, over to the power panel where he waits impatiently. Finally, belching oil and smoke, the ancient generator comes up to speed. After testing the current by touching the two cable ends together in a shower of sparks, Frank-O plugs the cables into the panel.

A light in the 'down' button flickers once or twice, then shines steadily for a second before shorting out. Then the doors open with a jerky, hesitant motion. A raspy, static-filled sound drifts out, barely recognizable as Teela O'Malley theme music. The elevator walls, floor and ceiling are dented, scratched and dusty. (Here's a chance to share a favorite limerick or some choice graffiti with your players—put it on the elevator walls.) Unlike the rest of the creaking, swaying elevator, the interior lights work perfectly, glaring with brilliant intensity through cracked ceiling panels.

There are three control buttons in the elevator labeled 'UP', 'DOWN' and 'STOP'. The DOWN button closes the doors and begins the descent. As soon as the doors close, Frank-O unplugs the generator, locks the doors shut and drives off. The UP button does not work now (it will work again in 24 hours or when the mission is aborted, whichever comes first). If pressed, the STOP button falls through the panel and down the dark shaft—but the PCs never hear it hit bottom.

The elevator descends slowly, shuddering and swaying back and forth while cables twang and snap in the shaft above. The elevator lurches, drops, then stops randomly. The lights even go out a few times, though Teela croons steadily. In the elevator car, anyone wearing a parka begins to sweat and should fear overheating before long. The PCs should not know how far down they travel, only that they are deep below their starting point. (Actually they descend 35 meters—about 11 stories.)



'I'm sorry. You are not cleared for seat belts at this time…'

Arrival and greeting

Review Map 1 at the end of this mission.

The elevator falls the last meter, crashing to a stop. Everyone inside must make a successful Agility check to keep from crashing to the floor or slamming against the walls. (This is a good time to ask someone who fails his check, 'Were you right-handed or left-handed?')

The door automatically opens at the bottom, but just partway. Only one character at a time can worm through. Light from the elevator is swallowed up by the huge, dark warehouse. This deep underground, the warehouse is quite cold and, of course, hasn't been heated in years. Characters without parkas begin to shiver and clack their teeth together loudly. Everyone's toes and fingers develop strange tingly and numb sensations. Determine other effects of the cold as you see fit, but don't make them disabling, just an irritating nuisance.

After the PCs have gotten oriented, and perhaps after they try to kill each other a few times—this is a dark room, after all!—a hidden PURGEr fires at the first person out the door. He uses an awesome weapon of the Old Reckoning: a 'RamCo wristrocket' slingshot loaded with precision-milled steel ball bearings (in ample supply in the warehouse). See the NPC roster for details about this PURGEr, nicknamed 'Ramco'. He is hidden at the north end of the first shelf rack east of the elevator. His shots are silent until they hit, making him hard to find. Ramco is very accurate, as the shrunken warehouse rat population can attest. He fires every round, retreating to the east if pursued or receiving life-threatening return fire.

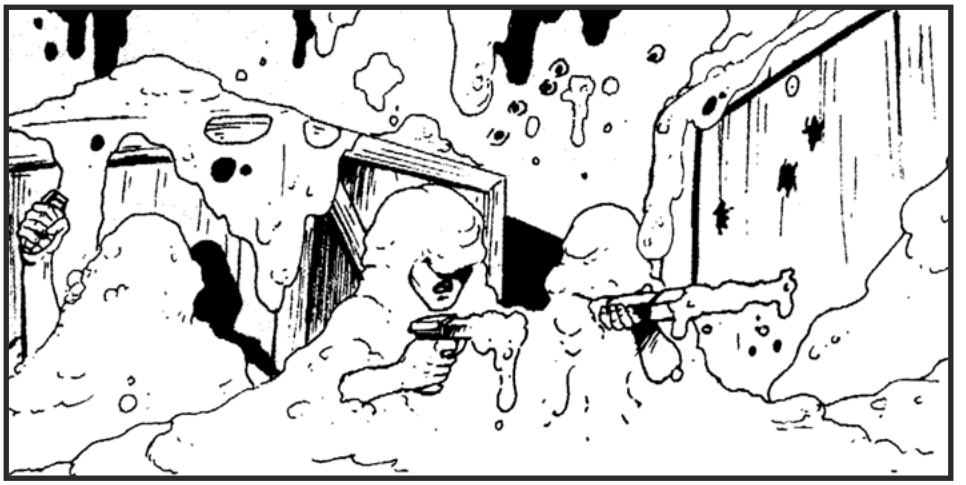
Ramco's goal is to draw the PCs away from Vatman (area 5), whom he assumes the PCs are after. As soon as Ramco is wounded (or just before he dies, whichever comes first), he shouts, 'Let 'er rip, Vatman!' This should draw an interesting reaction from Bobby-O, also a PURGEr, who knows Vatman (see Bobby-O's character sheet).

If the PCs hole up in the elevator, describe the projectiles zinging through the door and ricocheting around inside the elevator compartment. If that doesn't coax them out, short-circuit the control panel and start the elevator on fire.

If the PCs are quiet, they hear the muffled sounds of a distant firefight drawing near. The sounds come from the Hotshots, the enemy Troubleshooter team battling two PURGE guards in the north warehouse. (At a dramatic moment, the Hotshots should burst into the south warehouse, weapons blazing.)

Area 2. South warehouse offices

These prefabricated offices are only dimly lit by the elevator's light (if it's still on). The walls are mostly windows, resting on waist-high thin metal walls. Both the outer and inner doors stand open; they are easily closed, but creak loudly when moved. All the furniture was relocated or stolen long ago. The floor of both rooms is strewn with broken bot bits, plastic shreds and oily rags. In



'Please extinguish all smoking materials. Thank you for your cooperation.'

the center of each room hangs a strange ancient cord with a switch on it (empty but electrically live light sockets).

A careful search reveals an Old Reckoning projectile pistol (toy dart gun) and a thin needle, its pointed tip still in the manufacturer's protective seal (rubber-tipped dart). This weapon has a maximum range of two meters and causes no damage whatever, but it looks deadly.

A ladder along the back wall leads up through a hole in the ceiling into a plexiglas tube. The ladder continues through the tube to a hatch in the monitor station floor (Area 3).

The PCs can use these offices as a temporary refuge, but should soon realize how fragile they are. Lasers and slugs first melt and dent the metal walls, then blast through. Just about anything shatters the window panes, which are genuine sharp glass, not the normal safety-plexi.

Area 3. Monitor station

A ladder within a plexiglas tube leads up 17 meters from the offices (area 2) to a hatch in the monitor station floor. This small, two-meter-square room is bolted to the wall near the warehouse ceiling with just enough space overhead to stand in comfortably. Only the floor and back wall are solid; the rest of the room is plexi-enclosed. One round after the hatch is opened, two high intensity lights pop on, brightly illuminating the tube and the monitor station, and everyone within them. No NPC within range can resist such a target. The lights stay on until the switch on the hatch is discovered and turned off. (Smashing the light bulbs works too.)

Area 4. South warehouse

This mammoth warehouse is 75 meters wide and 175 meters long. The ceiling, 20 meters up, is out of flashlight range (15 meters). The smooth concrete floor has many oily stains and discolored patches. The entire room is pitch black, except for light from the elevator at the southwest corner (Area 1). The light controls are in a circuit-breaker box on the wall near the offices. A successful Electronic Engineering skill check and three rounds of work are needed to switch on the warehouse lights. A failed check produces a fascinating pyrotechnic display.

Giant steel shelf racks, 15 meters tall, stand throughout the warehouse. These shelf racks are marked on the map. Each rack contains five shelves, each three meters apart. Brave (or foolhardy) characters can climb the racks' corner posts by making a Violence/Agility check.

Some racks are full, others are empty (see the map). In the full racks, all shelves except the uppermost hold two-meter-cube pressure-sealed plastic crates of styrofoam 'peanuts'. These crates are quite light, but too large for one person to carry. The smaller one-cubic-meter crates on the top shelves are packed with precision-milled steel ball bearings. Weighing 500 pounds apiece, these boxes are hard to move.

Projectiles, such as slugs, penetrate and burst up to four of the larger crates at a time, showering 'peanuts' in all directions. Laser beams dissipate in a single crate, melting the styro within as well as the crate, giving off a thick, black, foul-smelling smoke. No weapon the characters have will shoot through a crate of ball bearings, but any hit ruptures the crate, spilling thousands of bearings over the edge. Characters underneath must make a Violence/Agility check to leap out of the way or receive a wound from the shower of steel. Of course, all those little round things on the floor make slipping and falling likely—PCs must succeed in a Violence/Agility check each round to move without falling and getting Snafued.

Naturally, firing between crates and shelves is difficult. Full shelves block line of sight at your discretion. Even empty shelves can make it hard to identify proper targets, so a Troubleshooter may well confuse friend and foe (heh, heh).

The warehouse contains an automatic fire extinguishing system. Combination combustion sensors and spray nozzles hang from the ceiling in a grid pattern of five-meter squares. The system activates soon after any substantial explosion or smoke. When activated, the nozzles spray a thick, sticky yellow foam for six rounds. During that time, all fires are extinguished and visibility is reduced to zero. Afterward, every exposed surface is coated with two centimeters of foam, greatly increasing the chances for dramatic and injurious falls. Unprotected weapons malfunction with the next shot. Use your imagination to invent other effects of the foam if you wish. The extinguishing system only works once.

Area 5. Vatman and Robin

The famous PURGE terrorist, Vatman, is standing atop a rickety ladder propped on a bearing crate on the top shelf of a rack, planting the last of a chain of explosives on the ceiling. His assistant, Robin, holds the ladder. See the NPC roster for details about both these PURGErs. Ramco, another PURGEr, is guarding the elevator while two other PURGErs battle the Hotshots, the Troubleshooter team in the north warehouse.

When Troubleshooters appear from both sides, Vatman assumes they're gunning for him. Resolved to complete his final 'vat mission' before being captured or vaporized, he doubles his efforts. Vatman stays out of the fight until his 'vat bombs' are ready (four or five rounds, say), then opens fire with his laser rifle. If necessary, Robin uses his blaster to defend Vatman while he works. Determined to go down with his vat, Vatman fights to the death from atop the shelf. He has rigged a 'dead man' switch to set off the explosives when he dies.

Seconds after Vatman dies, a series of explosions on the ceiling shake the warehouse. Cracking and ripping, the concrete and steel ceiling splits open.

Then, with a loud roar, an entire 20-meter wide, ten meter-high food vat drops through the ceiling, followed by several shrieking INFRAREDs. Smashing through all the shelves under it, the vat crashes to the floor and bursts open, sending a powerful wave of over 2.5 million liters (700,000 gallons) of gray-green gruel surging across the floor. When the wave subsides and the dust clears, the south warehouse is 25 centimeters deep in warm, cultured goo.

Not too long after the vat falls through, Internal Security agents peer gingerly over the edge of the hole in the ceiling. Not too long after that, the hole is cordoned off while Internal Security tries to figure out what happened and what to do next. As far as they are concerned, everyone in the warehouse is a traitor and saboteur.

Area 6. Mechanical arms

These three-jointed mechanical arms are mounted on a trolley that slides from one side of the warehouse to the other along a rail. The rail stretches the length of the warehouse on tracks affixed to the long walls. The arms, with a ten-meter reach, are programmed to pluck items from the forkbots and shelve them on the uppermost shelves. The arms come to life at the same time the forkbots activate (a few rounds after the first laser or slug shot is fired).

Area 7. Forkbots

These oversized, automated forklifts switch on a few rounds after the first laser or slug shot is fired. Three start in the south warehouse. Another, in the north warehouse, is quickly dispatched by the Hotshots.

Once activated, each heavy forkbot attempts to pick up any large object on the floor (especially PCs) and raise it to the mechanical arm (Area 6) for shelving. Once in a forkbot's grip, a character needs one full round to struggle free. By then he's too high to jump down safely (although he might try to leap for a nearby shelf unit). The forkbot and mechanical arms aren't gentle, and characters should fear being crushed at any moment. Roll the die, busily study tables, tsk-tsk and cluck sympathetically. However, shelved characters end up merely bruised and stranded.

The forkbots move as fast as a running person, weigh several tons and are practically impervious to laser and slug fire (sustained or concentrated fire will eventually destroy anything). A direct hit from a grenade can often disable or destroy a forkbot. Characters on the floor cannot fire over a forkbot. See the Bot roster for additional details.

These bots present several fun possibilities. Perhaps their brakes don't always function, or they occasionally forget their 'Fragile: Handle with Care' programming. Who knows, they might even accidentally drop something from a great height. Characters dropped from heights are wounded.

Area 8. Security combots

Leaning against the east wall (under the '8' on Map 1) are two rusted security combots, programmed to stun or wound any intruders in the warehouse. Sensing all the commotion, they, too, activate a few rounds after the first shot is fired. They function slowly at first, gradually working up to dilapidated lethargy. Each is armed with a needle gun and a stun gun, built into the arms. When new, their little treads easily overtook humans, but now these bots can hardly keep up and have trouble with sharp turns. On a 1d20 roll of 19 or 20, they topple over. See 'Security Combot' in the Bot roster.

Area 9. Sliding doors

Two identical pairs of thick, sliding doors provide the only link between the two warehouses. The ten-meter wide doors roll on tracks in the floor and ceiling. The rollers are fairly rusty, but determined pushing and pulling by more than one individual moves the doors, creaking and groaning loudly. An oval-shaped room lies between the two pairs of doors. When both pairs of doors are open, light enters the south warehouse from the north warehouse. Two of Vatman's PURGErs closed these doors behind them after entering the north warehouse. Fresh slug scars and two char marks against the north door record their demise.

At an appropriately dramatic moment of your choosing, the Hotshot Troubleshooter team opens these doors and charges into the south warehouse, weapons blazing, and screaming at the top of their lungs, *'Vapors don't shoot back!'* (For more about the Hotshots, see Area 12.)

The PCs should be instantly awed and inspired by the Hotshots' Troubleshooter vitality and gung-ho spirit. They should also shoot to kill, because as far as they know the Hotshots are disguised traitors.

Area 10. North warehouse

The brightly lit north warehouse is similar to the south warehouse, with the addition of shipping and receiving docks in the west wall. Large container bots and trucks once backed up to the docks to disgorge or take on supplies. They are all gone now. A sliding door at each dock opens over the parking lot (Area 13) one meter below the level of the warehouse floor. The northernmost sliding door is ajar, opened by the Hotshots.

A recently ruined forkbot lies close to the loading docks. The mechanical arm near the ceiling (Area 6) is still active. It follows characters from above, desiring to shelve them, but unable to reach them.

The fire extinguishing system here activates with the first explosion, smoke or laser fire in this area, but only sprays for two rounds and does not cause weapons to malfunction.

Area 11. Shipping & receiving office

This office and the attached filing room are stripped clean; nothing remains here.

Area 12. Hotshots' starting point

The six Hotshots are Buck-U's gung-ho team of ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooters. Their motto, 'Vapors Don't Shoot Back', has served them well. Only hours ago, they got an assignment similar to the PCs' assignment. Brandishing their laser rifles and slug throwers, they rallied around their leader, Bud-O-NDP-4, and worked themselves into a fighting frenzy. See Hotshots and Bud-O-NDP-4 on the roster for details about these maniacs.

Their strategy is to move in a dense pack, firing continually. They shoot first and never ask questions. They neither negotiate nor show mercy (nor much intelligence). In darkness, Bud-O wears infrared goggles to direct the team's movement and fire.

Soon after entering the warehouse, the Hotshots encountered two PURGErs and opened fire. Charging forward, the Hotshots overran a forkbot, then finished off the PURGErs against the sliding doors. When the south warehouse is filled with styrofoam peanuts and fire suppressant foam floating atop a sea of food vat gruel, and the PCs are scampering back and forth trying to avoid forkbots, combots and mechanical arms, the time is ripe for the Hotshots to slide open the doors and burst into the south warehouse, screaming and yelling and shooting.

Like all Troubleshooter teams, the Hotshots are plagued by jealousy, suspicion and treachery. After they first fire on the PCs, roll 1d20 every couple of rounds. If the result is a 1 or 2, remove one of the Hotshots—a teammate just shot him! However, no Hotshot attacks Bud-O. They

Unauthorized use of forkbots is prohibited.

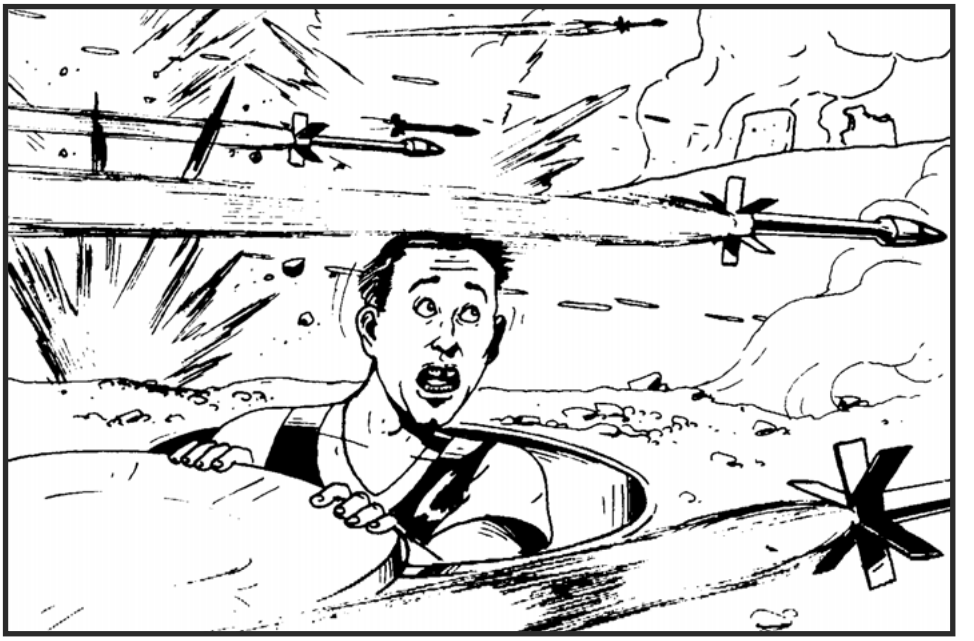
respect him too much. Also, they suspect he's wired himself with explosives.

Area 13. Parking lot

Three pairs of sliding doors connect the parking lot with the north warehouse. The parking lot floor is made of a coarse black material and is one meter lower than the warehouse floor. In a few places, small rounded plants grow from cracks in the parking lot blacktop. Some characters may recognize the shape of these mushrooms as similar to a tacnuke cloud. Although many mushrooms are poisonous, these are harmless, chock-full of healthy nutrients and rather tasty—unlike the 'mushroom concentrate' served in Complex cafeterias. A total of two man-hours spent harvesting these mushrooms produces a quantity worth 600 credits on the IR market.

The exposed bedrock ceiling is 21 meters above the blacktop. Although lights hang from the ceiling, none of them work.

The south wall opens into a large tunnel with an arched ceiling (Area 14).



Home, home on the firing range.

Area 14. Transit tunnel

This 20-meter-wide tunnel is totally dark. The arched ceiling rises 15 meters above the floor. Two faded yellow lines run down the center of the black floor. Half-way between the center line and each wall is a very worn, dotted, gray line. Tiny metallic plates between the center lines and on the walls reflect torchlight eerily like glittering little animal eyes. Small, burned-out lights line the ceiling and walls.

Carved from the solid rock beneath the food vat levels, the tunnel used to connect the warehouses with the rest of RSB Sector. Now, only one-half kilometer of the tunnel remains; the rest is blocked by a cave-in.

Near the wall of rubble at the tunnel's end, an extension ladder leads to a narrow shaft in the ceiling. The shaft ends in a man-hole cover in the center of the Armed Forces small-arms qualification range, which is always in use.

Ending the episode

While the PCs battle in the warehouse, Buck-U discovers Neil-U's most valuable possession, an independent personal computer. An independent computer allows Neil-U to test and develop his programs while remaining completely safe from The Computer's interference. Handed an opportunity to cheat, Buck-U decides to eliminate Neil-U, his only real competition, from the tournament by informing The Computer of Neil-U's personal computer. The Computer immediately orders the Armed Forces to retrieve the personal computer.

Alerted by one of his spies, Neil-U decides to send a team to rescue his personal computer. If the PCs are 'losing' this round anyway, Neil-U decides to cut his losses and forfeit the round. However, it would be a shame to abort the mission until at least half the PCs are killed or completely incapacitated, and the others wounded or pinned down. If the PCs are miraculously winning, Neil-U waits until just after they finish off their last opponent before aborting the mission.

Neil-U contacts the PCs through the leader's recording device. (If the leader has been vaporized, Neil-U manages to route the recall through the PCs' individual PDCs.) Of course the characters should believe The Computer is changing their orders. Speakers in the leader's helmet blare, 'Urgent Message: Abort Mission. Repeat, Abort Mission. Retreat to elevator for pickup. Retrieve all assigned equipment. Thank you for your cooperation.'

The cavalry

Frank-O returns and takes control of the elevator, sending down two GREEN-Clearance Vulture goons to provide covering fire if necessary. These two guys are armed with GREEN laser rifles and wear GREEN reflec. They should be able to pin down anything in the warehouse by shock alone. They don't hesitate to turn their weapons on anyone who threatens them. See Cavalry on the NPC roster.

Back in the hallway, Frank-O locks up the elevator while the PCs load into his autocar. He drives them straight to Headquarters, radioing ahead for docbots if they're needed.

The debriefing

Back at Headquarters, injured PCs are treated and sent to recovery wards. The others are told to wait for orders in the cafeteria or lounge. All PCs must account for their assigned equipment. Amos-O and Bobby-O must turn in their Multicorder recordings. Because Neil-U doesn't have much time, a formal debriefing is not held. However, any character may make a private report to The Computer. Hand out Official Commendations, Official Reprimands based on what Frank-O observed, the team leader's helmet broadcast, the two recordings and any reports to The Computer.

Complete necessary clone replacements, then proceed with Episode 2.

2: The cheating begins

Mission summary

Tipped off by Buck-U, The Computer quickly gathers an awesome strike force to march north and capture or destroy Neil-U's personal computer. This device was a major contributor to Neil-U's rise to power. On it, Neil-U codes and tests programs in safety before transferring them to the Alpha Complex Computer. Other High Programmers must design and develop their programs in secret subsystems on The Computer itself—risky business.

Neil-U realizes Buck-U is trying to win the tournament by linking Neil-U to an independent computer, an unforgivable offense. However, Neil-U has left no traceable clues in his personal computer. Even so, he is unwilling to let The Computer destroy it or, worse yet, turn it into yet another subjugated peripheral. So, Neil-U sets aside the tournament and hastily organizes a mission to rescue his personal computer's CPU Core, its only irreplaceable part.

Neil-U's personal computer is hidden in an Old Reckoning U.S. Geological Survey station, 25 kilometers north of the RSB Sector dome. Speed is critical. The rescue team (the PCs) must move quickly to reach the weather station before The Computer's strike force arrives. Unfortunately, the team can't take the most direct route (Highway 45). They'd be spotted by regular patrols, and The Computer could probably figure out where they were heading.

Possession of computer CPU parts is treason, so, in their briefing, the PCs are told they must recover a stolen container of radioactive isotopes, desperately needed for medical purposes.

Ironically, the PCs leave the dome from the staging area where the strike force is forming up. Little do they know they will see those troops and combots again.

The PCs are to head east on a route given to their leader and rendezvous with a flybot and its pilot. The flybot, another of Neil-U's illegal possessions, is constructed entirely of salvaged parts from crashed and trashed flybots. When the PCs reach the flybot, they find the pilot dead, shot by one of Buck-U's assassins (who otherwise plays no role in the storyline). The pilot was supposed to teach the PCs how to use their parachutes.

All is not lost, though. The fixed-wing flybot can fly itself on autopilot, or the team equipment guy can fly it (more or less) on manual. The autopilot flies so low the flybot frequently brushes tree tops, but it's the safer choice. If the PCs fly manually and stray more than a few kilometers from the pre-planned route, an Armed Forces model 916 flybot intercepts them—time to bail out, with or without instructions.

Once over the mountaintop weather station, the PCs must parachute in and recover the 'radioactive isotopes' (the CPU Core). The container is protected by a lethal defense mechanism only the team leader knows about.

Regardless of how long the PCs spend dithering en route, they still beat the strike force to the CPU Core. Unfortunately, the strike force arrives just in time to catch the PCs with the goods. During the ensuing firefight, the PCs' flybot swoops down to snap them off the ground with skyhooks.

On the way back to Alpha Complex the flybot gets hit and crashes several kilometers from the weather station. PC survivors must make their way cross-country back to their dome home. The great Outdoors holds many deadly obstacles and frightening challenges to test the PCs' courage, skill, strength but mostly their luck.

Mission alert

While mingling with other Troubleshooters in the cafeteria, lounge or recovery ward, each PC hears a rumor. Privately give each player a rumor from the General Rumor Table (see the start of Episode 1). Secretly inform Amos-O he can tell Mortimer-O is definitely a Mystic. Bobby-O receives the following secret message from his PURGE superior: 'The army in your area is after a hot computer part—steal or destroy it.'

Large Computer screens grace the lounge, cafeteria and recovery ward walls. A continuous stream of patriotic slogans and security warnings flashes across the screens. One particular announcement provokes cheers from many viewers: The famous entertainer, Teela O'Malley, will soon visit RSB Sector and perform a live show.

Not long after that hot newsflash, a mission alert fills the screens.

••••• MISSION ALERT •••••

Attention Amos-O, Cain-O, Roger-O, Mortimer-O, Terry-O and Bobby-O. Another exciting opportunity to serve The Computer is upon you! This is an expression of The Computer's confidence in you.

As evidence of The Computer's trust, your routine mission will take you Outdoors! The Computer offers you this gentle exposure to the rigors of life outside the dome so you may better appreciate life inside. Rejoice in this rare opportunity.

Failure to report to Briefing Room C within ten minutes constitutes disregard of Computer orders, a serious offense. Your cooperation and loyalty are always rewarded.

As the PCs leave the lounge, cafeteria and recovery ward, other Troubleshooters shout words of encouragement and advice: 'Don't leave the dome!' 'I lost my leg out there!' 'If it moves, shoot it.' 'Never leave the roads.'

Just about everyone in the Headquarters sees the mission alert, so PCs find it hard not to report for their briefing. Assign fines to those who try to avoid the briefings (and then have guards drag them to the briefing anyway).

The briefing room

This room (**Tension 16**) was fumigated several hours ago, and a sharp chemical odor lingers. There is no danger from the remaining pesticide, but the PCs may be distressed. The same four BLUE-Clearance guards stand silent and watchful. The three armed guards are wearing small air filters over their noses and mouths. The fourth guard, Spike-B, enjoys the fumes.

The briefing personnel

Ben-B was terminated after the last briefing for asking too many questions about 'mission authenticity'. Steve-G and Gary-V should appear less confident and secure than in the first briefing. Gary-V knows Buck-U has taken the lead in the tournament, and Neil-U will suffer a major setback if his personal computer isn't rescued. Gary-V desperately wants to lead the rescue mission himself, but realizes his absence would be noticed and investigated. He's also sure the PCs will bungle the mission. Although Steve-G does not know of the tournament, he senses his superior's tension and is worried by it.

Beginning the briefing

Steve-G enters and barks, 'All rise!' PCs who don't stand up respectfully are none-too-gently yanked to their feet by a guard. Wearing his shoulder holster, Gary-V enters and takes his seat behind the podium. He spreads six personnel files on the podium in front of him.

Steve-G motions for everyone to sit, then takes roll call. He first calls surviving team members, reprimanding those who did not perform well in the first mission. Next, he reads the names of clone replacements, urging them to avoid their predecessor's mistakes. Then he addresses the team. Read the following text out loud:

'We all know rumors are counterproductive, and I might add, often treasonous. Yet they abound. The current rumor that certain RED reflec armor is defective is absolutely false. To set this rumor at rest, I have ordered an INFRARED citizen dressed in the armor. I will laser him at point blank range, then bring him in so you may note the results.'

Drawing his laser pistol, Steve-G strides out the door behind the podium. A second later, you hear the unmistakable shriek of laser fire, followed by a painful scream. After a slight pause, Steve-G steps back into the room—alone, a look of exasperation on his face,

Then, immediately composed, he turns and smiles broadly. 'The test was a complete success, I assure you, proving conclusively the armor is not defective. Anyway, our next task is to assign mission equipment.'

The armor held, but the target passed out from fright, and viewing him might be bad for morale. What do you expect from an INFRARED?

Assigning mission equipment

The wall behind the podium swirls into a Computer screen. The screen displays a list of equipment assigned to the team for this mission. If any equipment was damaged or destroyed in the last mission, Steve-G reprimands the responsible parties, if they're still alive. Abandoned equipment sends him into a flaming rage. Hand out fines as you see fit.

Read the Mission 2 equipment list, nearby, to the players so they can copy it. Give them a few minutes to divide the gear. One PC must take responsibility for every piece of equipment on the list, except the crawler. Everyone is responsible for it.

No maps are available. They are too rare and classified for even Neil-U to obtain for mere ORANGE-Clearance Troubleshooters.

After the PCs divide their gear, Steve-G assigns some additional equipment. Read the following text aloud.

'You are each assigned a parachute/skyhook package. These packages are already in your crawler. Correct operation of the parachutes will be explained later. It's really quite simple and very safe. The Computer will now explain the operation of the skyhook personal retrieval system.'

An image of a large backpack with a complicated harness appears on the screen. The Computer's familiar voice narrates while the image slowly rotates, showing all sides. 'When you wish to be retrieved, put on the skyhook and tighten the harness. Then pull the activation handle. Relax your muscles, flex your knees and breathe normally. Do not look up or severe spine and neck injuries may result. Retrieval by skyhook is always an exciting experience, and perfectly safe.'

The crawler contains seven parachute/skyhook packages. Each package consists of a harness sandwiched between a parachute and a skyhook. The PCs know nothing of parachutes and skyhooks and information about them is impossible to obtain.

The skyhook allows aircraft to pick up people or cargo without landing. When the activation handle is pulled, a balloon pops from the backpack, fills with helium and rises 100 meters into the

Mission 2 equipment

Flamethrower, five shots remaining, no reload
Ice gun
(2) Laser rifles, one GREEN laser barrel apiece
(12) ORANGE laser barrels
Slugthrower
(5) Ten-round clips of solid slug ammo
Semi-automatic slugthrower (with voucher authorizing assigned character to operate this GREEN-Clearance weapon)
(25) Single HEAT slugs
(4) Environ suits
Pair of binoculars
(2) InfraSpecs
(4) Backpacks
(6) Two-day ration packs
(2) 30-meter ropes
(6) One-liter water bottles
Hottorch
Box of 20 high explosive grenades
(6) Pair hiking boots
Compass
All terrain crawler

air. A nylon shock-cord connects the balloon to the harness. An aircraft snags the cord and winches it in. The shock-cord absorbs much of the initial take-off jolt, but it's still a bonewrenching experience.

The mission assignment

Here's a dramatic challenge. As you portray Gary-V delivering the mission assignment, remember he is worried and upset, yet trying not to reveal those feelings. Read aloud:

Gary-V stands, leaning forward, his hands resting on the podium. Slowly, he surveys everyone in the room, his cold eyes never blinking. Outwardly calm, he radiates tension and energy.

'Troubleshooters,' he says. 'Your mission is of the utmost importance. Countless lives throughout Alpha Complex depend upon the outcome of your mission. Rare radioactive isotopes, needed for medical research and treatment, were recently stolen and removed from Alpha Complex in a sealed container.

'We learned the container's location only hours ago. Now, you must recover it. These isotopes have short half-lives, so you must return them by nightfall tomorrow.' *[Pause. Gary-V's eyes slowly cross and uncross as he gazes up at the ceiling.]* **'Direct exposure to these isotopes can be deadly, but the container is completely shielded. As long as you do not open the containers you will be perfectly safe.**

'Speed will determine the outcome and your survival. Pay close attention to these instructions; I do not expect to repeat myself.

'Immediately following this briefing you will run, not walk, to an autocar parked at the entrance checkpoint. All your weapons and other equipment will already be on board, packed in crates. Frank-O will transport you to the RSB Armed Forces staging area where you will pick up your crawler.

'You will depart through Gate 1, and your team leader will navigate you unerringly to a rendezvous with a flybot and its pilot, Glen-G-ESE-5. They will fly you to the container site and back. In flight, Glen-G will instruct you in the use of the parachutes. That is all.'

Gary-V is in a hurry to get the mission started, so he's impatient with questions. Steve-G dismisses everyone except the team leader. Then Steve-G leaves the room, curious about what Gary-V will tell the team leader. The guards remain.

Private leader briefing

Review Map 2 at the end of the mission.

Gary-V gives the leader a requisition form for the crawler, then shows the leader the route his team and the flybot will follow. Draw a rough map for the player, indicating important and interesting features, and explain the route. Then read the following text out loud to the player.

'The radio security code for Gate 1, out of the dome, is MEMBUKA. Remember it. The rest of the information I now give you comes from one of The Computer's reliable surveillance satellites, so it should be accurate. The container is hidden in the basement of the central building of an Old Reckoning outpost of some kind and is protected by a lethal security system. The first object that moves down the stairs will be destroyed. You can trigger the system by throwing a piece of junk down the stairs. The system needs two minutes to recharge, so you won't have long. The container is within a machine against the back wall. We believe the thieves left the container in the machine to analyze its contents.

'Intelligence indicates the container is now labeled "CPU CORE", which may alarm several members of your team. You must remove the label before anyone else sees or records it. Use the additional skyhook to retrieve the container.'

He pauses, looking almost embarrassed. 'I have never sent anyone on a more important mission—best of luck.' His voice becomes icy, serious again. 'Remember, no matter what, bring that container back. Dismissed.'

The mission

During the entire autocar trip from the briefing room, Frank-O gleefully sends RED-garbed pedestrians scurrying out of his way and nearly hurls the PCs from their seats. With one final screech of the tires he turns off the main roadhall into a long ORANGE corridor. Frank-O's attitude changes abruptly. His grin changes to tight-lipped silence.

Slowing to a crawl, he cautiously joins a line of autocars passing one by one through a checkpoint at the corridor's exit. An autotransport pulls in behind the PCs, carrying a squad of Death Troopers in its open back (see Death Trooper on the NPC roster). They immediately begin taunting the PCs, shouting out, 'Hey, laserbait!' 'Go back to the vats!' 'Anyone want to butt heads?' Give the PCs a chance to respond if they're feeling rambunctious.

Casually, the two guards at the checkpoint salute the occupants of each autocar, then wave it through. The guards stand with a fierce-looking doberbot next to a small slug-proof booth. Both men carry belt-fed slugthrowers and wear GREEN reflec. (See Reggie-G and Rip-G on the NPC roster, and the doberbot on the Bot roster.)

When the PCs' autocar approaches the checkpoint, Rip-G quickly presses a button on his belt. A line of angled steel spikes pops up from the floor, blocking the gate. Leveling his slugthrower at the PCs, he steps forward, covered by his partner and the alert doberbot. In a gruff voice he addresses Frank-O, 'This is a restricted area. You've got one second to state your name and business.' In an extremely polite voice, Frank-O does so. Frowning, Rip-G orders, 'Sniff them out, Reggie-G, while I check on this.'

Rip-G steps into the booth while Reggie-G releases the doberbot. It sniffs all around the autocar then leaps up into the crates. The Death Troopers find this all quite amusing and continue taunting the PCs. These troopers only draw their weapons if the PCs draw weapons or open one of their crates.

After a few seconds the doberbot snarls, pointing at the crates with its snapping jaws. Very alert, Reggie-G demands, 'What's in the boxes?' No matter what the PCs say, a moment after they finish, Rip-G steps from the booth, lowers the spikes, and says, 'You're cleared. Go on through.' Reggie-G protests, but his partner silences him, saying, 'I don't like it any more than you, and I don't like you very much.' The remainder of the mission takes place in the areas depicted on Map 2 (see the end of the mission).

Area 1. RSB Armed Forces staging area

This huge room, several times larger than the warehouse complex, is filled with activity, noise and confusion. Army patrols and special units form up here before going Outdoors. Soldiers, combots and warbots are everywhere. Right now, most of the activity centers around an Armed Forces strike force preparing for a mission. Mechanics swarm over an amazing variety of sinister vehicles, fixing and fussing, while technicians examine and fine-tune the numerous bots. Curses, shouted questions and orders bellowed over revving engines fill the air.

Unloading the autocar

Frank-O drives to an All Terrain Crawler (ATC) parked at the edge of Gate 1 and stops, leaving the engine running. He assumes this ATC is the PCs', but he doesn't know and doesn't care. He just wants to leave as soon as he can. He demands in quiet, hurried tones that the PCs unload—now! If they respond too slowly, Frank-O begins throwing their crates out of the autocar. As soon as the autocar is empty he takes off without a word.

Gate 1 is a massive concrete and steel wall. As soon as the PCs finish unloading, a speaker over the gate announces, 'Clear!' In an eyeblink, the gate snaps up into the ceiling. A heavily-armed dozer-crawler, splashed with gore and shredded plant matter, blackened from laser fire and generally beat-to-pieces, roars through the opening, narrowly missing the PCs and their valuable Computer property. The gate snaps shut just as quickly with a reverberating boom.

Welcoming committee

As the first PC touches their ATC, Deke-G, the leader of a nearby squad of troops screams, 'Halt!' The PCs face a line of 15 leveled laser rifles, covering Deke-G's advance. Deke-G marches up to the PCs and demands to know who they are and what they're doing. He is absolutely sure of his authority in this situation and does not hesitate to vaporize anyone who questions it. (See Deke-G and Strike Force Trooper on the NPC roster.)

Without a vehicle voucher, Deke-G blasts the entire team—you can't be too careful this close to the Outdoors. If given a vehicle voucher, Deke-G calls for a portable Computer terminal to verify it. The Computer responds with tension-building slowness, finally saying, 'There is no record of this voucher or Troubleshooter team in RSB files. Please stand by.' Needless to say, Deke-G's boys eagerly await the order to 'Fry Traitor!'

After the PCs have worked up a good sweat, The Computer says, 'This team is authorized to operate this vehicle and leave the dome with it. Squad leader Deke-G is highly commended for his quick response time in this situation. He serves The Computer in the glow of its praise!' Smirking, Deke-G turns and leads his troops away, ignoring any questions from the PCs.

The PCs are now free to inspect and load their vehicle.

The All Terrain Crawler (ATC)

This ATC looks and drives like a box with treads. Inside is a single compartment with two driver's seats in the front. A Com 3 unit is mounted on the floor between the two seats. Above each seat is a hatch and a red-painted handle labeled 'Eject'. If the handle is pulled, the seats eject perfectly, but on a 1d20 roll of 12 or higher, the hatches above them don't open, maiming the ejectee.

Six fully equipped passengers, three to a side, can ride on benches in the back. At the very rear stands an empty rack labelled 'Survival Gear'. Below it is another rack full of camouflage netting. Seven parachute/skyhook packages are piled on the floor.

An open revolving turret with an empty weapon clasp is mounted on top of the vehicle. A person standing up in the middle of the vehicle can operate the turret. Any weapon larger than a pistol fits in the clasp.

Bobby-O has the necessary skill to drive this vehicle, which is important because this ATC only operates manually; its bot brain can't even keep the thing idling. Top speed on the highway is 30 kilometers per hour, but the vehicle slows to a crawl off-road, and cannot travel through mountainous terrain. It can cross rivers but it rides very low in the water, threatening to tip over whenever a PC shifts his weight.

Getting out

After they pile everything into the crawler, the PCs must figure out how to open Gate 1. If they drive up to the gate, it does not open. A speaker, mounted above the door beside a vidcam and a laser cannon, blares out 'Stop!' Until the code word 'MEMBUKA' is spoken over the radio, the gate remains shut. Moments after the code word is spoken, the gate snaps open and the speaker screams, 'Clear!' No matter how fast the PCs race through the gate, it slams shut just millimeters behind them.

From this point on the team leader must direct the crawler's course.

The strike force

Soon after the PCs exit the building, the gate opens again, disgorging a stream of troops and vehicles that begin forming up in the Free-Fire Zone. This strike force consists of 80 troopers, four officers, 15 advanced combots, six supply crawlers and one bridge-laying crawler. (See Strike Force Trooper and Officer on the NPC roster. See Advanced Combot on the Bot roster.)

This is the strike force The Computer is sending to capture Neil-U's personal computer. The route they will follow to the U.S.G.S. Weather Station is marked on Map 2. Once out of the Free-Fire Zone they shoot at anyone they see or hear, or *think* they see or hear. The strike force will reach the weather station just as the PCs are leaving with the CPU Core in hand. If the PCs ever head out cross-country, this strike force hunts them down. Use the strike force as needed to heighten your players' paranoia.

PCs monitoring their Com units hear extensive radio traffic as strike force officers discuss their march and target. Their target, 'an Old Reckoning outpost of some kind', should sound familiar to the team leader.

Area 2. Alpha Complex dome

PCs looking back on RSB dome from Outdoors for the first time should be awestruck, overwhelmed by its size. The dome fills the entire western horizon with its smooth, curved surface. Only near the edge is the surface broken by numerous sensors, weapons and building additions.

Emphasize the emotional impact this experience should have on the PCs. Encourage the players to roleplay the profound sense of security their characters associate with the dome and the extreme paranoia they feel facing the unknown.

Area 3. Gravel roads in the Free-Fire Zone

Rutted, bumpy gravel roads, one lane wide, criss-cross the Free-Fire Zone. They are used by the regular Armed Forces patrols and are the only safe paths through the zone. Do the PCs a favor and point out the missile batteries and huge laser cannons that track their progress through the Free-Fire Zone. If the PCs stray too far off a road for any reason, a laser battery from the dome fires one warning shot in front of them. If they fail to stop or move back into the road immediately, the next shot vaporizes the crawler around them. The third shot finishes them off.

Many gigantic military vehicles, guided by wild-eyed troopers, barrel down these roads. They wouldn't think to move aside or leave room on the road for a measly little crawler. The PCs must frequently move off the road to avoid collision.

The many flybot patrols overhead occasionally buzz the Troubleshooters, just for the sheer fun of terrorizing them. The bots don't, of course, hit the crawler, but they come very close.

Improvise perilous encounters freely as the PCs travel through the Free-Fire Zone. Develop in the PCs a healthy fear, horror and respect for the Armed Forces. Alert Troubleshooters realize returning home through the Free-Fire Zone will be no picnic.

Area 4. Forest

These vast expanses of green stuff and tall brown things are spooky places. Strange sounds, sights and smells constantly remind the PCs how little they know of this environment. Maximum speed on foot in the forest is three to four kilometers per hour. Every two hours the PCs are in the forest, run an encounter from the Forest/Hills Arbitrary Encounter Table.

Area 5. Hills

These giant mounds, dotted with really tall brown things and large boulders, provide excellent views of the surrounding area. Unbelievably, there are no escalators or even stairs to the tops, so travelling is slowed by tedious climbs.

Maximum speed on foot in the hills is three to four kilometers per hour. Every two hours the PCs are in the hills, run an encounter from the Forest/Hills Arbitrary Encounter Table.

Area 6. Scrub grass

Impress the PCs with the thickness of the coarse green carpeting here. Without seams it

covers many kilometers of wavy floor. Unknown creatures scurry and slither through the grasses, causing alarm and drawing fire.

Maximum speed on foot in scrub grass is five kilometers per hour. Every two hours the PCs spend in the scrub grass, run an encounter from the Scrub/Open Terrain Arbitrary Encounter table.

Area 7. Rivers

To those who can't swim, merely looking at rivers can be terrifying. Swirling eddies and debris caught in the current make the water seem alive. These rivers are too wide to jump over, too deep to wade across and too turbulent to float across.

Area 8. Waterfalls

Describe these waterfalls as though they were as big as Niagara Falls, or larger. Emphasize the thunderous noise, the dizzying height, the surging power, the, the… well, you know.

Area 9. Crawler hiding point

A small grove of tall green-brown things at the base of the falls provides a perfect hiding place for the crawler. If the PCs do not hide the crawler, and survive to return to it, they find a scattering of small, melted metal scraps. Live and learn.

From here the PCs must proceed on foot to the flybot pickup point above the falls, as the ridge is too steep for the crawler. When the PCs climb the ridge, remind them the junk they are carrying would fill several shopping carts, the terrain is rugged and they are as comfortable in the Outdoors as a Wall Street broker would be in the jungles of Borneo. Express an interest in their plans for scrambling up the slope with their gear.

Area 10. Ridge

Although its height varies, this ridge is always steep and covered with loose, crumbly rocks. Characters must make Agility checks to avoid falling when climbing up or down. Falling characters take a wound. Ridges are impassable to land vehicles.

Area 11. The flybot and pickup point

One kilometer from the waterfall is the flybot pickup point, a long, narrow, grassy field next to the river, surrounded by low hills. Two deep skid furrows lead to the flybot resting at the far end of the field. The vehicle is a strange mishmash of spare and salvaged parts assembled by someone who doesn't know much about aircraft. (In fact, Neil-U built it himself, and no, he doesn't know much about aircraft; a bot brain that does know helped him.) This is a fixed-wing flybot with no hovering or VTOL capabilities. It requires a short, flat length of ground for landing and take-off.

Traitors reconsidering their decision to leave the road.

There's a small forward cockpit, entered from the top, and a larger rear compartment, entered from the back. A cannon is mounted under the craft's nose. The rear cargo doors open easily. Three folding seats are built into each wall of the cargo bay, ample room for six people with full gear. Against the wall separating the two compartments is a large winch over a floor hatch.

Closer examination reveals that the engines are still warm and the cockpit hatch is unlocked and charred from laser fire. The pilot, Glen-G, is slumped over the controls, dead of wounds from a single laser burst. (One of Buck-U's agents killed him.) A force sword and a GREEN-barreled laser pistol hang from Glen-G's belt. (Be sure Mortimer-O sees the force sword. He has a Repair Force Sword narrow specialty.)

The flight

Bobby-O, with his Vehicle Ops rating of 11, can fly the machine manually well enough for anything but combat. He also knows how to activate the bot brain's autopilot programming. As soon as the autopilot is engaged, the flybot begins the takeoff sequence, backing up, turning around and then launching itself. Once in the air, it skims the tree tops heading north until it can turn west to the U.S.G.S. Weather Station (see Area 12). The flybot's autopilot route is marked on Map 2. If flown manually more than a few kilometers from that route, the flybot is spotted and intercepted by an Armed Forces Model 916 flybot.

Parachuting

As soon as the flybot turns west, an audiovisual monitor in the rear compartment activates, showing an old Armed Forces parachute training film. A fat, balding Vulture shows how to put on a parachute, how to jump correctly and how to land. To demonstrate the last part, he climbs a short ladder and jumps into a sandbox, rolling to lessen the impact. The film only plays once. The PCs can stop, but not reverse, the film.

Once near the U.S.G.S. Station, a speaker shouts out commands. The PCs should recognize these commands from the parachute training film.

'Approaching jump site!': Warns the PCs to put on their parachute/skyhook packages and psyche up for the jump. The chutes in the film bear no resemblance to the PCs' equipment, so whether or not they paid attention to the film, each PC has a 50% chance of putting his package on upside down. Those wearing upside down chutes get to land on their heads.

'Form up!': Tells the PCs to form a line facing the door.

'Attach lines!': Clues the PCs to clip their ripcord handle onto the overhead rack that runs the length of the cargo bay. Three handles with built-in clips protrude from each parachute. One is the carrying handle; one is the ripcord that opens the parachute; the last collapses and detaches the parachute. The PCs have no way of knowing which handle to use, and so must guess. Each PC has a 1-in-3 chance of choosing any given handle. If the PCs dismantle one of the parachutes in an attempt to divine its operating principles, they may make a Hardware/Mechanical Engineering check to guess this information. Of course, they

Troubleshooter competing in the 6000-meter long drop.

only have the same one-third chance of properly reassembling the parachute. Oh, dear.

Characters who use the ripcord are lucky. Their chutes open. Characters who use the carrying handle are left dangling out the doorway, still attached to the overhead rack. Flip a coin. Heads, the strap holds, and the character can drag himself back into the flybot. Tails, the strap breaks, plunging the character into free fall—cause for an immediate Insanity check! Only if he passes the check can he pull another handle, a 50-50 chance! Characters who use the wrong handle fall to the earth, leaving their chutes drifting through the sky above them.

'Go! Go! Go!': Means just what it says. The rear doors open, green lights flash and whoever is in front is staring down at the mountains. He must pass an immediate Insanity check to jump. If he fails the check he freezes in the doorway and must be pushed out.

PCs who figure out the commands, jump when told and open their chutes survive the jump. Dispense some sprained ankles and damaged gear if you're in a peevish mood. They must then collapse and detach their chutes quickly or get dragged away by the wind. If they don't all get out of the plane together, the last ones land far away and must hike to the top of the mountain to be picked up.

Once the flybot has passed the jump site it begins to circle the peak. It continues to circle until the skyhook balloons go up (see below). It then snags them and heads back to the crawler.

Remember, don't let the *players* use their knowledge of parachuting to their character's advantage. They are supposed to be roleplaying characters who have never touched, seen or heard of the things.

Area 12. U.S.G.S. Weather Station

On the smooth, level top of a high mountain lies a cluster of small, dingy, gray, cement buildings—all that remains of an Old Reckoning United States Geological Survey Weather Station. A large rectangular building stands in the center of the cluster, surrounded by two circular and three rectangular outbuildings. Two broken-down dish antennas lean against one side of the main building.

Neil-U's personal computer is hidden in the main building's basement. He communicates with his computer through a wireless network over one of the dish antennas (cleverly camouflaged to appear useless). He rarely visits.

The closer one gets to the buildings, the worse they look. Storms and vandals have battered open the rusted metal doors and strewn their contents about. The two circular buildings contain nothing but steel pedestals that once held telescopes. The other small buildings provided storage and housing for scientists. Toppled metal shelves, cabinets and empty cot frames are all that is left.

The main building holds the remains of many large machines. Dark holes in the frames mark where buttons, knobs and screens used to be. On the back of the largest device is a large panel that conceals a narrow steep cement stairway to the basement. There is no light in the stairwell. A flashlight shows the stairs lead down to the open doorway of a small room, but nothing more. PCs who carefully examine this entrance note an unusual coating of fine black dust on the ceiling opposite the doorway and along the walls, floor and ceiling of the stairwell. PCs with Field Weapons skill recognize this soot as evidence of flamethrower use.

A powerful flamethrower is hidden in the floor at the base of the stairs. Any object larger than a mouse that crosses the last stair triggers the firethrower. When set off, a gushing jet of flame fills the stairwell, blasts out the panel opening and broils against the ceiling. Anyone caught in the stairwell when the flame erupts is wounded. The flames burn outer clothing and singe the hair of anyone looking at the stairwell. The building is non-flammable, so it suffers no damage except for a thick layer of soot that covers everything. The PCs have two minutes before the flamethrower recharges. This can be a very long or short two minutes as you see fit.

At the bottom of the stairs is a single unlit room, just high enough to stand in. A light switch is on the wall to the right of the door. Once turned on, the bright lights reveal that the entire far half of the room is filled with floor-to-ceiling computer banks. A chair rests in front of the single terminal. A rough bed stands to the left of the door. A small metal table and icebox are on the right. The ice box is empty and warm.

A container labeled 'CPU Core' is wired within the largest machine against the back wall. The container weighs 40 kilograms.

The skyhook escape

As the PCs emerge from the main building with the 'isotope container', they see the strike force moving up the mountainside from the south. The PCs must act quickly if they wish to live. If the PCs stand their ground and wait for the strike force, or if they try to escape on foot, the crack troopers cheerfully pursue and execute the traitors with such subtle weapons as tacnukes and plasma generators. Their best (and most dramatic) option is to use the skyhooks. See 'Assigning mission equipment' near the start of this episode for an explanation of the skyhook.

On autopilot, the PCs' flybot swoops in to retrieve the balloons. It flies in a large circle, snagging one balloon on each pass, then reeling in the shock-cord for 30 seconds while circling for the next pass. The flybot randomly determines which balloons to snag on each pass. If the flybot is on manual (autopilot off), snagging and reeling in balloons is up to the pilot.

Roll 1d20 for each shock-cord. On a 19 or 20, the shock-cord breaks when snagged. The chance doubles if two people use the same skyhook. As soon as the first balloon inflates, the eager strike force troopers spot it and open fire. They're out of range initially, but quickly close in, shooting at the balloons, the PCs, the buildings and sometimes each other. The last PC should be picked up in the middle of a firefight. PCs already in the flybot can spray covering fire for their teammates still on the ground (a fine opportunity to assassinate a teammate in the confusion).

The strike force's advanced combots, further down the mountainside, concentrate their fire on the PC's flybot. On its first pass, the flybot is out of range. On the second pass, the combots hit it on a 1d20 roll of 18 or higher. On each successive pass, the chance increases by 3—or just have it succeed automatically as soon as you get tired of rolling. If enemy fire hits the flybot, pieces get blown off, and it smokes and sputters, but it finishes all the pickups. (If the flybot hasn't been hit by the time it completes its pickups, a mysterious suspension of game rules increases the combots' chance of hitting to 100%.)

After completing the pickups, the flybot flies another five to ten kilometers, billowing dark smoke and slowly losing altitude, until it crash-lands. PCs aboard get wounded or maimed as it suits your fancy.

Area 13. Power lines

Tall Old Reckoning high-voltage power towers dot the countryside. Most are still standing, strung with long-dead cables, but several have fallen into tangled heaps of rusted steel. Low-flying flybots occasionally run into these lines.

Area 14. Bomb crater

Long ago, from a country far, far away, a small nuclear bomb arrived, forming an impressive crater. The hole now collects and contaminates rainwater. Residual radiation in the air, soil and water causes passers-by to become ill. Remaining in the crater for more than 15 minutes results in nausea and headaches for two days. Remaining for more than two hours in the crater causes incapacitating radiation sickness that will overcome the PC several days later. With proper Alpha Complex technology, recovery is as if healing a wound.

Area 15. Highway 45

Army patrols frequently use this Old Reckoning highway. No one has ever maintained it, so the blacktop has crumbled away to dust. Even so, it's one of the best roads around. Maximum speed on foot on the road is 5 kilometers per hour.

Area 16. Highway 55

This four-lane divided highway cuts across the land like a scar. Although the steel-reinforced concrete is cracked and even buckled in places, most of the road remains intact. If the PCs decide to escape down this road, abandoning the good life with The Computer, they discover a minefield at the edge of the map. The army rarely patrols this from the ground, relying instead on flybots.

Area 17. The only bridge

The only bridge across the deep, swift, PC-drowning river is out. Pieces of it lie downstream, strewn along the river bank. The pilings and steel girders that remain will certainly give out under the weight of a curious PC.

Area 18. Mountains

To dome dwellers such as the PCs, mountains are utterly alien and threatening. Gaping chasms, towering walls, sheer edges and wisps of cloud and fog should strike terror into their hearts. If they climb high enough, be sure to mention the cold, white, fluffy stuff.

The PCs' crawler cannot enter mountains. Maximum speed on foot in the mountains is 2 kilometers per hour. Every two hours the PCs spend in the mountains, run an encounter from the Mountain Arbitrary Encounter Table at the end of the missions.

Area 19. Tainted lakes

Although it looks clear and tastes sweet, the water in these lakes is poisonous. The Commie savages who live around the lakes have built up immunity to the poison's effects. Not surprisingly, the PCs are not immune. If the PCs need a village to explore, use the savages in Encounter 1-2 on the Forest/Hills Arbitrary Encounter Table for the village warriors. Toss in some women, children, old shamans and ramshackle housing, and presto, you have a village. Unfriendly villagers invite visitors to a feast, then make them the main course. Friendly villagers invite visitors to a feast where most of the food is boiled or steamed in the lake water.

Area 20. Shangri-la

On a hill, tucked among some sheltering trees, is a hitherto undiscovered billionaire's A-frame mountain retreat. A pack of eight ravenous dobermans, descendants of the owner's original guard dogs, makes this A-frame its home—the major reason the place has yet to be reported. The house is packed with priceless Old Reckoning objects. However, none of the lights work and there is an odorless gas leak that explodes with the first spark, flame or laser burst, scattering the house, its contents and any trespassers across the hillside.

Feel free to place this house anywhere in the mountains so it's in the PCs' path.

Area 21. Hidden road

Trees completely hide from view this broken, weed-covered, single-lane road. It leads from Highway 45 (the turn-off is grown over) to an old toxic waste dump (see Area 22). Four rusted, padlocked, chain-linked gates block the road at intervals.

Area 22. EPA toxic waste dump

In a tiny valley surrounded by gentle hills are a whole series of colorful mounds and pools. In Old Reckoning times this valley served as a dumping ground for toxic wastes of all kinds, hence the many pretty colors. Have fun here describing the strange sights and arousing the players' curiosity.

PCs who become contaminated with the splendid assortment of poisonous substances have a life expectancy of 1d20 days. If contaminated PCs return to Alpha Complex

Retrieval by skyhook is always an exciting experience, and perfectly safe.

they face executions as Commie agents for introducing these toxins to the complex. Certain secret societies would be quite interested in some of these substances, and black market distribution would be gratifyingly profitable.

Area 23. Vulture aerial target ranges

These forest areas are devoid of tall green-brown things and pockmarked by numerous craters. Vulture Squadron pilots use these ranges to sharpen their already deadly aim with bombs and missiles. Coincidentally, a practice session begins a few rounds after the PCs wander into one of these areas. The Vulture pilots are tickled to have live targets for a change and pursue them beyond the range boundaries. After all, only exiles and Commies would be running around a target range.

Area 24. Old reservoir

Now mostly mud, this used to be a large reservoir that fed two huge pipes to the south. The pump house at the start of the pipes is rubble now.

Area 25. Pipes

A pair of huge aboveground water pipes that used to drain the old reservoir wind their way across the landscape. Dry and broken now, they provide shelter for all sorts of critters.

Ending the mission

This mission may end Outdoors with the death of the last PC. However, some Troubleshooters may survive to return to the dome. The moment they cross into the Free-Fire-Zone, whether on foot, crawler or otherwise, sensors pick them up. The Computer dispatches an Armed Forces unit to further verify their identity.

This welcoming committee consists of 20 troops, led by a sergeant and an officer, backed up by an advanced combot. All the troops are riding in open-topped, armored four-wheel drive autocars. On the NPC roster, see Hotshots for the troops, Strike Force Trooper (the sergeant) and Strike Force Officer. See Advanced Combot on the Bot roster.

With a bullhorn, the officer demands to know who the PCs are. He is in constant contact with The Computer. No matter what they say or who they claim to be, The Computer can't figure out who they really are. It orders the welcoming committee to disarm the PCs and 'escort' them back to the dome.

When they reach Area 1, the RSB Armed Forces staging area, the PCs are held in custody while The Computer tries to track down who they are and figure out what they were up to. Docbots give injured PCs immediate medical attention. As one trooper explains to them, 'If you turn out to be traitors, we want you looking your best at your execution.'

The briefing

One by one, the PCs are led away, handcuffed and interrogated by an army officer who wears no indication of his security clearance. Computer cameras monitor the interrogation, but the PCs can't tell if they're on or not. Meet privately for a few minutes with each player to roleplay the interrogation. Use this opportunity to debrief the PCs.

Returning without the CPU Core

If the PCs did not return with the CPU Core, Neil-U decides it's not worth his while to bail them out. If you want to end the mission here, the army promptly loses the PCs in the bureaucratic shuffle, and they spend the rest of their days in prison, waiting for The Computer to decide to execute or release them. But The Computer has moved on to more important things.

Roleplaying long waits in small cells isn't much fun, so if you want to move on to Episode 3, terminate the Troubleshooters quickly and bring out their backup clones for the third mission.

Returning with the CPU Core

If the PCs returned with the CPU Core container, the Armed Forces interrogator focuses on it. As long as all the PCs tell him it's radioactive isotopes, they're safe. If anyone says otherwise, he immediately opens the container to verify contents. Upon finding the CPU Core, the army summarily terminates every member of the team and then does the paperwork. Neil-U himself barely escapes a swift Internal Security investigation, which only strengthens his resolve to avenge himself against Buck-U (see Episode 3).

The same fate befalls the PCs if the Armed Forces obtains a record of the mission from the team leader's helmet recorder or otherwise discovers what they were doing. If the PCs try to implicate Steve-G or Gary-V, the crime of 'slandering a loyal citizen' is added to their list of offenses (Classic offense: P3M; Straight offense: C3B).

If the PCs stick to the isotope story, Neil-U quickly arranges their release. Gary-V personally greets and further debriefs them, if necessary. Of course the PCs must account for all damaged and lost equipment, but Gary-V is lenient in handing out reprimands and fines, and promises the PCs a month of light duty before their next mission.

Just two days later… Episode 3.

3: The finals

Mission summary

Even as the PCs were on Mission 2, Neil-U was planning his strike against Buck-U. Neil-U is angered that Buck-U finked to The Computer and caused the destruction of the weather station and his personal computer. Worse yet, Buck-U has pulled ahead in the tournament. The only way Neil-U can win is to eliminate Buck-U.

During the two days between Episode 2 and the alert for Episode 3, scores of Neil-U's Program Group clerks burn the midnight oil arranging, checking and double-checking all the details. As soon as the necessary bribes, intimidations and covers are taken care of, Neil-U puts his team (the PCs) into action.

They cross into TJC Sector disguised as HPD & Mind Control workers, then bluff their way into the TJC reservoir. Once there, they must ride out on jet-skis to assault Buck-U's stronghold, an ancient fireboat moored in the reservoir.

About as crazy as they come, Buck-U has converted his ship to resemble a pirate ship, and crewed it entirely with special pirate bots. The PCs must overcome these bots before they can take on the First Mate bot and Buck-U-XVB-5 himself.

Mission alert

Strangely, the PCs do not receive their mission alerts directly from The Computer. Instead, RED-Clearance couriers track down each PC to deliver a sealed computer message (see below). If a character asks The Computer to confirm these orders, The Computer does so, thanking the character for his security-consciousness and ordering him immediately to his briefing. Impose a 50cr fine for failing to heed an official Computer message.

••••• MISSION ALERT! •••••
If seal is broken, terminate courier.
EXTREMELY URGENT!

Rejoice, Troubleshooter! As a reward for diligence and loyalty, you are selected to serve as a personal bodyguard and escort for the entertainer Teela-O-MLY during her visit to RSB Sector. Although you will be on duty, you will have access to tomorrow night's show, normally reserved for citizens of GREEN Clearance and above.

Report immediately to RSB Sector Troubleshooter Headquarters for your pre-mission briefing and new uniform fitting.

Stay alert! Give thanks for The Computer's trust in you. Polish your equipment and bathe. The Computer and Teela-O-MLY are your friends.

Teela O'Malley's evening shows have quite a reputation, and she is visiting RSB Sector tomorrow. The PCs, however, won't come within kilometers of her. Knowing Buck-U has informers, Neil-U used Teela's visit and the above mission alert to gather his team without tipping off Buck-U.

As usual, characters who don't report for their briefing are in big trouble.

RSB Sector Troubleshooter Headquarters

Teela's visit is the talk of the sector. The Vulture Squadron guards at the entrance checkpoint talk of little else, all wishing they could see the show and meet Teela in person.

Once again, the PCs must turn over all their weapons. Security is tighter because several people have smuggled in weapons recently. Under the watchful eyes of the duty officer, each PC must pass through a metal detector and an old X-ray machine ('It's perfectly safe, bub, heh heh'). Unfortunately, today's R&D weapon cleaners are all rookies. Incompetent rookies. There's a 50-50 chance (Arbitrary Justice roll) each weapon turned in will never fire again.

Once through the checkpoint, each PC is led to a small chamber. Inside, a bot measures the character for a 'new formal jumpsuit and boots'. In fact, the bot is fitting the characters for wetsuits and flippers. When the bot finishes, a guard escorts each PC to a secure lounge. While in the lounge, give each player a rumor from the General Rumor Table in Episode 1.

Cain-O receives the following secret message from a high-ranking Computer Phreak: 'Your cover is blown; the High Programmer's spy is going to eliminate you soon.' Give Mortimer-

O the following secret message from his Illuminati superior: 'Make the spy feed false information to R&D about the Tech-dominated RSB Troubleshooter Headquarters.'

After a suitable delay, two armed guards appear and escort the PCs to Briefing Room C (**Tension 16**).

Beginning the briefing

The same four guards stand in the corners. Steve-G and Gary-V are already in the room, sitting at the podium, when the PCs arrive. The largest slugthrower pistol the PCs have ever seen lies on the podium in front of Steve-G. The safety strap on Gary-V's shoulder holster is unsnapped. Both men are tense, and their efforts to appear calm only make it more evident. Steve-G regularly consults his watch. Gary-V occasionally tilts his head, as though listening to the small device protruding from his right ear. (Gary-V is receiving mission information from Neil-U as it becomes available.)

Steve-G takes roll call quickly. First he asks for each Troubleshooter by name and title. Then he points out glaring faults in the character's performance to date and reprimands the character, making it clear such incompetence won't be tolerated again.

Choosing a team leader

Give the players an opportunity to elect a new leader, especially if several PCs have reported dissatisfaction with the present leader. If the team leader has been working out well, you may veto the team's new choice. Of course, if he's working out *too* well….

Steve-G explains that in its vast wisdom and fairness, The Computer will let the team elect a new leader, if they want to. Steve-G then reiterates the leader's many responsibilities. Force the players to vote by secret ballot after three minutes of discussion, no more.

Only if a new leader is elected does Steve-G remember to tell the PCs the additional leader pay program was temporarily suspended. All other benefits remain.

Assigning special mission equipment

Once again, the wall behind the podium swirls into a giant computer screen. At the same time the room lights dim. 'Pay close attention,' orders Steve-G. From the film that follows and the special mission equipment, the PCs should realize the task ahead of them is not related to Teela O'Malley. If anyone asks about her, Steve-G responds with a quick reprimand to stop dreaming and pay attention.

An HPD&MC training film, narrated in one of The Computer's deep, authoritarian voices, explains how to change water filters in large water systems. A team of workers wearing distinctively ugly HPD&MC coveralls performs the task at a domed reservoir outlet to the accompaniment of a full orchestra. The filters are round steel cages, about two and a half meters tall, filled with a porous material, and appear quite heavy. The reservoir, several kilometers across, is truly awe-inspiring. PCs who have not been Outdoors and seen large bodies of water might need Insanity checks upon realizing so much water exists. Most citizens have no reason to learn to swim, so large bodies of water are particularly frightening.

When the film ends, the lights come up and an equipment list appears onscreen. Much of the equipment will be unfamiliar to the characters, though they should recognize some of it from the training film. As per regulations, characters must sign for all equipment. The italicized footnotes are for your information only.

The mission assignment

Gary-V stands to give the team its mission assignment. He's upset, nervous and sweating. He knows Neil-U's plan, and realizes if Buck-U finds out, the team could walk straight into an ambush. But that isn't worrying Gary-V. He's afraid all the activity will expose Neil-U, and consequently himself. He half-suspects one of Buck-U's assassins is planting explosives in his residence even now.

Read the following text aloud to the players.

Gary-V's icy voice is strained, his expression grim. 'Troubleshooters, I will be brief—and I will be honest with you, because you deserve it. This will be your final mission. You can count on support from me, Technical Services and The Computer right to the end.'

He pauses, touching the pistol in his holster before continuing. 'Through patient and diligent work, The Computer has located one of the most dangerous traitors in all Alpha Complex. He calls himself Captain Beard, or something similar. We've been after him for years, but he's as slippery as vat gruel. If we don't strike immediately he'll escape again, to undermine the well-being of thousands of loyal citizens. Stopping him is your job.'

He surveys each of you, as though doubting your ability. 'We can't send in a high-clearance team. This traitor has informers everywhere; movement by a high-clearance team would certainly tip him off. He isn't expecting you, so surprise will be on your side.

'He's hiding out in the middle of TJC Sector, using HPD&MC for cover. They don't even know he's there, and their security is so lax we don't dare tell them. You'll go in disguised as a Filtration Replacement Team and blow up this traitor's stronghold. Frank-O will transport you to the site. The equipment officer and one other person will follow him with the filters in a flatbed autotransport. You are all dismissed to pick up your equipment—except the team equipment officer and team leader.'

Gary-V tolerates a few questions, but answers most by saying, 'Your leader will be completely briefed; he'll inform you as necessary.'

Mission 3 equipment list

(6) Ugly HPD&MC worker overalls with insignia that reads: 'Reservoir Maintenance'.
(6) Tool boxes emblazoned with HPD&MC insignia
(6) Wet suits, grey with orange trim, one sized to each team member
(6) Pairs flippers
(6) Bright orange vests with handles[1]
(6) Weight belts[2]
(3) Slugthrowers
(9) 10-round clips of armor-piercing slug ammo
(9) 10-round clips of solid slug ammo
Energy pistol with five six-round reloads
(2) Laser rifles (five ORANGE barrels apiece)
Cone rifle[3]
(20) Armor-piercing cone rifle shells
(20) High-explosive cone rifle shells
(2) Boxes of 20 high-explosive grenades
(6) Rope ladders with grapple hooks on one end
Model V docbot
(2) Suits of Kevlar armor with Mylar coating
(6) Sealed filter crates, each 2x1x1 meters, weighing 250 kilograms, wheels on bottom[4]
(2) Empty filter crates
(2) Blobs of plastic explosive with timer[5]

[1] Inflatable life jacket supports one person.

[2] Life jacket does not support character wearing weight belt.

[3] With voucher authorizing assigned character (only) to operate this BLUE-Clearance weapon.

[4] Each crate actually contains one jet-ski (see 'Private briefing' for details).

[5] The blob's explosion hits automatically (S2V impact, radius six meters). Timer can be set from one second to 60 seconds (longer settings are possible with Demolition specialty).

Private briefing

After the other PCs leave, Gary-V meets with the equipment officer and the team leader. Read the following text out loud to those players.

'Citizens, the traitor you're after is hiding aboard a boat parked in the center of the TJC reservoir. For your information—and this is classified—a boat is a vehicle designed specifically for movement on water. You must cross more than a kilometer of open water to reach him, and you need to move fast.

'The Computer has provided a way. Those six crates do not contain filters. They hold jet-skis—watercycles, if you will. A powerful waterjet propels these craft over water at amazing speed. They're easy to operate; a single joystick controls speed and direction. Start them by pulling sharply on the handle protruding from the engine casing. When you judge the time correct, reveal this information to your teammates.'

Gary-V then hands a set of autotransport keys to the equipment officer and dismisses him, warning him to drive carefully with the jet-skis. Finally, Gary-V addresses the team leader alone. Read the following text out loud to that player.

'You must cross through the RSB/TJC Sector checkpoint. Frank-O has the proper papers, but you'll never get through with all your weapons and gear. I suggest you load your equipment into the empty filter crates. Open them when you reach the reservoir. Incidentally, there's a smaller checkpoint leading to the reservoir area. Past that, Frank-O will not proceed to the maintenance area; he'll pull into an unused roadhall. The numeric door code there is 250624. Good luck.'

The mission

The Computer closely monitors and regulates all intersector traffic. Consequently, intersector checkpoints, such as this one, are miniature fortresses (**Tension 15**). Laser cannons in armored pillboxes cover the four-lane 'spines' that connect the two sectors. Guards and doberbots physically search vehicles while Computer monitors scan the passengers and check their papers.

The PCs approach the checkpoint during the off hours, so traffic is minimal and only a skeleton crew mans the checkpoint. When the PCs arrive, the line of spikes that usually blocks the roadhall is down, but flashing red warning signs order all vehicles to stop for inspection.

Presumably the PCs stop. Four GREEN-Clearance guards and a doberbot walk over and greet them. (Use Rip-G on the NPC roster for the guards. See the doberbot on the Bot roster.) The guards instruct the drivers to hold their papers up for The Computer cameras scanning the area. The doberbot sniffs around while the guards examine the vehicles. The PCs' papers pass inspection. As for the rest…

Roleplay the guards, questioning the players about who they are, what they're doing, where they're going, what they're carrying and so forth. Exploit any timid or careless responses. Here are some general guidelines:

1. If the PCs look like Troubleshooters (they aren't wearing their HPD&MC disguises), the guards are instantly curious about their mission. Even though they outrank the PCs, they're just guards, and wish they led the more exciting life of a Troubleshooter in The Computer's service.
2. The guards try to confiscate all weapons carried openly. If the PCs are dressed as workers, the guards arrest them if they find any weapons.
3. If individual PCs' stories don't match, the guards become suspicious.
4. If the plastic explosives are not sealed in a filter crate, the doberbot sniffs them out and goes wild, growling and snarling and clashing its steel jaws together. The guards try to arrest the PCs for possession of undeclared explosives.

If the PCs don't stop at the checkpoint, or run into difficulties that necessitate a fast getaway, let them slip by in a dramatic narrow escape. The laser cannons fire off a few rounds, but miss (unlikely, but exciting). Give the PCs a few pursuers to shake, a few tiny roadblocks to crash through, a few small security bots to run over, then surround them with combots and vaporize the whole bunch! You may console the players with the knowledge that their plastic explosives blow up, too, vaporizing most of the combots.

TJC reservoir checkpoint

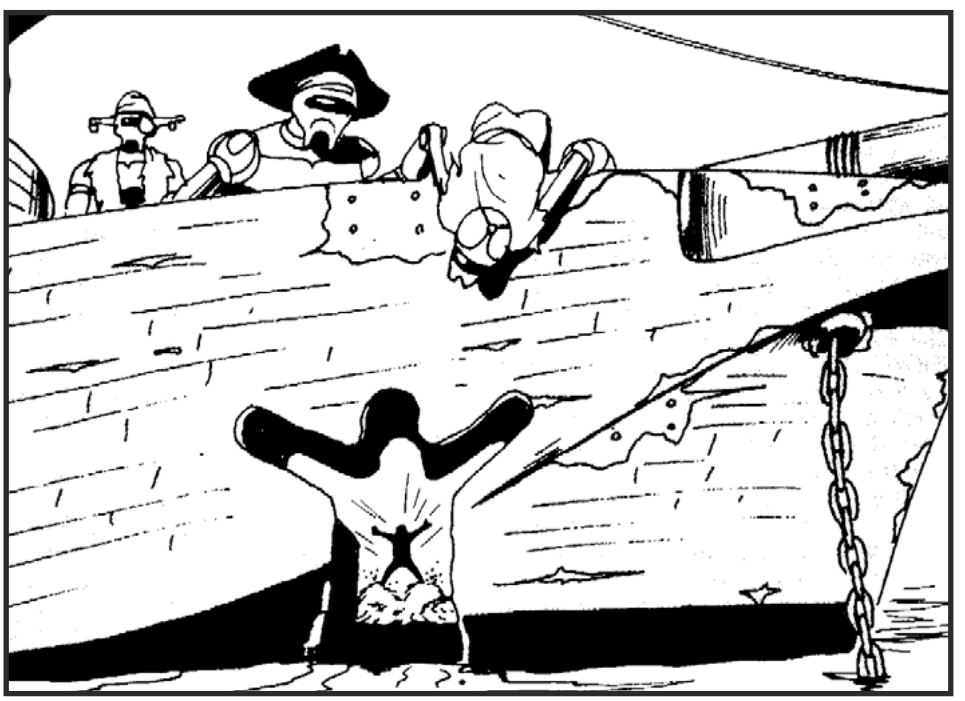
A lone citizen, Willy-Y, works the late shift at this gate on the roadhall into the TJC Sector reservoir. This roadhall (**Tension 5**) sees little enough traffic during primary hours. During the late shift it's positively deserted. Willy-Y is quite glad to have visitors.

Willy-Y is reasonably gullible and accepts any marginally plausible story the PCs offer regarding the filters. However, he's also corrupt. After listening to the PCs, he frowns and says, 'I don't know; this is highly irregular. There may be a fee involved here. I'll probably have to call this one in.' He dawdles until bribed (10cr), shot or threatened with a weapon.

If the PCs crash the gate or threaten him, he notifies his superior, one of Buck-U's bots. The bot decides not to bother Buck-U and arranges an ambush in the unused roadhall (see next section).

Unused roadhall

As soon as he can, Frank-O departs. The flatbed autotransport must stay in the roadhall, unless the PCs think of something else to do with it. If they really try, they might persuade Frank-O to tow it. If they think about it, though, they should



Dedicated Troubleshooter experiments with ramming maneuver.

realize the autotransport is their only way back to RSB Sector.

The armored door here only opens if the proper code, 250624, is punched into the control panel. The door opens onto a short pier jutting into the TJC reservoir (**Tension 1**).

The TJC reservoir

The reservoir is L-shaped and huge—several kilometers across, covered by a translucent roof. The pier is on the short leg of the 'L', near the corner. The maintenance area, with the pump house and filter station, is at the end of the short leg, more than a kilometer away. A thin catwalk, bolted to the walls, runs around the entire perimeter. Pieces of the catwalk railing and floor are missing in places. The water is uniformly 15 meters deep. The water is warm and absolutely clean. It used to be crystal-clear, but Buck-U adds blue and green dyes to make it look like ocean water.

Ambush by pirate bots

The PCs may have earned themselves an ambush (see 'TJC reservoir checkpoint'). If so, three pirate bots greet the opening door with two rounds of slug fire, then charge with cutlasses. These bots are just part of Buck-U's completely mechanical crew of various modified bots. All resemble humans, more or less, but these wear garments unlike anything else seen in Alpha Complex. They wear loose trousers and bright-colored shirts (usually tattered). Many wear hats and scarves. Some even sport tiny pictures scratched into their surfaces. A few wear rings through their audio sensors. (See their stats on the Bot roster.) These pirate bots fight to the end in characteristic buccaneer fashion.

Riding the jet-skis

Once the pier is secure, the PCs must unpack their jet-skis, push them into the water, fire 'em up and take off! Remember that initially only the team leader and equipment guy know how to operate them. (See 'Private briefing' above for a description of the jet-skis.) Think of these vehicles as water motorcycles: fast, loud, exciting and wet. They do float, but if they flip over (Violence/Agility check every now and then), they are hard to right. The engine stops whenever the operator lets go of the control stick. Two persons can ride on one jet-ski (a driver and a gunner), but don't reveal this unless the PCs try it out.

Try to inspire the PCs with the excitement and adventure these vehicles offer. At the same time, reinforce their fear of drowning and their vulnerability to fire while on jet-skis. Any time a character attempts to maneuver his jet-ski in any way other than a wobbly straight line, a Violence check is in order.

A pirate captain and his ship

Buck-U is a large, fearsome-looking man with a gigantic beard braided into long strands. A copper-finished parrotbot sits on his shoulder, squawking such nonsense as 'walk the plank' and 'feed the bird' while clanking its wings. (Incidentally, this bot neither flies nor walks. It just perches.)

Buck-U's stronghold, a converted fireboat, floats in the center of the longest part of the reservoir, out of sight of the pier and maintenance area. The *Jolly Roger-U* is no mere boat. A crew of 21 bots mans this 33-meter ship. Designed as a powerful ocean-going fireboat, the *Roger-U* now merely floats in place, permanently moored to the bottom of the reservoir. Most of its original equipment is no longer operational, but the water-cannons and hoses are in mint condition.

Buck-U has filled much of the ship with personal luxuries and sophisticated communications equipment for tapping into The Computer. He spends most of his time here, overseeing his many projects and directing his teams in the tournament. To protect this valuable asset, Buck-U only allows bots on board, and then only those he has reprogrammed himself.

Obsessed with a few Old Reckoning pirate films he owns, Buck-U converted his ship to resemble an old wooden sailing vessel. His conversion is only partly successful. The entire ship is painted to resemble wooden boards, but the rusting steel hull shows through in places where the paint is peeling. Three round, black cannon barrels poke out of each side of the hull, just above the water line. A tall steel girder, bolted to the ship's smokestack, serves as a mast. Welded near the top of the mast is a small platform (the crow's nest). Above that hangs a black and white skull-and-crossbones flag, Buck-U's Programs Group emblem. Dozens of sewn-together sheets hang from cross poles on the mast, limp sails that have never known wind. A long boom juts from the bow, holding a carved figurehead above the water. A jumble of steel cables serves as rigging, connecting the mast, deck and boom.

The *Jolly Roger-U* is described in detail below (see 'On board the *Jolly Roger-U*').

Assaulting the *Jolly Roger-U*

Buck-U directs the defense of his ship from the bridge, issuing orders through a special combot named 'First Mate'. (See First Mate on the Bot roster.) First Mate is big, mean and ugly. It's fanatically dedicated to Buck-U and looks down on the other bots who serve him. From a distance, First Mate looks like a giant deformed man wearing a long overcoat, high boots and a three-cornered hat decorated with gold tassels. First Mate's slugthrower is modified to resemble an ancient flintlock pistol—it even belches black smoke every time it's fired.

The rest of the crew consists of eight pirate bots and 12 deck swab bots. (See their stats on the Bot roster.) The pirate bots are described in 'Unused roadhall' above. The deck swab bots do the work on the ship, hoisting and lowering the sails, swabbing the decks and rowing Buck-U to and from the maintenance area in a rowboat.

First Mate sounds a general alarm when it sees the PCs rounding the bend in the reservoir. Three pirate bots immediately man the main water cannon on the forward deck and one mans the cannon on each bridge wing. Another pirate bot climbs to the crow's-nest with a telescope. Directed by two pirate bots, all the deck swab bots crew the 'ten-pounders', six authentic-looking cannons beneath decks.

Buck-U may not be much of a historian, but he puts on a good show. The ten-pounders do not actually fire projectiles. They're merely special effects machines. A speaker in each barrel produces a tremendously loud explosion when the gun is fired, followed by a big puff of gray smoke from a smoke generator. Other directional speakers simulate the scream of flying shells. The entire reservoir reverberates when the *Jolly Roger-U* fires a broadside. Most spectacular of all (this is Buck-U's favorite part) are the water geysers that simulate splashing cannonballs. Literally hundreds of tiny but powerful special effects machines float just under the surface to cause geysers all around the ship when appropriate.

The PCs, of course, should believe they are riding directly into cannon fire. After all, they see the puffs of smoke, hear the roar of the cannon and the screaming shells and feel the spray from cannon balls slamming into the water. The *Jolly Roger-U* fires four broadsides at the PCs if they approach directly, more if they take evasive action. When each broadside is fired, every player must roll 1d20. On a roll of 19 or 20, a nearby geyser knocks over the PC's jet-ski. On a roll of 20, a geyser also erupts directly under the jet-ski, blowing it into the air and completely destroying it (the PC is unhurt).

When the PCs approach within 200 meters of the *Jolly Roger-U*, the ten-pounders stop firing and the deck swab bots prepare to repel boarders. Eight of them gather with the two pirate bots in the deck house under the bridge. In pairs, the other four prepare the two high-pressure hoses on the aft deck. All water cannons open fire when the PCs are in range.

The main water cannon's range is 150 meters (O3D impact). Its crew is under good cover, which makes a decent rationale for Perversity point modifiers. The water cannons on the bridge wings have a 100-meter range, and their crews are similarly protected. The firehoses have 50-meter ranges, but those crews are completely exposed to fire. The crews can reel the fire hoses anywhere on the ship. The bots' ratings with water cannon and hose are listed on the Bot roster. PCs on a jet-ski hit by the water cannon or hoses

must succeed in a Violence/Agility check or be knocked overboard.

The bot in the crow's nest snipes at the PCs with his slugthrower, as does the First Mate from the bridge. Buck-U struts back and forth on the bridge, shouting orders and watching the battle, enjoying himself like a kid in a bathtub.

Concussion from grenades and cone rifle shells may blow bots high into the air to splash into the reservoir, even if they aren't damaged or destroyed. Impact of slugs (or captured water cannons, if the PCs get on board) may knock bots backwards over the railing. Not surprisingly, overboard bots sink like lead. However, all Buck-U's bots are waterproof. Furthermore, a steel shaft runs from the bottom of the ship to the bottom of the reservoir. Bots walk on the bottom to the shaft, then climb up to rejoin the battle. (Buck-U devised this system so he could make bots walk the plank without destroying them.) To the PCs, of course, Buck-U seems to possess an endless supply of bots. On a 1d20 roll of 17 or higher, damaged bots that go overboard or get hit with water short circuit and fry themselves.

Only armor-piercing ammo can pierce the outer hull and deck top. The blob of plastic explosive must detonate on the hull beneath the water line to have a chance of sinking the ship. The same pumps that run the water cannons can pump water out of the ship just about as fast as it pours in. If lightly damaged, the ship sinks in 12 hours, unless Buck-U can make repairs. If heavily damaged, the ship sinks in six hours; if junked, the ship sinks in one hour. The pirate bot in the crow's-nest is looking for just such a threat, and concentrates his fire on the PC with the explosive. On First Mate's order, Deck Swabs jump overboard just to grab the blob off the hull on their way past.

Once the PCs are on board (if they get that far), First Mate directs the defense while Buck-U retreats to his computer center below decks. Neither Buck-U nor First Mate give or ask for mercy; all Buck-U's prisoners walk the plank.

On board the *Jolly Roger-U*

The following areas are depicted on Map 3 at the end of the mission. Descriptions of the *Jolly Roger-U* use naval terminology. *Forward* is toward the bow, or front, of the ship. *Aft* means toward the stern, or rear. To a PC facing forward, *port* is on the left, *starboard* to the right.

Kids in a candy store

As the PCs search the *Jolly Roger-U* (**Tension 0**) they discover numerous unfamiliar items. Some are obviously valuable; some are completely incomprehensible. Most are profoundly treasonous. Describe the contents of the cabins and below-deck areas by comparison to objects familiar in Alpha Complex. For example, an oscilloscope is 'a metal box with a screen resembling a video monitor'.

Any PC displaying knowledge of high-clearance or otherwise treasonous items (computer accessories, books, etc.) is liable to be reported by other loyal Troubleshooters. Drop more or less subtle hints about this if the PCs are apparently less than vigilant.

PCs may try to smuggle out items for sale on the IR market, for their secret societies or for their own entertainment. If this doesn't occur to them, drop hints about how attractive that computer hardware would be at the Computer Phreaks clubhouse.

PCs may also try to prove their loyalty to The Computer by destroying or confiscating treasonous items. Anyway, this is the best alibi when caught damaging or smuggling valuable property. The Computer is a sucker for passionate speeches about dedication to the highest principles, blah-blah-blah…

Area 1. Stern ladder

Buck-U's rowboat is tied to this ladder welded to the hull. In every other place, the deck is too high above the water for the PCs to reach without standing up on their jet-ski handlebars, a Violence/Agility check if we ever heard one. Pirate bots should cluster around this ladder to resist the boarding party, taunting the PCs—'Arrr, matey!' 'C'mere, ye faint-hearted landlubbers'—in gravelly, sinister synthesized voices.

Area 2. Top deck

Slippery when wet. The rusting steel deck shows through where the wood-grain paint has peeled. A rail surrounds the deck's outer edge. A small locked hatch near the stern leads down to a hallway. A closet (2a), starboard of the smokestack, holds fire axes, fire extinguishers, buckets, mops and a two-meter plank.

Area 3. Fire hoses

A large shed on the top deck houses two large reels of fire hose and the valves to control them. These hoses are long enough to reach anywhere on the ship. Of all the bots, only First Mate is strong enough to operate one of these hoses by himself. The others work in pairs. PCs must make special preparations, such as bracing or lashing themselves down, to fire the hose without being blown backwards.

Area 4. Smokestack and mast

The *Jolly Roger-U*'s engines fell apart years ago, so the smokestack isn't used. PCs can climb down the smokestack to the engine room.

The smokestack does hold up the mast, though, and that's important to Buck-U. The mast itself is a steel girder almost impossible to climb. However, a maze of cables runs from the edge of the deck up to the crow's-nest. Designed for powerful hands, the cables are not fun for PCs to climb and are slippery when wet. (Buck-U learned the hard way that ropes don't always support bots.)

Dozens of sheets hang from two crosspieces on the mast. These sheets catch fire easily, but nothing else up there burns.

Area 5. Port emergency room

Long ago, when this fireboat was designed, emergency rooms treated people injured in the fires the boat was fighting. Buck-U converted this room into a garment factory. Here his bots sew their own clothes, hats and boots, as well as the sails. The aft closet is filled with spare bot clothing. The smaller, forward closet contains a sewing machine and bolts of cloth.

Area 6. Starboard emergency room

This room is similar to the port emergency room. Buck-U uses this room to regularly polish and waterproof his bots. He also uses tiny drills to scratch 'tattoos' into their arms and backs. The only closet is filled with jars labeled 'Beard's Own Polyurethane Bot Sealant'. Wouldn't R&D or Corpore Metal find this unique substance interesting?

Area 7. Deck house

Small portholes in this large room can be used as firing ports, giving the defender good cover. A ladder against the aft wall leads up through a hatch in the ceiling to the bridge (Area 12). A ladder against the forward wall goes down through a hatch into the mess hall (Area 17), then the engine room (Area 32). Eight deck swab bots and the two pirate bots rally here to defend this important access to the lower decks.

Area 8. Booty

Lashed to the deck is a pile of ten treasure chests. Some of the chests are made of wood, but most are aluminum or plastic crates painted to look like wood. Ten thousand credits' worth of fake jewelry, gems and gold pieces fill these chests. Each of these items is equally valuable in Alpha Complex—they're all worth 1cr apiece.

Area 9. Cargo hatches

These solid, heavy doors open into the cargo holds (Area 26). A couple of rounds of abuse with massive objects or weapons fire can break the door locks.

Area 10. Main water cannon

This water cannon is mounted on a raised platform that rotates to aim the cannon in any direction. A crew of three normally operates this cannon, which has a range of 150 meters (O3D impact).

Area 11. The bridge

Armored windows afford an excellent view forward and to the sides. A large, round wheel is set in the center of the bridge. The wheel handles can be removed for use as clubs. A barrel labeled

'Rum' rests near a large captain's chair. The barrel contains flat water colored reddish brown. A ladder against the aft wall leads down through a hatch to the deck house (Area 7).

Area 12. Bridge wings

A small balcony opens off each side of the bridge. Railings provide 50% cover for anyone on the balcony. A small water cannon with a range of 100 meters is mounted on the end of each balcony.

Area 13. Chartroom

A real oak table stands in the center of this room. A sextant (a real Old Reckoning antique), dividers and rulers lie on the table beside an old, old map of the ocean off Bermuda. Other maps are rolled into plastic tubes hanging on the walls. These artifacts are worth thousands of credits to secret societies or IR market operators. The Computer treats their surrender as evidence of true loyalty.

Area 14. Comm station

Buck-U stays in touch with his many agents and The Computer through a complex network of scrambled transmitters. In contrast to most of the *Jolly Roger-U*, the controls here are absolutely current and functional. A curtain in the port wall leads to the central radio transmitters and receivers (Area 15). PCs from Technical Services drool over this stuff. So will IR market entrepeneurs.

Area 15. Radio transmitters & receivers

This room is jammed with extremely high-clearance radio transmitters and receivers. Wires lead up through the ceiling to antennas. Just knowledge of this equipment is treasonous below VIOLET Clearance. If The Computer knew Buck-U owned these, it would crash a subsystem! Informing the Computer Phreaks of these treasures would earn them instant preeminent status in their secret society.

Area 16. Mess hall

Rough tables and benches fill this room. Buck-U regularly makes his bots sit here while he lectures, instructs and reprimands them.

Area 17. Gun room

Wire-mesh hammocks hang from the ceiling in this dimly lit room. In shifts, Buck-U's bots crawl up into their hammocks and 'sleep' for several hours.

Three rough holes are cut into the hull on each side of the room. An ancient-looking cannon sits before each hole. A ramrod, brush and single cannon ball sit beside each cannon. (Because the cannon doesn't actually shoot anything, the bot crews just load and unload the same cannonball.) See 'Assaulting the *Jolly Roge*r-U' above for the way Buck-U uses these cannons.

Area 18. Cabin

These two mirror-image cabins each contain a bunk, a chest and a desk. The cabins have never been occupied and contain nothing casually pilferable.

Area 19. Officer's mess

Buck-U uses this room primarily to watch Old Reckoning pirate movies and occasionally to hold meetings. A large table stands in the center of the room. Video screens pull down on each wall so Buck-U can surround himself with pirates. On special occasions, Buck-U sets up a replica 16mm movie projector and shows his preserved 'original films'. IR market value of the 16mm projector and film is approximately 2,000cr. To the Romantics, the value is 8,000cr.

Area 20. Electronic workshop

Shelves full of reels of computer tape, boxes of computer disks and packages of computer chips line the walls here. Soldering guns, oscilloscopes, calculators, circuit boards and complete sets of miniature tools are scattered across a desk in the center of the room. With the right contacts, this stuff could fetch a fortune on the IR market.

However, displaying knowledge of the functions of these devices and supplies is clear evidence of treasonous access to high-clearance information. Describe the contents of the room as an ignorant child would view them: 'There are clear wheels with long, thin brown tapes wrapped around them, and large plastic donut-shaped objects in boxes. Some clear plastic bags contain small plastic boards with numerous bits of colorful plastic and metal attached in a meaningless pattern.' Give PCs with appropriate skills (Software, Electronic Engineering, etc.) more detailed descriptions.

Area 21. Captain's lounge

This cabin is probably the most luxurious room the PCs have ever seen outside vidshows. Deep, plush white carpeting covers the deck. An ornate chandelier hangs from the ceiling over a dark green billiard table. The curved aft walls are made of armored plexiglas, giving Buck-U a fine view of the 'sea'. Bookshelves full of antique books, most of them fakes, line the walls. ORANGE-Clearance PCs probably recognize a billiard table, but know little about the purpose and function of most items in the room.

Area 22. Captain's quarters

These are Buck-U's personal quarters, worthy of a High Programmer. The walk-in washroom is especially well-equipped to keep Buck-U's beard in awesome condition.

Buck-U has decorated this cabin to resemble a movie pirate captain's cabin, with phony wood-texture paint, a simple bunk, several sea chests, nautical charts of the Caribbean and a crude table and chairs. Several ample jugs marked 'XXX' sit on and around the table. The jugs contain 'Whippy Fun' (a bland vat beverage) laced with powerful stimulant and euphoric drugs. One drink produces the equivalent of roaring drunkenness in any Troubleshooter.

Now you understand Buck-U's extravagantly bizarre behavior. These drugs have turned Buck-U's brains to applesauce. The Mystics would be very interested in these jugs; so would Free Enterprise, the Illuminati, Death Leopard and any other secret society that could sell the drugs or use them in sabotage schemes.

Area 23. Computer center

Electronics, holographic color monitors, bioconsoles, printers, desktop manufacturing devices and a host of other computer peripherals fill this room, the seat and focus of Buck-U's power. He uses this equipment to tap into the Alpha Complex Computer and steal processing time, manipulate data, issue and modify orders, etc. Buck-U controls his tournament teams from here.

Buck-U makes his last stand against the PCs here. If he is losing, he destroys or disguises all evidence of treason that might be linked to him. He never surrenders.

Depending on the weapons the PCs use, the firefight here may spare Buck-U the necessity of destroying any evidence. Any stray missile or beam fire destroys the computer. The video and communications systems are all computer-coordinated, and shut down completely when the computer is destroyed. The charts and reports may survive unless fire or explosives are used.

If the PCs can incapacitate Buck-U in two rounds, they can capture the computer center intact. If Buck-U lasts more than two rounds, he fires at the computer, disabling it, then swings his laser beam across the paper documents, setting them aflame. Tough luck.

But if the PCs manage to capture the computer center intact…

By observing the dozens of monitors on the walls of this room and the charts and reports hanging on the walls, the Troubleshooters may deduce the basic elements of the High Programmer Tournaments. The monitors follow the progress of various competing teams in the middle of other competitive events (sort of a *Wide Complex of Sports*); the charts and reports chronicle the results of earlier competition. If the PCs look around, they find reports on the results of the competitions they took part in.

Throughout the electronic and paper records in this room lies evidence of unspeakably high treason among the most powerful and trusted citizens of Alpha Complex. What can the PCs do with this evidence?

Reveal it to The Computer? How will it respond to such tragic betrayals? Whom will The Computer believe? Lowly ORANGE Troubleshooters, or the citizens it has raised and trusted above all others in Alpha Complex?

Sell the information, or blackmail the High Programmers? A dangerous game, but one that

might really pay off. No Illuminatus would ever pass up such an opportunity.

Destroy the evidence, and hope The Computer never realizes its faithful servants have been exposed to such seductively treasonous influences?

Make sure the PCs are aware of the possible consequences of reporting, concealing or destroying the evidence. No matter what they do, they'll probably get in trouble. Gently remind the PCs ot this. Then it's just about time for The Computer's voice to suddenly resound on their PDCs, inquiring pleasantly for a mission progress report. 'Well, uh, we—ehr, mmm—'

Area 24. Anchor winch

A two-meter-wide capstan stands on the deck. The heavy anchor, like most of the ship, is just for show; the ship's hull is permanently moored to the bottom with steel cables. No treasure or monsters here. Keep moving.

Area 25. Anchor storage

These two rooms are piled high with rusted anchor chain. Not much IR market demand for rusted anchor chain.

Area 26. Cargo holds

Large hatches (Area 9) open into these holds. Both holds are empty. Nobody home. A big explosion in here destroys the bilge pumps and sinks the ship in short order.

Area 27. Brig

Buck-U maintains these four barred cells to hold prisoners until he has time for the pomp and festivity of a proper plank walking. Captured PCs spend some time here, reflecting and hoping for a rescue that will never come.

Area 28. Crew's head

Buck-U converted this large washroom to accommodate his robot crews. He lubricates, tunes up, recharges and repairs bots here. A single pirate bot, its legs off for repairs, sits on a bench, unable to join the battle. It will, however, shoot any PC who opens the door.

Area 29. Galley

One of the deck swab bots is specially programmed to prepare and serve Buck-U the fine cuisine High Programmers expect. Because the PCs have seldom seen food prepared in less than army-size quantities, they may not recognize this room.

Area 30. Pantry

As in the galley, the PCs should recognize few, if any, of the fine herbs, spices, grains, fresh fruits and other delicacies stored here. However, a successful Outdoor Life skill check reveals the nature of these substances, and may suggest their IR market value.

Area 31. Freezer

Hanging from the ceiling of this walk-in freezer are legs of lamb, whole turkeys and a side of beef (from the clone-research labs). To the PCs, such wretched carcasses could only be the victims of torture, hanging in a morgue. The shock of learning this stuff is food may stun them.

Area 32. Engine room

Two big diesel engines sit side by side here amid a jumble of cables, pipes, hoses and wires. The only functioning pieces of equipment are two high-pressure water pumps that run the water cannons and hoses, as well as pump out any water that may enter the ship.

Area 33. Underwater shaft

A hatch in the floor opens into a shaft to the bottom of the reservoir. Overboard bots climb up the shaft to return to the ship.

Area 34. Nuclear generator

Buck-U provides power for the electronic devices and the pumps with a compact nuclear generator. It is self-regulating and very, very stable. However, a large enough explosion (perhaps the plastic explosive blob?) could breach the shielding and fill the ship with deadly radiation. No one gets out alive, but the mission is a total success.

Ending the mission

Once again the PCs may end the mission for you very conveniently by dying. If you were lenient with them, some may survive and escape.

If the PCs win the battle, either by sinking the *Jolly Roger-U* or by eliminating all resistance on board, ten boatloads of Internal Security frogmen arrive and arrest all the survivors. In any case, the distraction of the battle allows Neil-U to once again take the tournament championship. He is so pleased by this outcome (and by wiping out his rival Buck-U in the process) he quickly makes the arrangements to extradite arrested PCs from TJC Sector Internal Security.

Some of Buck-U's bots may survive and walk out of the reservoir on the bottom. They would undoubtedly dedicate the rest of their lives to tracking down the PCs and eliminating them. Throw one into your next mission to add even more paranoia.

The debriefing

Two days after their return, Gary-V personally debriefs the team survivors in Briefing Room C (**Tension 16**). Review Chapter 28, 'Debriefings' in the ***PARANOIA*** XP rulebook before conducting the debriefing with your players.

Gary-V commends, reprimands, praises and fines the characters according to the reports, records and statements available from the characters. He collects mission records from the team leader. Remember that the characters must account for all equipment assigned to them. When assigning rewards and raising security clearance, take into account all the missions the PC participated in. The performance of deceased clones is also relevant, since guilt/praise by association is an established principle of ***PARANOIA***.

At the end of the briefing, Gary-V announces that the Special Troubleshooter team is disbanded, and all the PCs will be reassigned to their previous jobs. He wishes them loyal and productive existences.

Special invitation

Neil-U is always on the lookout for ingenious, devious and lucky citizens, particularly if they have incriminating evidence of his treason and the good sense to keep quiet about it. If one or more PCs are such people, Neil-U conducts a full investigation into their background and personality. If they seem safe and useful, Neil-U instructs Gary-V to offer them a place in his Program Group.

Changing secret societies is rare, so such an opportunity should reveal to the PC the magnitude of the group's power. If he accepts, the PC can become a double agent in his old secret society, or receive a new identity. In either case, his ex-secret society probably comes back to haunt him.

'And the grand prize winner is…'

If the PCs have evidence of the treasonous practice of High Programmer tournaments, and they try to peddle that evidence to The Computer, secret societies or the black market, roll 1d20.

1–2: Things don't work out. Activate clones.

3–18: It could have been worse. After a brief period of anticipation and terror, it becomes obvious that nothing important comes of their efforts. Better luck next time.

19–20: Things work marvelously. Promote the PCs to a higher security level and make them fabulously wealthy. Then arrange for an extended and dramatic public treason trial that makes them an example of the Commie corruption of even the most loyal citizens. Teela-O-MLY personally visits them in their cells before the gala execution. There isn't a dry eye in the house.

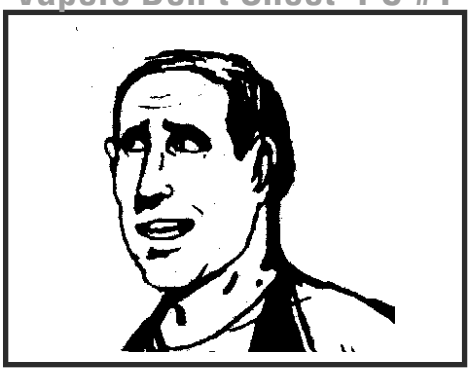
Bot roster

Type	No.	Speed	Weapons	Special equipment & abilities	Size	Armor
Forkbots	4	Wheels (sprint)	None	Able to lift 10 tons, 15 meters in air with clamp-forks	4 m long, 3 m wide, 2 m high	2
Security combots	2	Treads (walk)	Needle gun 10, Stun gun 10	Operating at half-ability; infrared sensors; falls on corners on roll of 1 or 2	Man-size	3 (hardened)
Doberbot	1	Legs (walk/run/sprint)	Teeth 16 (W5K impact)	Touch-stuns for 1d20 divided by 2 rounds	All you notice are the teeth	1
Advanced combot	15	Treads (walk/run/sprint)	Laser cannon 16, flamethrower 16, semi-auto slugthrower 16	All-terrain vehicle	Monstrous tank	6 (hardened)
First Mate bot	1	Legs (walk/run/sprint)	Slugthrower (HE) 16, 5 throwing knives 16, neurowhip 18	Waterproof; infrared sensors	A little larger than man-size	3
Pirate bot	8	Legs (walk/run/sprint)	Hand slugthrower (HE) 14, 3 throwing knives 14, cutlass (sword) 15	Waterproof; fires water cannon or hose at base skill roll 14	Man-size	2
Deck swab bot	12	Legs (walk/run)	2 throwing clubs 13, cutlass (sword) 13	Waterproof; fires water cannon or hose at base skill roll 08	A little smaller than man-size	1
Parrotbot	1	None (none)	None	Mimics Old Reckoning pirate movie dialogue	Chicken	—

NPC roster

Name	Clearance	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Roleplaying notes
Spike-B, briefing guard	BLUE	Violence 06, Unarmed Combat 19, Necking 10	Spiked collar 10 (O4W impact)	BLUE reflec	A man who loves his work.
3 briefing room guards	BLUE	Violence 12, Unarmed Combat 15, Intimidation 05	BLUE laser rifle 16	BLUE reflec	Three men who only like their work.
Steve-G	GREEN	Violence 06, Unarmed Combat 10, Bootlicking 10	GREEN laser pistol 10	GREEN reflec	A briefing veteran.
Ben-B	BLUE	Violence 09, Unarmed Combat 13	None	YELLOW reflec	Knows nothing of the game, but is suspicious of Gary-V.
Gary-V	VIOLET	Violence 09, Unarmed Combat 10, Con Games 16	Black exotic laser pistol 13	Kevlar/Mylar vest under uniform	Nevo-U's right-hand man. Wants his own program group.
Frank-O	ORANGE	Violence 04, Unarmed Combat 05, Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 16	ORANGE laser pistol 08, Club 08	Crash gear; treat as padding	Lives to drive. It's the thing he does best. 'Nuff said.
Ramco	Unknown	Violence 05, Unarmed Combat 08	Slingshot 10 (range 40m; dmg O5W impact), knife 09	Padding	A fanatic PURGEr and Vatman fan.
Vatman	Unknown	Violence 08, Unarmed Combat 09, Leadership 15, Oratory 16	GREEN laser rifle 12, IR goggles	Kevlar with Mylar	PURGE embodied.
Robin	Unknown	Violence 04 Unarmed Combat 07	Blaster 08, knife 08	Padding	The Vatman's protege.
Bud-O-NDP-4, hotshot leader	ORANGE	Violence 06 Unarmed Combat 06	YELLOW laser rifle 11, ORANGE laser pistol 10, IR goggles	Kevlar with ORANGE reflec	Crazier than the rest of the Hotshots combined.
5 hotshot troubleshooters	ORANGE	Violence 04, Unarmed Combat 07	2 ORANGE laser rifles 08, 5 ORANGE laser pistols 08, 3 oange slugthrowers 08	ORANGE reflec	They all want to be as crazy as Bud-O.
Reggie-G Rip-G	GREEN	Violence 10, Unarmed Combat 10	Semi-auto slugthrower 14	GREEN reflec over padding	Their doberbot was scheduled for termination. They scared it into obedience.
Average death trooper	GREEN	Violence 09, Unarmed Combat 13	Blasters 13, truncheon 14	Kevlar	The army elite. Would die before shaking hands with a Vulture guard.
Deke-G, strike force officer	GREEN	Violence 08, Unarmed Combat 11	GREEN laser pistol 12	Environment suit	Your average line officer.
Average strike force troopers	YELLOW	Violence 06, Unarmed Combat 10	YELLOW laser rifles 10	Environment suits	Your average line troops.
Black-U-BRD-5	ULTRAVIOLET	Violence 08, Unarmed Combat 12, Oratory 15, Con Games 14	Force hook 14 (acts as force sword), hand slugthrower 12	Kevlar/Mylar	A man in command of his own ship, but not of his own mind.
Vulture cavalry	GREEN	Violence 11, Unarmed Combat 13	GREEN laser rifle 15	GREEN reflec	

‘Vapors Don’t Shoot’ PC #1



Roger-O-CWE-2

Male Tech Svcs Communications & Recording Officer

Service firm: 1-800-PDCHELP
Service firm type: Tech Support
Security clearance: ORANGE
Credits: 120
Tics: Sighs a lot.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Bobby-O: We did it, we won! Those Romantics traitors are dead meat!
Roger-O: *[sighs]* Yeah, we really did it.
The Computer: Good work, Troubleshooters! Each of you gets a 200-credit bonus.
Roger-O: *[sighs]* Thank you, Friend Computer.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 07
Befuddle Others With Technobabble 13
Con Games 11
Intimidation 01

Stealth 09
Disguise 01
Notice Unusual Discolorations 15
Surveillance 13

Violence 07
Agility 11
Energy Weapons 11
Unarmed Combat 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

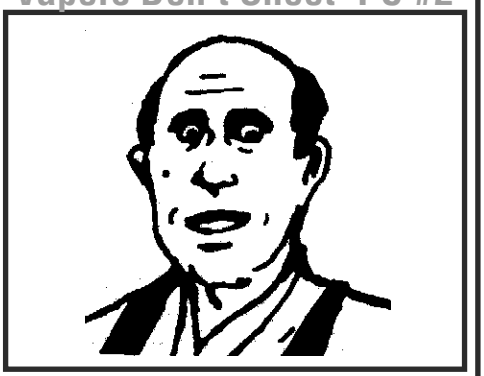
Hardware 06
Chemical Engineering 10
Electronic Engineering 10
Com Unit Ops and Maintenance 12

Software 07
C-Bay 01
Data Search 11

Wetware 05
Cloning 01
Make Cold Fun Into Emergency Adhesive 11

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Violence, Software)

‘Vapors Don’t Shoot’ PC #2



Amos-O-BYA-4

Male Tech Svcs Happiness Officer

Service firm: ComfyCouch
Service firm type: Bedding Inspectors
Security clearance: ORANGE
Credits: 120
Tics: Blandly agreeable.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Mortimer-O: *[hiding from laser fire]* Amos-O! We’re pinned down by PURGErs! Can you flank them?
Amos-O: *[likewise hiding]* Just give me a moment, and I’ll be glad to give it a try.
Mortimer-O: What, there’s a problem?
Amos-O: Oh, my leg’s been shot off, but it’s nothing to worry about. I’m sure it’ll work out just fine.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06
Bootlicking 10
Chutzpah 01
Hygiene 10
Interrogation 01

Stealth 06
Concealment 10
High Alert 01
Conceal and/or Recognize Bribery Attempts 12

Violence 08
Duck Behind Furniture 14
Energy Weapons 12

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

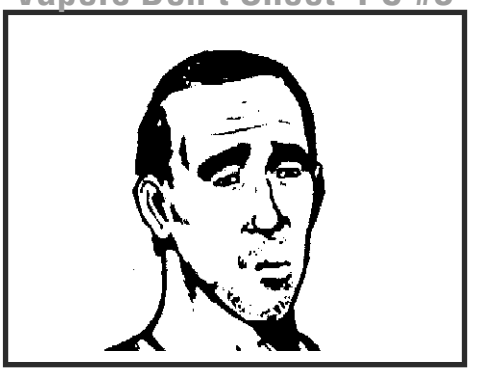
Hardware 08
Habitat Engineering 12
Nuclear Engineering 01

Software 09
Bot Programming 13
Financial Systems 01
Initiate Remote Shutdown of Pyrus-Class Warbots 15
Operating Systems 13

Wetware 05
Diagnose Sleep Disorders 11
Pharmatherapy 01
Suggestion 09

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Management, Hardware)

‘Vapors Don’t Shoot’ PC #3



Cain-O-ATW-2

Male Tech Services Equipment Guy

Service firm: YourMove
Service firm type: Consolidated Motorized Transport
Security clearance: ORANGE
Credits: 120
Tics: Constantly playing with PDC.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
[Cain-O is shutting down a reactor with one hand and playing a PDC game with the other]
Bobby-O: Uh, could you focus a little? The reactor’s about to blow!
Cain-O: Calm down, okay? I’m totally focused. Everything’s fine— Ooh, double word score!

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06
Bootlicking 01
Chutzpah 10
Shrug Ambiguously 12

Stealth 05
Security Systems 09
Sneaking 01

Violence 10
Energy Weapons 10
Projectile Weapons 01
Thrown Weapons 01
Unarmed Combat 10

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 11
Build Abstract Sculpture From Spare Parts 17
Nuclear Engineering 15

Software 09
Bot Programming 13
Leave Untraceable Calling Card When Hacking 15
Operating Systems 13
Vehicle Programming 01

Wetware 04
Cloning 08
Identify Artificial Flavoring Agents 10
Outdoor Life 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Violence)

Cain-O-ATW-2

Male Tech Services Equipment Guy

Mutation: Mechanical Intuition
Society: Computer Phreaks (degree 2)
Secret Skills: Experimental Equipment Maintenance / Repair 13, Jargon 07, Hacking 13
Background: You were a long time discovering your mutant ability. An inclination toward ripping apart complex machinery and putting it together again seemed normal to you. Not until you joined the Computer Phreaks did you learn the true nature of your skill.

Once in the Computer Phreaks you quickly made a name for yourself: 'Data-Chef'. After some concentrated work, you broke into the recipe storage bank of the food-prep subsystem. For a solid week thereafter the INFRAREDs were subjected to food with taste and consistency. The experience was almost more than they could handle. When The Computer discovered the treasonous breach and replaced the original programming, it took every Internal Security agent in RSB Sector to quell the riots. Tech Services is still making repairs.

The Phreaks admired you for this inspired act, and your mentor, CPU/CP-ME, taught you the basics of computer hacking, a treasonous skill. You look forward to testing your new ability.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

The Phreaks suspect a High Programmer is behind your current mission, not The Computer. CPU/CP-ME sent you a message: 'learn when/how/why hp exerts control / steal/duplicate all programs/techniques/ equipment that look cool / roger-o-cwe-2 has comm gadget / somehow bypasses computer's monitors / we MUST have it /endmsg'

You received a second message just before reporting for your Troubleshooter mission briefing. 'be advised high programmer has spy in yr group / encryption on msg tough / spy's home sector contains letter y / good luck /endmsg.' That would be either Amos-O-BYA or Bobby-O-SYE....

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
Flashlight
Illuminating hand-lens
Tool kit (the box is legal, but most of the tools aren't)
(2) ORANGE laser barrels
Jumpsuit
ORANGE canvas backpack
Utility belt and pouches

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit ORANGE reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2
Robot Investigation Device (RID) (see GM for details)

Amos-O-BYA-4

Male Tech Svcs Happiness Officer

Mutations: Machine Empathy, Telekinesis
Society: Psion (degree 2)
Secret Skills: Drug Procurement 09, Whistling 16, Bribery 14
Background: You've always had good rapport with The Computer; other people have been vaporized for *hinting* at questions you asked outright. You learned the true nature of your Machine Empathy mutant power when the Psion secret society recruited you. You use that ability whenever you can to stay in The Computer's good graces and to extract favors and information for yourself and the Psions.

Your promising career in Technical Services hit a snag recently, and quite unexpectedly, when The Computer transferred you to the Troubleshooters. This is important because you are on your fourth clone and rapidly approaching extinction. Everyone else on the team is only on their second clone.

Your last two clones expired blissfully, in rapid succession, only a short time ago. They fell victim to the latest rage among Mystics, the new brain exploder drug. Armed with some of those same pills, you've been seeking Mystics for revenge ever since.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Soon after your transfer to the Troubleshooters, several Psions were revealed and dragged away by a swarm of Internal Security agents. Arrests and executions continue, causing great alarm in Psion. Several members have even turned themselves in, registering their mutant powers. They have not been seen again.

Your Psion Control told you of a Psion informant in your Troubleshooter team. As soon as the informant uses a mutant power, you must nail him as a traitorous mutant. The suspect is either Cain-O-ATW-2 or Terry-O-EUZ-2. You are anxious to carry out this mission because you know that if an informant were traced to this group, you must be under suspicion too.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
Flashlight
Portable steam iron (keeps you lookin' good)
YELLOW laser barrel painted ORANGE (ILLEGAL)
(2) ORANGE laser barrels
Jumpsuit
ORANGE canvas backpack
Utility belt and pouches

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit ORANGE reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2
(20) Gelgernine / Inner Happiness tablets
Miniature audiovisual recorder to document equipment damage

Roger-O-CWE-2

Male ~~Tech Services~~ R&D Communications & Recording Officer

Actual service group: R&D (spying on Technical Services)
Mutation: Chameleon
Society: Pro Tech (degree 3)
Secret Skills: Logic Puzzles 06, Botspotting 11, Hacking 11
Background: You are a worried clone. You've been in the front lines of battle for resources between Technical Services and R&D for some time. You actually know little about R&D; to be a good spy, you submerged yourself within Tech. Unfortunately, this very dedication has caused problems. Your loyalty has been questioned on several occasions, and only some skillful fast-talking has saved you from premature clone activation.

Recently, your long-overdue promotion to third-rank spy came through. You carefully selected and trained a subordinate to also penetrate Technical Services. Much to your chagrin, he was delivered to R&D headquarters in a small box labeled 'Defective Observation Equipment'.

Your unimaginative superiors hold you responsible for the embarrassing incident and your loyalty is more suspect than ever.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

At R&D headquarters, your superior made it clear that to redeem yourself you must make a similar delivery to Tech HQ. He said, 'We've gotten you assigned to a special Troubleshooter team that's crawling with Techs. Shipping one of 'em back to Tech HQ shouldn't be too difficult. Just don't get caught.'

On your way out, he slapped a communication device into your hand. 'This is a little gadget I just finished that you can use to keep us posted. I don't think The Computer can pick up its signal.' Then he added, 'This is your absolute last chance, Roger-O. If you don't clean up this mess, you'll finish your days as a volunteer in the nerve pain test lab.'

Properly chastized, you joined the Troubleshooter mission team as communications & recording officer, good cover for your special device. By sheer chance, you've discovered that one of two techs on the team, either Terry-O-EUZ-2 or Bobby-O-SYE-2, is probably your protege's killer. Now all you need is a box.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
Flashlight
Pair of binoculars
Miniature camera & telephoto lens (ILLEGAL)
Miniature 'bug' & recorder, 100m range (ILLEGAL)
Mini Com 1 on 'secure' RED frequency (ILLEGAL)
(2) ORANGE laser barrels
Jumpsuit
ORANGE canvas backpack
Utility belt and pouches

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit ORANGE reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2
Printout of transfer orders (see GM for details)

‘Vapors Don’t Shoot’ PC #4

Mortimer-O-TBI-2

Male Tech Services Loyalty Officer

Service firm: Ooze Advisors
Service firm type: Slime Identification
Security clearance: ORANGE
Credits: 120
Tics: Speaks in violent terms.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Terry-O: Hurry up, Mortimer-O! We have to go talk to these bots right now.
Mortimer-O: Leave me out of it. I’m no good with talking; I’d just kill the negotiations.
Terry-O: Okay, you can guard the rear then.
Mortimer-O: Great! You go on and break a leg. Knock ‘em dead!

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 07
Con Games 01
Get All Buddy-Buddy With Local GREEN Goons 13
Interrogation 11
Intimidation 11
Oratory 01

Stealth 07
Sleight of Hand 11
Surveillance 01

Violence 09
Agility 13
Energy Weapons 13
Hand Weapons 13
Throw ‘Rita’, Your Lucky Personal Knife 15

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

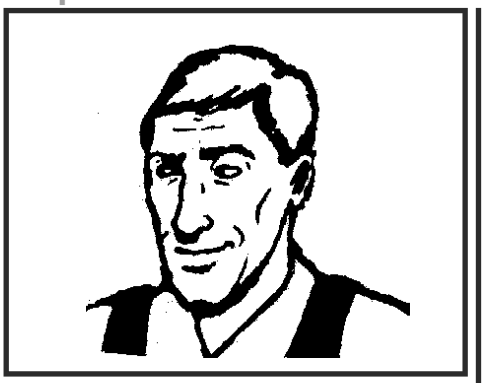
Hardware 07
Habitat Engineering 01
Repair Force Sword 13
Weapon and Armor Maintenance 11

Software 04
Hack Laser Pistol Data Recorders 10

Wetware 05
Medical 01
Bioweapons 10

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Wetware)

‘Vapors Don’t Shoot’ PC #5



Terry-O-EUZ-2

Male Tech Services Hygiene Officer

Service firm: Medical Overall System Support (MOSS)
Service firm type: Medical Services
Security clearance: ORANGE
Credits: 120
Tics: Drifts into people’s personal space.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Terry-O: *[Leans over Cain-O’s shoulder.]* So, whatcha working on?
Cain-O: *[Poking at his PDC.]* Just checking the subsector map.
Terry-O: Neat.
Cain-O: You know, I can’t concentrate when you’re leaning over me like that.
Terry-O: Oh! Sorry.
Cain-O: …No, I mean it. Please move.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06
Moxie 01
Oratory 10
Scare Wild Animals Away 14

Stealth 06
Poker Face 12

Violence 07
Energy Weapons 11
Scramble Up Pipes 13
Thrown Weapons 11
Vehicular Combat 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

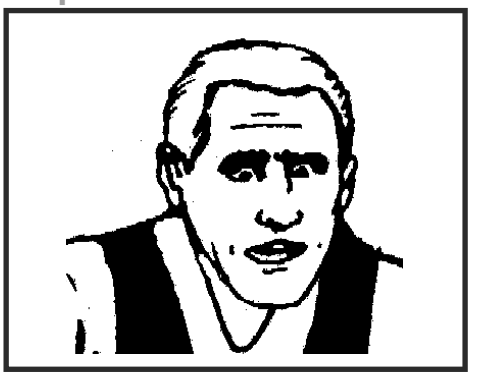
Hardware 07
Mechanical Engineering 11
Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 01

Software 05
C-Bay 09
Data Analysis 01

Wetware 05
Medical 12
Pharmatherapy 12
Recognize Mutagens 14

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Hardware, Software)

‘Vapors Don’t Shoot’ PC #6



Bobby-O-SYE-2

Male Power Svcs Loyalty Officer

Service firm: Power Tours
Service firm type: Executive Power Chauffeurs
Security clearance: ORANGE
Credits: 120
Tics: Always exercising.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
[Bobby-O is doing push-ups.]
Roger-O: Bobby-O, can you take the jetpack and scout up ahead?
Bobby-O: 98… 99… 100! *[stands up]* I’m sorry, what was that?
Roger-O: *[sighs]* Go scout, okay?
Bobby-O: Sure thing! Hup! Hup! *[jogs away]*
Roger-O: And he forgets the jetpack. Again. *[sighs]*

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 07
Chutzpah 11
Hygiene 01

Stealth 05
Bend Metal Quietly 11

Violence 08
Energy Weapons 12
Fine Manipulation 01
Lift Heavy Things 18
Unarmed Combat 16

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 07
Mechanical Engineering 11
Polish Surface to Gleaming Mirrorlike Sheen 13
Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 11
Weapon and Armor Maintenance 01

Software 06
Hacking 01
Rewire Confession Booth In Your Residence Hall 12
Vehicle Programming 10

Wetware 05
Biosciences 09
Psychotherapy 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Management, Wetware)

Bobby-O-SYE-2

Male Power Svcs Loyalty Officer

Mutation: Adrenalin Control
Secret society: PURGE (degree 2)
Secret skills: Cash Hacking 08, Gloating 12, Mechanical Sabotage 14
Background: You spent many years as a member of the tightly-knit Power service group, driving Power execs around RSB Sector in autocars or, occasionally, crawlers. After The Computer made your unusual 'temporary' transfer to this Troubleshooter team, one of your execs informed you *every* other member is from Technical Services! 'So watch your back,' he said, 'the Techs have always had it in for us, and they're going to outnumber you.'

Through careful planning and labor, you're starting to earn quite a reputation among PURGErs as the 'Spinebender' for your sabotage of the autocar guidance tracks known as 'spines'. Your latest job on a four-lane spine was so flamboyant and inspiring that it earned the praise of several prominent PURGErs, including the infamous Vatman, scourge of the RSB Sector food prep areas. Your cover seems secure so far. Internal Security doesn't usually suspect drivers of destroying the roads beneath them.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

You recently received a tip from another PURGEr. Before you ate it, the scrap of grimy paper read, 'A real enemy, a citizen who sucks up to The Computer, frequently gaining undeserved praise and favors, is on your team. He may even be an experienced, high-rank special agent to The Computer. It's either Amos-O-BYA-4 or Cain-O-ATW-2.'

Although the message didn't say so, you can read between the lines: PURGE wants this traitor to humanity's ultimate supremacy taken out. Not so tough, there should be plenty of chances.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
Flashlight
GREEN laser barrel painted RED (ILLEGAL)
Set of wrist and ankle weights (help keep you fit and improves unarmed attacks; see GM for details)
(2) ORANGE laser barrels
Jumpsuit
ORANGE canvas backpack
Utility belt and pouches

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit ORANGE reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2
Miniature audiovisual recorder to document treason and damage to Computer property
Personal Air Bag (PAB) (see GM for details)

Terry-O-EUZ-2

Male Tech Services Hygiene Officer

Mutations: Telekinesis, Teleportation
Society: Psion (degree 2)
Secret Skills: Power Studies 10, Macrame 15, Twitchtalk 07
Background: When your secret society, Psion, discovered you have the rare power to teleport, you quickly advanced to second degree. After demonstrating your trustworthiness by passing several Deep Probe investigations, your superiors taught you a second psionic power, telekinesis. This power lets you move objects with your mind, though it's easiest with objects no heavier than, say, a grenade (heh, heh). Obviously, you are eager to explore this exciting ability. (Without, of course, revealing your undeclared mutant power.)

You were made team hygiene officer, no doubt, so you could put your special services training to good use. In your last mission, you patched up several of The Computer's valuable agents, who had just discovered the truth about rumors of packs of wild dogs marauding in the food vat areas. Blood everywhere; most unhygienic.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Recently, Internal Security has zealously increased its efforts to uncover and execute members of the Psion secret society. Of course everyone expects some harassment from Internal Security, but the present vendetta has gone too far. Your Control has ordered you to eliminate known Internal Security agents as part of a wider effort to make Internal Security back off. You strongly suspect Mortimer-O-TBI-2 and Roger-O-CWE-2 to be Internal Security agents; one of them is posing as a Mystic.

Control's last telepathic message said another Psion who might help you is in this Troubleshooter team. He is either Bobby-O-SYA-2, Amos-O-BYA-4 or, strangely enough, Mortimer-O-TBI-2.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
Flashlight
First aid kit
(4) Smoke grenades (they help cover your disappearing act; BLUE)
(2) ORANGE laser barrels
Jumpsuit
ORANGE canvas backpack
Utility belt and pouches

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit ORANGE reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2
(4) StimuGo injections (see GM for details)

Mortimer-O-TBI-2

Male ~~Technical Services IntSec~~ Technical Services Loyalty Officer

Actual service group: Technical Services (spying on Internal Security (spying on Technical Services))
Mutation: Empathy
Society: Illuminati (degree 2), infiltrating Mystics (degree 2)
Secret Skills: Drug Procurement 02, Gloating 11, WMD 15
Background: Your credo is 'Survival Through Superior Firepower'. Lasers and other weapons feel very comfortable in your hands. You obtained a force sword some time ago, even though it's a BLUE-Clearance weapon. Though learning how to use it did you in, you learned from your mistakes and wielded the thing fairly well in your new incarnation. Unfortunately, you had to ditch the sword just weeks ago during an unexpected residence inspection.

Your skill with weapons makes an Internal Security cover natural for you. You purposely chose a Mystic second cover, figuring correctly that you'd make a lousy Mystic. Anyone looking carefully will see right through your Mystic identity to your Internal Security cover and stop there, satisfied or unwilling to dig further.

Recently, though, some doubt was cast on your cover. While you were shooting at the laser target range, The Computer politely asked you for a conference (never a pleasant event). After a tense little chat about a recently terminated friend's interest in Internal Security, and an exhortation to root out evil traitors, The Computer signed off. Recalling your friend had a similar chat just before his demise, you realize you desperately need to do something to vindicate yourself— ike expose someone, anyone. That will get The Computer off your back and also strengthen your cover as an Internal Security agent.

After you were assigned to the team as loyalty officer you heard a rumor that a teammate, Bobby-O-SYE-2, is connected with the Death Leopards. He just needs to perform one treasonous act and you'll be able to serve The Computer.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Your Illuminati superior gives you solid information that Roger-O-CWE-2 is a spy for R&D. The coded message reads, 'Use this information to establish control over Roger-O-CWE-2 by means of blackmail or similar coercion. Do not kill him nor allow him to be killed. Further instructions will follow.'

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Lucky personal throwing knife ('Rita') (ILLEGAL)
Ordinary non-throwable knife
Datapad and stylus
Flashlight
(4) ORANGE laser barrels
Jumpsuit
ORANGE canvas backpack
Utility belt and pouches

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit ORANGE reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2
Barrel blade (fits on end of laser barrel, functions as sword)
Giant Metal Plate (worn over or under reflec)

Outdoors arbitrary encounter tables

One thing sure to cause a sophisticated roleplayer to pitch a fit is a random encounter table. State-of-the-art design theory frowns upon such mission elements as either unnecessary padding or lazy game design. 'If the encounters are significant, plan them into the mission and develop them properly. Otherwise, leave them out.'

Benighted fools that we are, we *like* these primitive roleplaying tools. We use 'arbitrary' encounter tables as springboards for improvisation. You're welcome to use our tables, or make your own or simply decree arbitrary encounters on impulse. We suggest you purposely avoid detailed preparation for arbitrary encounters. Because such encounters are less critical to the mission, you can afford to be more freewheeling, imaginative and irresponsible—in short, have more fun.

However, because these encounters are supposed to be unimportant and lots of fun, go easy on the death and destruction. Nuisances and annoyances are fine, but losing a PC to some arbitrary bear or earthquake is a bummer.

Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table

Roll 1d20 and run the corresponding encounter. If it isn't appropriate for the situation, modify it, roll again or create your own encounter.

Roll	Encounter	Description
1–2	Hunting party of 4–8 savages	They wear no armor, but carry bows and arrows and hunting frisbees with razor-sharp edges (O5K impact). If the savages outnumber the PCs, they set an ambush. If there are more PCs, the savages follow the PCs and try to nab a straggler.
3–4	Tree snare	A loop attached to a sapling snaps one PC into the air (roll to see who gets flipped), breaking his leg (Wounded) and spilling his gear on the ground. The unlucky fellow cannot get himself down easily and can't walk without medical treatment. A PC who succeeds in a Violence or Chutzpah roll can hobble along with a splint and gritted teeth.
5–6	Covered pit	This deep hole might be an Old Reckoning cesspool, storm drain or basement, or hunting pit filled with dull stakes (the savages aren't too smart). Randomly determine who falls in, but allow him a Violence/Agility check to grab the edge. Victims who fall take S3M armor-piercing impact damage and cannot climb out without help.
7–8	Skunk	PCs must make Violence/Agility checks to avoid spray. Odor lingers. Eternally.
9–10	Snake	A poisonous snake bites one of the PCs, who twitches, convulses and spasms for two days before recovering. The victim is down until he recovers. Recovery is as if healing a wound. Until recovered, the PC is too weak and debilitated to walk without assistance, but he may perform normally in any combat round if he can first succed in a Violence check. When near a road or highway, change this encounter to a single well-armed crawler manned by eight gung-ho death troopers. See death trooper on the NPC roster.)
11–12	Grizzly bear	A crazed bear attacks the party and fights until dead. It moves at sprint speed and its fur serves as I1 armor. It makes two claw attacks each round (Violence 13, S4K impact damqage). Only a killing shot to the head stops this bear instantly. All other killing wounds take effect two rounds later. (Note: This could be a short mission for several citizens unless you give the party ample opportunity for ranged fire.)
13–14	Bull and harem	A herd of 15 cows is led by a gigantic bull that charges if PCs advance. The bull moves at sprint speed, has natural I1 armor, Violence 11, and does S4K impact damage with its horns (S4D vs. hardened armor).
15–16	Harmless animal(s)	Your choice of deer, goats, birds or squirrels. Describe these creatures as though the PCs have never seen them before. Don't be surprised if the Troubleshooters are hard on these unwitting Commie traitors.
17–18	Natural event	Use falling tree limbs (or whole trees), quicksand or an earthquake. Roll 1d20 for earthquake severity: 1 = slight vibration; 20 = 'Where'd the dome go?'
19–20	Exit point for the Bermuda Triangle	This is always a favorite. Use it whenever you want, no matter what else is rolled. The Wreck of the *Edmund Fitzgerald.* A grounded squadron of P-47s. Whatever.

Scrub/Open terrain arbitrary encounter table

Roll 1d20 and run the corresponding encounter. If it isn't appropriate for the situation, modify it, roll again or create your own encounter.

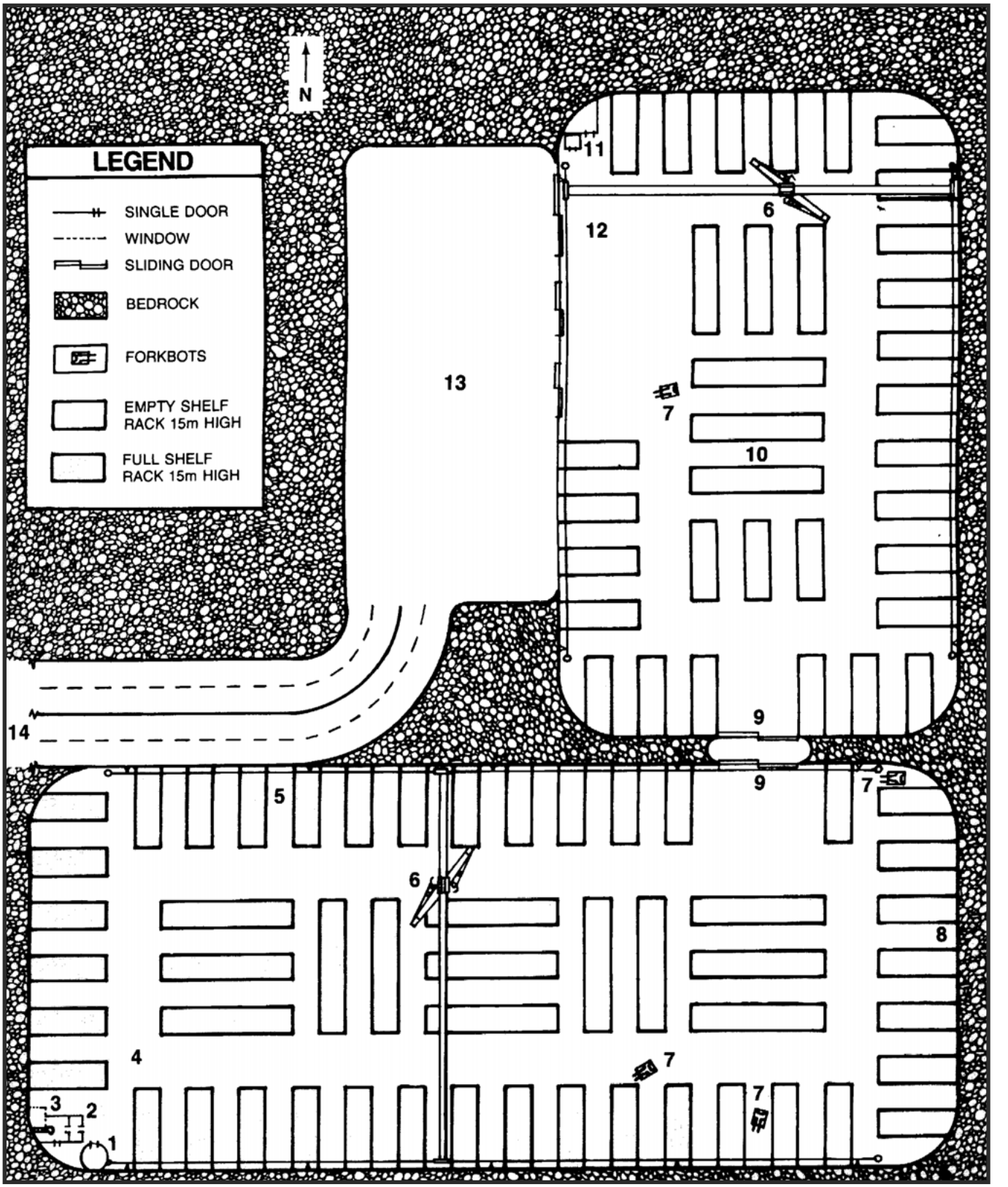
Roll	Encounter	Description
1–2	Savages	See 1–2 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table. Triple the number of warriors and arm some with spears, slings and shields.
3–4	Wild horse herd	1d20 horses led by a magnificent stallion thunder past, narrowly avoiding the PCs. However, if the PCs attack or try to catch one, the stallion attacks at sprint speed (Violence 05, tramples for S5D impact damage).
5–6	Buzzards	They circle high above the PCs, waiting. Armed Forces patrols know that where there are buzzards, there are often Commies and traitors. See strike force troopers on the NPC roster.
7–8	Locusts	A veritable plague descends upon the PCs. Visibility is reduced to zero. Vehicles crash unless stopped immediately. Lasts 1d20 rounds.
9–10	Snake	Same as 9–10 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table (including death trooper option).
11–12	Harmless animals	Your choice of prairie dogs, antelopes, turtles, spiders, etc. More ammo wasters.
13–18	Natural events	Choose one of these possibilities:
	Dust devils	Small dust tornadoes that knock things over and Snafu communications.
	Prairie fire	Moves at run speed, consuming all in its path, and seems to pursue the PCs (burns on 11 or less, S6M energy damage).
	Earthquake	See 17–18 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table.
19–20	Gamemaster's special	Close your eyes and make one up. Conan. Goblins. Venusians. Republicans. Use it whenever you want, no matter what else is rolled. Then do some fancy footwork to rationalize your frivolous impulse. Isn't it fun being the Gamemaster?

Mountain arbitrary encounter table

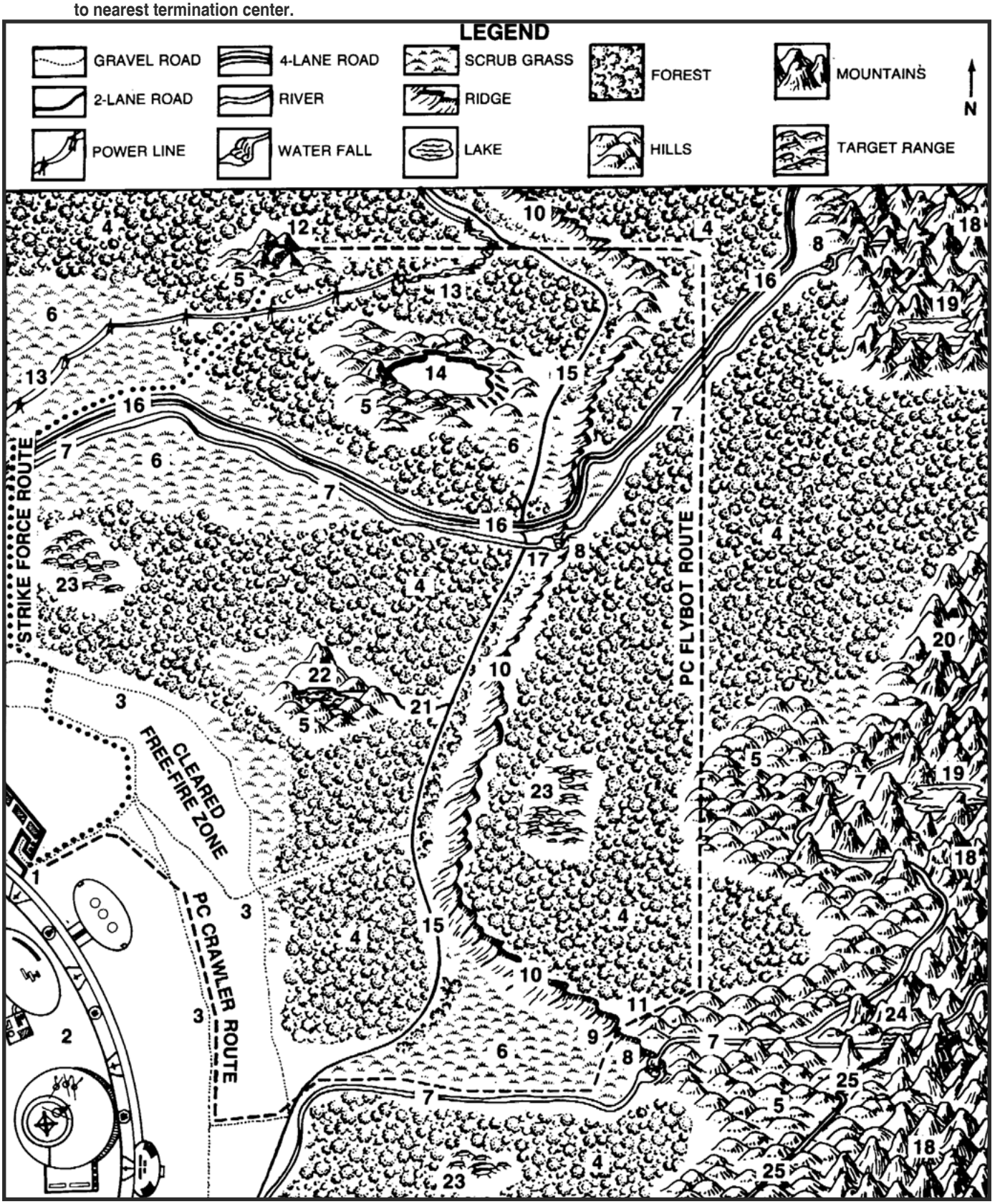
Roll 1d20 and run the corresponding encounter. If it isn't appropriate for the situation, modify it, roll again or create your own encounter.

Roll	Encounter	Description
1–2	Savage hunting party	See 1–2 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table. Arm a couple of warriors with slugthrowers.
3–4	Harmless animals	Your choice of mountain goats, eagles, chipmunks, etc.
5–6	Buzzards	See Encounter 3 on the Scrub/Open Terrain arbitrary encounter table.
7–8	Mountain lion	This ferocious creature surprises and attacks a single PC. This lion moves so fast it makes three attacks (Violence 15) each round (claws do S4K impact damage, S4S vs. hardened armor).
9–10	Snake	See 9–10 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table.
11–12	Bear	See 11–12 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table.
13–16	Natural events:	Choose one of three possibilities:
	Rockslides	Roll 1d20 for severity: 1 = small pebbles bury boots; 20 = boot buried under three meters of rock.
	Earthquakes	See 17–18 on the Forest/Hills arbitrary encounter table.
	Storm	A thunderstorm starts brewing overhead; lightning strikes where you aim it (Violence 04, W1K energy, armor-piercing).
17–18	Mine shaft	An abandoned dark tunnel, shored up by rotting timbers, leads deep into the mountain. It's obviously dangerous, but it looks like a swell place to hide. A couple of small cave-ins may discourage the PCs.
19–20	The silly option	Mountain goats with mutant powers. The last of the Mohicans. Robbie the Robot. Trust the Force, Luke.

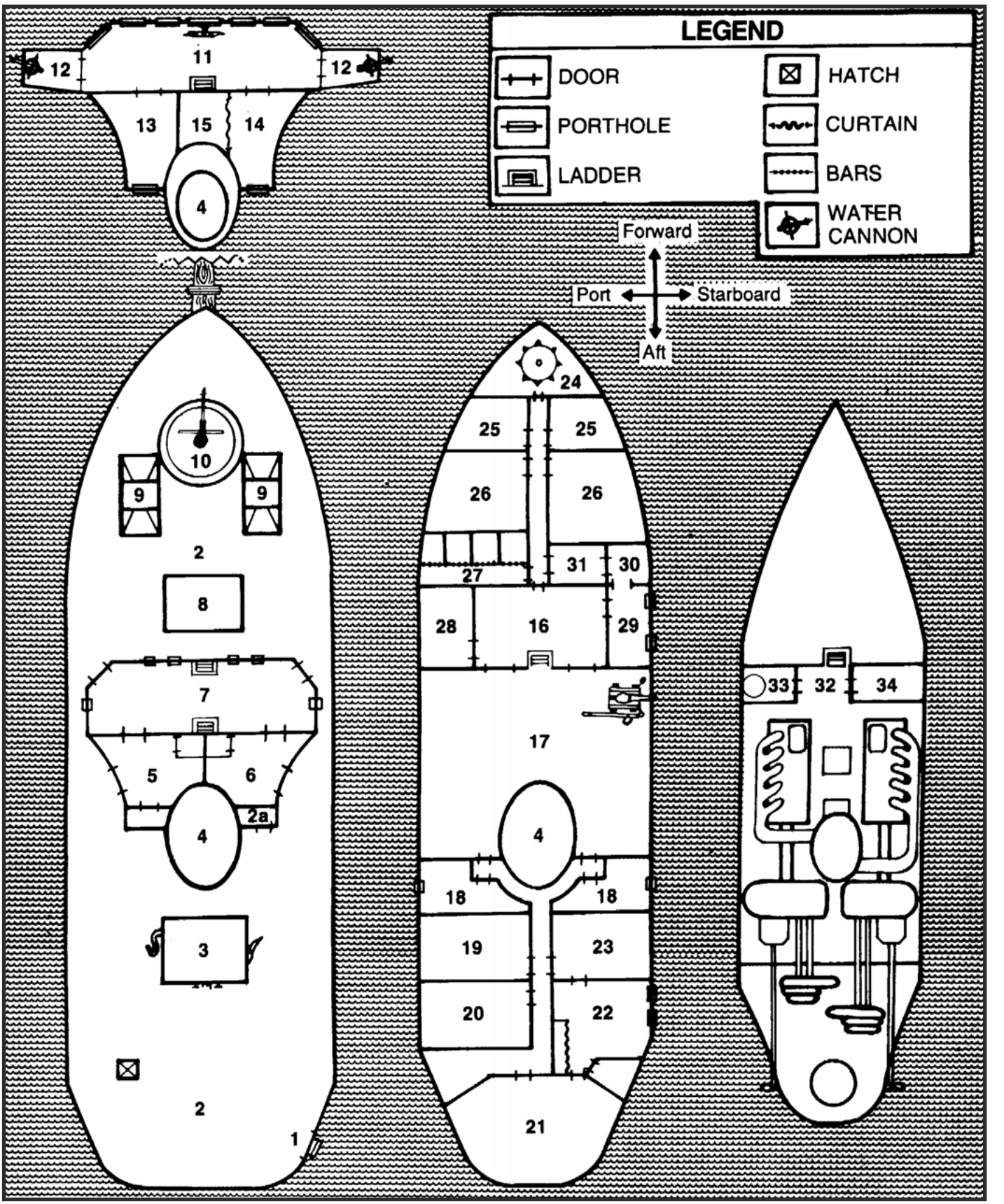
:TITLE = VDSB MAP 1 / RSB LEVEL 54B, TRANSIT STORAGE AREA 12 [INACTIVE]
:TYPE = FLOOR PLAN / SCALE: 1 CM = 5 METERS
:CONFIGURATION = HARDCOPY PRINTOUT
:SOURCE = RSB.ARCHIVE.SUBSYSTEM
:SECURITY = ULTRAVIOLET. This information restricted. If your security clearance is below ULTRAVIOLET, report immediately to nearest termination center.



:TITLE = VDSB MAP 2 / OUTDOORS, QUAD NE (ALTURAS OUTBACK)
:TYPE = TERRAIN FEATURE PROJECTION / SCALE: 1 CM = 1 KM / NORTH AT TOP
:CONFIGURATION = HARDCOPY PRINTOUT
:SOURCE = OUTPATROL.CARTOGRAPHY.SUBSYSTEM
:SECURITY = ULTRAVIOLET. This information restricted. If your security clearance is below ULTRAVIOLET, report immediately to nearest termination center.



:TITLE = VDSB MAP 3 / TJC RESERVOIR FIRE & RESCUE BOAT [INOPERABLE]
:TYPE = DECK PLAN / SCALE: 1 SQUARE = 1 METER / SQUARE GRID CURRENTLY UNAVAILABLE, CONTACT PLC
:CONFIGURATION = HARDCOPY PRINTOUT
:SOURCE = BUCK.U.MUSEUM.SUBSYSTEM
:SECURITY = ULTRAVIOLET. This information restricted. If your security clearance is below ULTRAVIOLET, report immediately to nearest termination center.



Information Inquiry Form 375A11/A00002-021

Distributed by the Office of Information Collection and the Office of Forms and Vouchers, PLC

Name _____-____-_____-_____

Service firm _____

Authorization _____

Are you now, or have you ever been a:

Communist?	☐ Yes	☐ No
Mutant?	☐ Yes	☐ No
If yes: Reg. number _____, or	☐ Unregistered	
Secret society member?	☐ Yes	☐ No

Information Access Method Preference

Please indicate the method by which you would prefer to access the information. (Note: Whereas we will endeavor to provide the information in the preferred way, this may not be possible.)

- ☐ Cmail direct AlphaNet link
- ☐ Cmail document in SecurePaq
- ☐ Send a copy of the document to selected confession booth
  State coordinates of preference: _____ Alternate: _____
- ☐ Send a datachip via homing dart
- ☐ Send via Fed-R-ALL Express Economy
  Preferred next of kin to receive document: _____
- ☐ Inspect original documented data item at local CPU Datacenter
  Indicate minimum monetary incentive provision: _____

The Computer is your friend. Are you The Computer's friend?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Other (please explain) _____

_____

_____

Date info desired by_____ Date info needed by _____
2nd alternate date _____ 3rd alternate date _____
4th alternate date_____ 5th alternate date _____

I heard about the availability of this information from my

- ☐ Briefing officer (please state full name): _____
- ☐ Troubleshooter Headquarters mission dispatcher (full name and current sector assignment): _____
- ☐ Secret society contact (full name and society): _____
- ☐ Team leader (full name): _____
- ☐ Other:_____

CPU is open to feedback in respect of the handling of efficient and adequate information assessment, storage and dispersal. In requesting this information, do you feel that the data provided in your most recent briefing fell short of the optimum threshold required to complete your task in a satisfactory fashion?

- ☐ **No**, the information was entirely adequate, and my own shortcomings represent the primary driver behind this request.
- ☐ **Yes** (to adequately handle your feedback and ensure timely processing, please explain in no fewer than 250 words; please be clear and concise; and do not repeat any individual word more than once).

_____

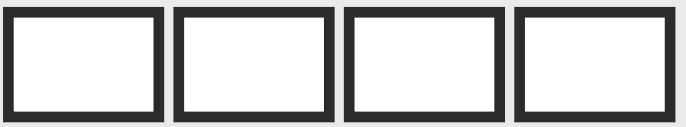
_____

_____

_____

INFORMATION NEEDED. *(Please be as specific as possible.)*

Verification of requester's identity. Please apply four (4) distinctive forms of verifiable personal cellular material within the spaces provided below.



Purpose of information request (optional; though you are not required to state the purpose for your request, doing so may assist Internal Security in clearing temporary consideration for deliberation in respect of a registered application to acquire the participation of an executive deputy administrative officer to review your request):

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

FOR OFFICIAL USE ONLY! DO NOT WRITE IN THE SPACE BELOW!

Attention Processors: *To fulfill request for information, secure approval from ULTRAVIOLET-Clearance personnel in all service groups (initials or identitag below):*

CPU _____	PS_____	IS_____	IS/InfCom ___
TS _____	AF_____	IS/Sup _____	IS/InOff_____
HPD&MC _____	PLC_____	IS/AssSup ___	IS/InOut ____

Result:

- ☐ Return for clarification ☐ Information not found
- ☐ Requestor terminated
- ☐ Request filed (state reason on attached sheet and submit to IntSec)
- ☐ Information unavailable at this security clearance
- ☐ Please have a(n) IntSec officer/Vulture Squadron/brainscrub specialist (delete as applicable) contact me

Undersigned acknowledges that all information made available to him/her is considered privileged and highly sensitive. Any report is classified unless otherwise stated. Should this information fall into the hands of enemies of The Computer, undersigned agrees to report for immediate reprimand and/or termination. Pursuant to The Computer's directive 199/3468 section 3 subsection C paragraph f, 'Reduction of Paperwork Through Multiple-Purpose Documents', undersigned also assumes responsibility for reservoir maintenance bots in Waste Recycling Subdivision, agrees to supervise next Semiannual Loyalty and Patriotism Festival and requests information pamphlet C-27 'Captain Botaroo and Foodvat Show *You* How to Spot a Traitor.'

Signature _____ **Date** _____

Witness #1 _____ **Date** _____

Witness #2 _____ **Date** _____

Bot Witness #1 _____ **Date** _____

Counter-signature _____ **Date** _____

PARANOIA The YELLOW Clearance Black Box Blues

JOHN M. FORD
Mission design, words and music, keyboards

KEN ROLSTON
Development, rhythm guitar, 24-track remix

JIM HOLLOWAY
Illustrations and video editing

PAUL MURPHY
1st edition editing and percussion

PAUL BALDOWSKI
Troubleshooter PC arrangement

MARGOT DIAMOND
STEVE GILBERT
STEVE CRANE
DOUG KAUFMAN
PAUL MURPHY
ROBERT TUFTEE
Playtesters and roadies

THE COMPUTER
Intense supervision, error termination and fear

Introduction 61
1. Bop 'til you drop 63
2. I was a mutant for the FBI 73
3. No one here gets out alive 80
4. Why don't we do it in the road? 90

Charts, tables and resources
General rumor list 65
Secret societies and the Box 66
Organizing Episode 4 events 92
Pregenerated PCs 101
Episode maps 105
Mission alert handouts 107
Bot roster 109
NPC roster 109

A few words from the High Programmer

It has come to The Computer's attention that many end-users of products such as this mission do not use them in the intended fashion. Instead of operating the adventure as written, these users merely use it as a source of ideas for their own games.

Good.

In the first place, it is understood that copies of the mission text may fall into the hands of citizens not cleared for them. This is, of course, treason; yet for our own protection we must admit that treason exists and make allowances for it. Gamemasters who suspect their players may have access to classified material should prepare ingenious dooms triggered by the use of such material. The Computer recognizes no laws against entrapment.

Second, it is not possible to anticipate every action or idea players may come up with during the course of play, brilliant or peculiar or both. Anyone who thinks otherwise is referred to the Maginot Line as an instructive example. Even if advances in behavioral psychology made this possible, it would not be desirable—if you're not in it for the interplay of ideas, you might as well play chess against a computer. (Discussions of a computer-interactive version of ***PARANOIA*** are not available at your security clearance at this time. Rumors are treason. Thank you for your cooperation.)

Second-and-a-half, because any game session above the level of intellectual sterility (approximately 7th level, in most game systems) depends on a continuous supply of interesting plot twists and unexpected but logical events, there is no such thing as an excess of ideas. In ***PARANOIA***, where the atmosphere is the game, there is extra pressure to come up with events that maintain the spirit of consistently amusing terror, without being 15 more iterations of Whoops, Your Equipment Blew Up.

As to the subject matter of this mission…the original designers having run everything from golf to Communism up the flagpole and then shot lasers at it, it was only a short logical leap to sex, drugs and rock & roll. In this High Programmer's opinion, anyone likely to be offended by the material herein would have been so offended by the original ruleset as never to have bought this mission. If, on the other hand, you are a member of a censorship organization seeking to purify the Earth of Eeevil Influences—grow up, you should be ashamed of yourself. (It is not true that this mission reveals secret messages when read backwards at 45 rpm. Nosaert era sromur. Noitarepooc ruoy rof uoy knaht.)

Because we expect most of you will use this text as a source of ideas rather than The Book of Law, it was thought A Good Idea to make reading it as pleasant an experience as possible. I think we succeeded. If you laughed while you were reading, then we did. It is our hope, and our creditors', that thousands, tens of thousands of you will purchase this mission and laugh. (This will make you all traitors. Some things just cannot be helped. Thank you for your cooperation.)

I will now boggle my estimable colleague Greg Costikyan (an event worth points in Greg's game *TOON*) by saying that ***PARANOIA*** seems to me to be the most genuinely science-fictional roleplaying game out there—that is to say, the one that most reflects science-fiction as a form for thought experiments about society, not a collection of genre clichés. Everything else out there falls under the headings of Militaristic Space Opera or Post-Holocaust (or, The Rover Boys Go Survivalist). I've worked in both those forms, and they're fine, but it was about time for something different. ***PARANOIA***'s black-comic inferno is reminiscent of Robert Sheckley or Ron Goulart. I also thought of Philip K. Dick, in whose work the truth about Reality is only available to the characters in hints and flashes (alert readers will notice a respectful reference to Dick in these pages).

Of course, there are rayguns. And there *could* be spaceships. Perhaps there's an Alpha Complex on the Moon. (Rumors are treason.) I could discuss these and many other topics, but The Computer is requesting me to report for immediate termination, and I must dispatch a team of Troubleshooters to find out what the trouble is, and shoot it.

John M. Ford

'All right, hand it over!' 'All right, hand it over!' 'All right, hand it over!' 'All right…'

Introduction

Warning: This mission is designed for use with the ***PARANOIA*** roleplaying game. It would be a swell idea if you were to read the rules to the game before you try to GM this adventure. But it's a free country, and if you think you can run the mission using the rules for poker, it's fine with us.

You probably ought to read the mission before trying to run it. (Boy, is that an understatement!) Those of you who thought you could absorb the information in this booklet by pressing it to your forehead or by eating it are in for a rude awakening.

Mission background

Alpha Complex is, well, complex. Its megameters of corridors, tens of thousands of rooms, countless corners and crannies defy the understanding of any human being. They come close to exceeding the capacity of The Computer itself. But only close. If you thought otherwise, you are guilty of treason. The Computer does in fact contain a 'memory map' of the entire Complex, down to the last rivet and junction box, but the map is not all in one piece or one place… and though The Computer never forgets, there are places and things it has not thought about for a very long time.

A group of confused and desperate traitors, while fleeing a like-minded group of Troubleshooters, found one of those areas: a long-disused passage that led to the world Outdoors.

And so they escaped, without The Computer ever knowing where they had gone.

One of them made it back alive, and was glad to be home. In exchange for the equipment and favors he needed to slip back into daily Complex life, he sold his discovery to a cell of the Sierra Club.

In the time since then, Sierra Clubbers have used the secret exit as often as possible without an excessive risk of discovery by Internal Security. Since Club members are Complex-grown clones like everybody else, most of those who go out meet a fate hardly distinguishable from death. But a few survive, first by dumb luck and then by acquired skills. And some of those survivors return. (More on this in Episode 2.)

One group returned with an artifact of the Outdoors, a box of black lacquered wood, an authentic Natural Thing received in trade from an authentic Natural Person, in return for some artificial Complex-made dross like butane lighters, pocket mirrors and ball bearings. Unfortunately, the Natural Person did not tell his friends how to open The Black Box—but still and all, they thought, it was from Outdoors, and made of wood and generally a nice thing to have.

However, they also needed some money and illegal goodies to support the Club's next expedition, so they sold The Black Box to a group of Free Enterprisers. The Enterprisers, by means of some illegal testing equipment, found the hidden catch that opens the Box. They were at first disappointed to find out the Box contained only some holographic data cartridges. But after playing one of the cartridges, they realized they had something absolutely unique. The Enterprise group was immediately torn between those who wanted to preserve the Box's uniqueness and those who wanted to make lots of copies for sale. While they were arguing, a Romantic who had heard the test sales pitch for the Box stole it from them.

For the Romantic secret society, The Black Box is a dream made real: a window on the lost world they so desire to bring back. They were so taken with the vision, they let their friends the Humanists see it. And the Humanists stole the Box.

PURGE stole it from the Humanists. The Mystics stole it from PURGE (an exciting event, involving the flooding of a PURGE meeting with aerosol THC). Corpore Metal got a brief look at it, then lost it to Death Leopard—in particular, to a superstar-class Death Leopard, who intends to use it as part of a Leopard-style mass disruption media event.

By now, of course, every secret society in Alpha Complex has heard of The Black Box, and all of them want it (see page 66 for a detailed list of their reasons). The Computer does not yet know of The Black Box's existence or contents, but it is only a matter of time until it does, whereupon The Computer will also want the Box. And what The Computer wants, it has ways of getting. Sending teams of Troubleshooters, for instance.

So what's in the Box that everyone wants so badly?

Be patient. Thank you for your cooperation.

Mission summary

The Troubleshooters are never sent explicitly to retrieve The Black Box. All their missions have other objectives, and these objectives are genuine—but at some point in each mission, the Box will show up, and the PCs will have some reason to try and get possession of it.

They will, however, always fail. Eventually they should develop a maddening curiosity about what is in that peculiar wooden cube that so many people are dying around and for. You, Friend GM, must not satisfy that curiosity until the absolute last moment, and maybe not then. (In the final episode, the Troubleshooters are given a pretty good idea of what the Box contains, but they may not find out for certain.)

The PCs will be sent on four tasks in the course of this mission. First, they attempt to find the source of mysterious disruptions in communication within Alpha Complex, and find themselves caught in a crossfire between rival Death Leopard superstars and a number of secret societies trying to get possession of The Black Box.

In the aftermath of this n-dimensional shootout, The Computer decides (quite incorrectly) that a cell of unregistered mutant traitors must be involved, and sends the Troubleshooters to, well, shoot the trouble. The snark hunt is further complicated by a compulsory visit to R&D, where the players will be saddled with many wonderful and dangerous pieces of experimental equipment.

As a result of this investigation-by-fire, the Box comes to the attention of a High Programmer, Betty-U-YFL-5. Her attempt to discover The Black Box's origin leads to The Computer's discovery of the secret exit from Alpha Complex, which the Troubleshooters are sent to seal off. It is a long way to the light at the end of the tunnel, and back again. Further complicating matters is the knowledge that everything the PCs learn on the trip is treasonous.

The Troubleshooters are next sent into the Outdoors world itself, ostensibly to complete the operation begun in the previous episode. Actually the expedition has been arranged by two High Programmers, rivals for the affections of Betty-U, who each intend to win her heart with Old Reckoning artifacts. Unfortunately for the players, each Programmer made his plans separately, and The Computer then combined the missions without the Programmers' knowledge. The mission suffers from a split personality from the beginning, and is further weighted with more innovations for better living from R&D.

Outdoors, the Troubleshooters encounter the usual hazards faced by those who boldly go where they have no business going. They meet three groups of humans, pretty well organized for the time and place: the Cyberpunks, a post-technological cycle gang; Nouvelle Vague, who try to keep Woodstock Nation alive; and the Studio Engineers, high priests of the 24-track mixing board, and the source of The Black Box, which contains… 24 hours of music videos. (Now you know why it's a secret.)

Troubleshooters who make it back from this final mission may find themselves set up for INFRARED-marketeering, or the favors of a High Programmer (blackmailing a Programmer is a quick way to the Body Armor Testing Squad). They may also, of course, be judged enormously guilty of treason, and immediately find themselves replaced by the next clone in series. Another day in the life…

Mission materials

Included in this mission is roughly 50 pages of genius mission material. The end of the mission showcases, for your GMing pleasure, important and exciting information pertaining to the mission. The pages should be covered with many little squiggles, called 'writing'. If not, don't worry. A blank 50-page spread is a handy place to keep recipes, or press flowers.

NPC and bot information is summarized for easy reference at the end of the mission. Also at the end of the mission, for your photocopying pleasure, are pregenerated player characters, GM and player maps, mission alerts, special dispatches and equipment lists for each episode.

Rosters

These charts summarize the important statistics, abilities and distinguishing features of the mission's non-player characters (NPC roster) and bots (Bot roster). Set this behind the GM screen and refer to it as you roll dice and grin evilly at your players.

Pregenerated PCs

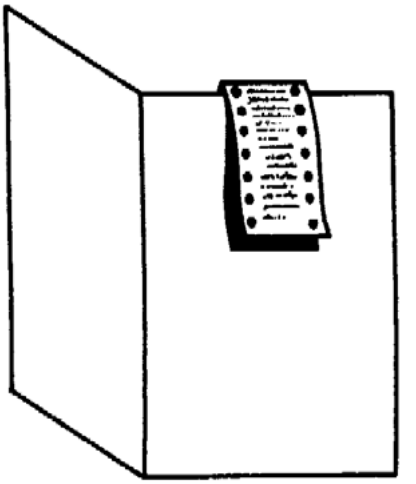
The six pregenerated player characters and their backgrounds and personalities are designed to produce maximum intrigue, eccentricity and entertainment for you and your players.

However, in spite of all the hard work we have gone through, you may want to let your players use characters of their own design. If so, you'll have to prepare secret society, mission briefings, personal briefings and rumors for them. You can use the prepared player characters as examples of the information each player ought to have.

Notes on PC possessions:

Certain special PC items with unusual characteristics are described below:

Brett-Y-WYD-2—The truth serum pills. Roll 1d20:



1–5: Subject voluntarily and truthfully answers any question put to him. Duration: 60 seconds.

6–10: Pill ineffective; harmful side effect. Roll on Insanity Table.

11–20: Subject voluntarily and truthfully reveals unimportant details of his own choosing. Chatters amiably and irrelevantly for as long as the GM finds it entertaining.

Miles-Y-LOM-2—The manual '25 Ways to Beat the Bot'. Roll 1d20:

1–15: Causes the bot to respond to all commands in inappropriate and unpredictable ways.

16–20: Causes no effect, but bot retains memory of tampering procedure and identity of tampering traitor.

Maps

See the nice maps at the end of the mission? They are designed for your reference. They are useful.

See the not-so-nice map on page 115? (Map confiscated from Commie Warbler: Reference YCBBB.3.324)? It is for the players' reference. It is not so useful. (Your players will understand. 'Hosed again…'.)

Other player stuff

Included in the photocopy and chop-up section of this mission are special dispatches, mission alerts and equipment lists for the players' viewing pleasure. Photocopy them, cut along the dotted lines and fold along the dashed lines. Thank you for your cooperation. (If you fold where you should cut and cut where you should fold, you should consider a job in government services.)

These materials are designed to be hung over the edge of the GM screen. Aim the appropriate information at your players and flop the piece of paper over the screen. (See diagram above).

Don't give these documents to your players. They'll just get greasy stains and pencil marks all over them.

1: Bop till you drop

Mission background

Angela-G-DRQ (alias Screaming Sarah Slick)

Angela-G-DRQ-3 is a food processing supervisor in Production, Logistics & Commissary. Angela-G's specialty is additives: the wonderful, bizarre and poorly-tested array of chemicals used to differentiate one batch of vat food from the next, and also to preserve freshness, retard spoilage and inhibit hormonal activity among the citizenry. Angela-G likes to talk about additive chemistry. She does it all the time. She has bored all her coworkers blind on the subject. Even Internal Security finds Angela-G boringly loyal, which is just the way she wants it.

In the secret society Death Leopard, Angela-G is known as the Superstar-class operator Screaming Sarah Slick. Screaming Sarah was exposed to ancient books and tapes documenting rock music…well, not much of it, actually, but in the culturally numb world of Alpha Complex a little stimulation goes a long way. Death Leopards have a generally punkish, boogie-till-you-barf attitude toward society anyway, and 'Girls Just Wanna Have Fun' could be their national anthem.

Screaming Sarah's first triumph—the one that got her into the star classes—involved GNH-609, the sexual suppressant that lards every citizen's daily fare. Sarah/Angela-G managed to prevent the addition of GNH-609 (or 'Zero-G', as it is sometimes called) to one entire residential block's food for 43 days. The strange behavior in Block PYT soon came to The Computer's attention. Fortunately for Angela-G, she was able to pin the rap on her supervisor, not only escaping execution but moving into the vacated position. And so it goes.

Screaming Sarah's exploits since then have not involved the food vats, for safety's sake. But recently Angela-G discovered an unusual effect, and she has been waiting for the chance to use it to the maximum: this is the one that will send her to Ultimate Beast level, the one it might be worth blowing her cover and getting terminated for.

Boogie juice

Angela-G has discovered that the yeast flavorant Chloroziptase-L, when ingested in the same meal as algae texturizer para-2-brocco-line, produces a 'drug synergy' effect: it deranges the victim's motor nerves, causing an uncontrollable rhythmic twitching of the major muscles. Angela-G has dubbed the new compound 'boogie juice'. The effect lasts for six to 30 hours, depending on how much chemical was eaten, and seems to leave no permanent effect. Obviously there have not been rigorous lab tests. Equally obviously, 'no permanent effect' does not apply to those victims who were operating flybots, working with explosives, etc. at the time they lost voluntary motor control.

Angela-G has arranged to reset the vat controls and add massive doses of C-zip-L and para-2-bine to the evening meal of almost one fourth of Alpha Complex. Approximately two hours after the meal the victims will begin to experience the effects of the boogie juice. On the same day, a cell of Death Leopards operating under Screaming Sarah's orders will load The Black Box's contents into an illicit video input. The result: several million citizens involuntarily breakdancing the night away to video music.

Rasterman Ganja and his commercial interruptions

Unfortunately for the politics of dancing, the gang of Leopards entrusted with The Black Box has already compromised the operation. The gang leader, who uses the *nom de freak* Rasterman Ganja, has been using his tap to broadcast short, disruptive programs of his own invention. He calls them 'commercials', after the legendary short, disruptive programs of the Old Reckoning, though Rasterman has only read about, never seen, a real commercial. His broadcasts vary in content from fake official announcements to 'advertisements' for products both real and imaginary. Angela-G has only recently discovered Rasterman's activities. So has The Computer.

Since the video communications system is part of The Computer's peripheral nerve net, it is an extraordinarily dangerous system to play with. Rasterman Ganja has a nifty creative sense, but little instinct for survival—i.e., with some luck he will be a great Death Leopard.

A lifetime of devoted service…

The mission

The Troubleshooters are sent by The Computer to track down and terminate the teletraitors. At the same time, Screaming Sarah decides to recover The Black Box before Rasterman's careless commercial campaign attracts a Vulture Squadron or something. In the collision at Rasterman's 'studio', the Box is up for grabs—and there ensues a chase across XTZ Sector, with the Troubleshooters trying to prevent somebody from doing something, they're not too sure what, and maybe grab the Box for their own secret societies. They will fail in that. Finally, they will either watch or participate in Screaming Sarah's dance marathon, depending on whether or not they have had dinner.

Pre-mission briefing

Group briefing

See the Mission Alert: Reference YCBBB.1.2.1 for Episode 1 at the end of the mission. This alert appears on the ubiquitous monitors as the PCs are queuing up to use the barracks toothbrush after breakfast. Read the alert aloud to the players, then hang it over the GM screen so the players can refer to it.

Distribute the pregenerated player character sheets, which appear at the end of the mission. If the players use characters of their own design, prepare special rumors and secret society missions for them before you start the briefing.

Players may wish to contact their secret societies or service groups concerning the mission alert, or just to pick up any juicy rumors.

Do ya (do ya do ya) wanna dance?

If so, tell them to give the details (preferably in writing) of how they plan to make the contact (in a particular corridor or restroom, notes in a sandwich, whatever).

Individual briefings

Privately give each player a rumor from the General Rumor List (see box next page). Then tell each player that he has heard rumors through his secret society concerning a thing called 'The Black Box'. No one knows what the Black Box looks like or what it's good for, but it is universally considered to be valuable, and his secret society would love to get its hands on it.

Give hints to each player about the nature of his own secret society's interest in the Black Box (see 'Secret societies and the box' nearby). If the PCs request more detailed information on the appearance or nature of the Box, they may, at your perverse discretion, receive little secret messages from their secret society during the course of the misson.

A funny thing happened on the way to the briefing room

Once again the Troubleshooters approach their place of employment, a structure as warm and inviting as Orwell's Ministry of Love, or an Internal Revenue office. The architecture and decor are intended to foster a sense of despair and resignation—James Bond couldn't shoot his way out of this joint—and the omnipresent whirring cameras, imposing Vulture Squadron guards and snooping bots make it clear that there is nowhere to hide and hatch Commie plots. The **Tension level** throughout this building is **15.**

Read the following description aloud to the players:

The reception room of Troubleshooter Headquarters is a large room measuring 30 by 30 meters. As usual it is ominously empty. And as usual the entire room has changed since the last time you visited two weeks ago. (Frequent summary executions and periodic turnover in high-level staff occasions regular redecoration of the premises.)

From the entrance doors you see two BLUE-Clearance Vulture Squadron guards with unusually massive slugthrowers and Kevlar armor guarding a pair of glass doors on the opposite side of the room. Their silvered-plexi facemasks reflect a distorted image of the room.

To the immediate right of the glass doors is a computer console with a GREEN-Clearance Troubleshooter seated behind its considerable bulk. Headquarters staff have a reputation for obstructive cooperation and cheerful eagerness to order summary executions. To the right of the console are four Computer terminals for citizens' use.

On the left wall is an open doorway. Through the door is a small alcove. Five GREEN Vulture Squadron guards with laser rifles and GREEN reflec armor are visible lounging against the walls, apparently guarding a BLUE door and a large machine of some sort.

The rest of the room is silent and empty except for an assortment of scrubots and snooperbots moving over the scarred, stained and patched carpet, and the ever-present whirring of the scanning cameras.

The Troubleshooters are already in trouble; they don't know what briefing room they are to report to. To suggest that The Computer might be confused about the matter is treasonous. The BLUE Vulture Guards do a reasonable imitation of Buckingham Palace guards if the PCs ask questions of them, but if the PCs move toward the glass doors, the guards train their slugthrowers on them, and if the PCs do not stop immediately and go away, the guards fire warning shots through the PCs' chests.

Asking the GREEN staffer at the console for help is a logical but futile gesture. The PCs cannot get the time of day from him without ULTRAVIOLET security clearance. They can use the public terminals with the same result.

When asked for information about briefing rooms, the GREEN Vulture Guards in the alcove admit that the briefing rooms lie beyond the BLUE door, but refer the PCs to the GREEN staffer for further information about which room they need. The PCs may use their Con Games skill on these guards to let them go through the BLUE door to look for the proper briefing room, but not without checking in at the new Experimental Security Computer Terminal (see below).

Showing the Mission Alert to either the GREEN staffer or any of the Vulture Squadron guards results in the PCs being taken into custody, reprimanded by an INDIGO Internal Security officer, fined 100cr for revealing a Mission Alert to unauthorized personnel and told to go to Briefing Room AA.

If the PCs spend a lot of time struggling with the problem of finding the briefing room, and you get tired of jerking them around, a RED-Clearance errand boy sticks his head through the BLUE door and yells, 'Hey, there's a bunch of Troubleshooters supposed to report to Briefing Room AA. You guys seen 'em?'

Before the PCs may go through the BLUE door which leads to the briefing rooms, the GREEN guards insist that the Troubleshooters check in at the Experimental Security Computer Terminal, labeled 'Caution: Experimental Computer Security Terminal'. This machine looks like a video game machine with a clear plexi cover enclosing a terminal keyboard. There are two small holes for the Troubleshooter to reach inside the plexi cover and work the terminal keyboard. A boom-mounted camera and bot laser cannon track on his facial features as he approaches the machine. The PC is asked the typical questions (name, security clearance, assignment or mission, 'Are you, or have you ever been, a Commie traitor?') and a lie detector evaluates the PC's responses.

The fourth PC to perform this operation will find steel cuffs closed tightly on his wrists as an alarm sounds and weapons are leveled on him from all directions. Technicians are summoned from R&D to 'check things out': it seems a malfunction has occurred (though the guards don't seem to believe this).

Unfortunately, only one of the wrist cuffs can be made to open. The R&D Tech partly disassembles the console, leaving the Troubleshooter with roughly five kilos of metal locked around his hand. The Tech explains that the batteries powering the clamp will fail in seven or eight hours (your decision as to when they actually let go). The PC is, naturally, required to sign a receipt for Equipment Taken Away (this may be difficult if his pen hand is inside the unit), and will receive a stiff fine if the component is not returned upon its release.

The Troubleshooters are not disarmed. If they voluntarily offer up their laser pistols, the weapons will be handled by the guards as if they are particularly rotten fish, then returned with expressions of mingled amusement and disgust.

One of the Vulture Squadron guards mutters, in an awed tone, 'Bunch of YELLOWs going to meet *him*,' and is immediately shut up by his superior. (Any PC who asks 'Him who?' is shut up with a truncheon.)

The GREEN guards herd the Troubleshooters down a narrow, high-ceilinged corridor with a VIOLET tile floor, to the double armored doors of Briefing Room AA. After a final series of security checks, the doors hiss open, and the PCs are pushed inside.

The briefing room

Note: Capsule descriptions of the appearance and personalities of these four briefing personnel are in the 'Briefing personnel' box nearby. Study them carefully so you can properly portray them as distinctive personalities.

Read the following text aloud to describe Briefing Room AA:

The briefing room is extraordinarily high and narrow. Harsh lights shine straight down on you. The carpet is lumpy and badly worn, with several burned streaks and blotches of something that's either maroon dye or dried blood. There is a strong smell of diesel fuel.

General rumor list

Passing rumors is a way of life in Alpha Complex. The fact that rumors are mostly unreliable does not change anything: all sources of information in Alpha Complex are unreliable. Nor does the fact that spreading rumors (or, for that matter, listening to them) is treason. Everyone reasons that if there were really nothing to a rumor, Internal Security wouldn't be so worried.

Following is a list of suggested rumors, to be given to players at the GM's descretion. You should be liberal in handing these out—but remember to give them to one player at a time. It's up to the player whether he wants to commit treason by telling his fellow Troubleshooters.

Repeating a rumor from different sources is a good way to increase paranoia. An even better way is to drop a rumor that directly denies or contradicts a previous one. 'What are they trying to hide?' Another good way to use rumors is to have them scrawled on corridor walls, or whispered in the dark so the whole party can hear.

Note: The italicized information after each rumor is for your eyes only. Don't bother telling any of that stuff to the players. They'd probably just be bored anyway.

1. Somebody came in from Outdoors, carrying a plague they haven't got any way to cure. People are dropping all over; they've had to seal off four residence blocks. *(False.)*
2. When you draw your gear from the Req Room, tell them you know Howd-Y-DDE. They'll be sure to give you equipment that works. *(True and false. The name is an Internal Security code word: half the time the staffer gives the person an extra pair of laser barrels of appropriate color, half the time the staffer gives the 'IntSec snooper's' gear a couple of whacks with a pipe wrench.)*
3. There's a defective warbot loose in some out-of-the-way sector. It's wiped out two dozen Troubleshooters already, and they're making up all kinds of fake missions to get people to go in there and run its batteries down. *(False.)*
4. Tech Services has an INDIGO Clearance who can detect mutants just by looking at them. They're putting him on briefing panels, to snoop out who's an unregistered mutant. *(False.)*
5. Because of a PURGE raid on one of the armories, there are a lot of grenades in inventory with the wrong labels. *(True. See the equipment lists.)*
6. Be careful who you pick as team leader! They're experimenting with a gadget that lets the leader fry the team members' brains if they try any double-crosses. *(True, but the device is not yet operational, and will not be issued during this mission.)*
7. 'Outdoors' is a deathtrap—it's all radioactive, you die in a week. Everybody who says he's been Outdoors is under orders to lie. *(False, though an awful lot of Troubleshooters do get killed Outdoors.)*
8. They're getting worried about bad morale from Troubleshooters coming back maimed—your Medical Officer has orders to make sure anybody who's badly hurt doesn't make it. *(False. How could Troubleshooter morale get any worse than it is?)*
9. All Corpore Metal members are programmed to kill on command. The code word is 'Six Megacredit Man'. *(False, though a lot of Corpore Metals do have hypnotic programming.)*
10. If you follow the deep service tunnels long enough, you come up inside another Alpha Complex. That's how spies get in and out. *(May be true of certain tunnels, but none the players will encounter in this mission.)*

There is a bench at one end of the room at least four meters high; to see the top of it, you have to look up at the lights. There appear to be five plexi compartments along the top of the bench. Four appear to be occupied, but the harsh lights make it hard to see clearly. At your eye level on the front of the bench are what look like gun ports and gas vents. There is a small tiled gutter in the floor, with drains.

At the left end of the bench, a combot fitted with four chainsaws is standing at attention. At the right end there's a BLUE Vulture Squadron sergeant at parade rest; he has a huge, weird-looking pistol in a very bulky holster covered with wiring, and he wears a matching wire-covered glove. It's a toss-up whether the combot or the man looks tougher.

Behind you are the five Vulture Squadron guards who brought you here. Their weapons are casually pressed into your backs.

The PCs should enter the room confidently and respectfully. If they are too timid or too cocky, the guard on the right of the bench demonstrates his fancy Power Holster, summoning his slugthrower to his hand with a smooth, sweeping gesture that ends with the snout of the slugthrower resting against the snout of a PC, while barking 'C'mon in here, ya quivering runts!' or 'Watch yer manners in the presence of yer superiors, laserbait!' as is appropriate.

Once the PCs are all in the room and quietly standing at attention, they can better see the four figures in the plexi compartments. Read the following aloud:

The powerful lights behind the top of the bench are blinding, but you can see the head and shoulders of the four figures a little more clearly. From left to right there are:

- **A BLUE uniform with an HPD&MC insignia; the face has a sour expression; his nameplate reads 'Al-B-MNU-5'**
- **A BLUE uniform with an Internal Security insignia; the face is stern and alert; his nameplate reads 'Brian-B-IWR-6'**
- **An INDIGO uniform with a Tech Services insignia; the figure is studying a sheaf of papers and the face is not visible; his nameplate reads 'Zach-I-VLI-5'**
- **A VIOLET uniform, colorfully decorated and ornamented, with an R&D insignia; the face is relaxed and smiling pleasantly; his nameplate reads 'Dan-V-OSD-6'**

Dan-V begins by greeting the PCs. He is friendly, sincere and soft-spoken. He is much too pleasant.

The VIOLET-clad man on the right taps his microphone with a finger, then smiles and speaks into the microphone:

'Welcome, Troubleshooters. I hope we haven't interrupted your daily schedule too much. I know you must be very busy, but we have this terribly important mission for you.'

Dan-V leans forward, apparently studying his notes. The room is very quiet for several minutes. Suddenly you hear the clear sound of snoring over the microphone.

The other three men look at each other, then the BLUE-clad Internal Security officer leaps to his feet, points at you and loudly shouts, 'Ghzzzaaahbat fhissle thorrbhat mmmhena weeeeel (SquuuuUUUUUEEEEEEEL. Hiss. Pop.).'

Well, that's not really what he says. It's just hard to understand him because his microphone is buzzing, humming, fading in and out, squealing with feedback and hissing with static. In fact, none of the microphones but Dan-V's works properly; whenever the other figures speak, they can hardly be understood. Dan-V does not notice

anything wrong. The others eventually will, and will become very annoyed.

As a GM, you can simulate this unintelligible garble by speaking with a styrofoam or paper cup pressed halfway into your mouth (small end first, of course). You can yell as loud as you want, or speak perfectly normally, but the poor players won't be able to understand much of what you say. This is so much fun that you'll be tempted to use this cheap trick whenever The Computer speaks to the PCs from old monitors or wall speakers. It is hard on the cup, so be sure to have a supply of spares.

Anyway, from here on, we'll tell you what the characters really say. You just talk with the cup in your mouth unless Dan-V is talking, or unless one of the other briefing personnel steals his microphone.

What Brian-B really says is, 'All right, which of you is the mission leader?' He pauses, waiting for an answer. The PCs probably haven't understood a word, but it is clear that he expects an answer. They better come up with something.

Whatever the PCs say, he then cackles, 'Of course you don't have a mission leader, because you don't know your mission yet, do you? Or…perhaps you traitors have already got SECRET information about this mission?' He pauses again for an answer. This continues for a few minutes, with Brian-B grilling the PCs about their mission alert, their past service records, their proof of loyalty to The Computer and their dedication to serve The Computer without question or hesitation. Since the PCs can't understand Brian-B, their responses may be rather inappropriate, and the PCs may start to get panicky.

Mission assignment

At this point, Dan-V snorts loudly, wakes up and looks around. Brian-B is immediately silent, looking cautiously at Dan-V as he humbly sinks back behind the bench. Dan-V smiles at everyone, then continues the briefing.

'Welcome, Friend Troubleshooters. Our friend The Computer has chosen you for a mission of the utmost urgency and importance.

Secret societies and the Box

Following is a list of reasons for the secret societies to send their members in pursuit of The Black Box. It is not meant to be exhaustive. Nor is it necessary for every society to be in pursuit of The Box: in fact, it is probably better (read, more divisive and productive of internecine warfare) for some societies to be in pursuit of entirely different unattainable objects.

Starred societies have at some time or another possessed The Box itself; all of these except the Sierra Club (which never got it open) know the contents. Other societies know of The Box by hearsay or inter-society espionage.

- **Anti-Mutant:** The flip side of Psion, they think perfect pitch is a creepy mutation.
- **Communists:** The Box is a propaganda device, in the classic color of the Anarchist. If we cannot make use of it, we must make sure that no one else does. *(Folkmusic was the people's great art form. Remember Joe Hill! Remember Woody Guthrie. Remember Slim Whitman!)*
- **Computer Phreaks:** It appears to be data the Computer has no access to. That makes it interesting and desirable. While we dare not hope, it may be a relative of the legendary 'Blue Boxes' of our ancestors.
- ***Corpore Metal:** The Box contains evidence that Old Reckoning humankind was striving toward a machine symbiosis that has since been forgotten. We must not let this history die. The Box could make many converts to our cause. *(Result of seeing some heavy-metal artists in their chrome stage getups, and perhaps listening to McCartney's 'Magneto and Titanium Man' once too often.)*
- ***Death Leopard:** The Box contains anthems of anarchic Fun. The Box is the soul of the Leopard. *(As the mission starts, they have possession of it. See Episode 1.)*
- **First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer:** We believe this device to be a threat to The Computer, perhaps one of the accursed 'virus programs' of demonic legend. It must be captured and presented as an offering to The Computer, who will bless Its Chosen.
- **Frankenstein Destroyers:** Similar to the Humanists.
- ***Free Enterprise:** This is a valuable item stolen from us by trickery. Free Enterprise does not like people muscling in on our rackets. Sizable rewards await the Box's recoverer. *(They want to sell copies. Maybe sell tickets. Or start a couple bands and run road shows, reestablish MTV….)*
- ***Humanists:** The unit is connected to conclusive proof of the superiority of Man over Machine. The Computer and its minions must not be allowed to destroy this evidence. *(It shows artists in control of hardware. They especially like it when someone smashes a guitar or blows up an amp.)*
- ***Mystics:** This is, like, basic to a clear understanding of the, like, universe, and is like, our origin, you know? There is clear blue light in there, the Headtrip itself. Of course we want it. *(Many Mystic faiths are rooted in 60s/70s rock. Most cells would kill for a video of 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds', 'Cocaine' or 'Hey Bartender'.)*
- **Pro-Tech:** Obviously the synthesizer was Old Reckoning mankind's greatest artistic achievement.
- **Psion:** Rumor has it that the Black Box is coupled with a previously unknown psychic mutation. We must document this effect, and protect it from those who would destroy the New Improved Humanity. *(The 'mutation' in question is musicianship. Mostly they're curious, a treasonous emotion.)*
- ***PURGE:** The unit contains data that is directly toxic to The Computer. *(Not true. Also caught up in the smash-machinery philosophy displayed in many heavy-metal clips.)*
- **Romantics:** It is a genuine artifact of the Old World, just like people used to sit around the Sony, eat Twinkies and listen to 'ads' on the 'televisor boxes'. Enough said.
- ***Sierra Club:** It comes from Outdoors, and is made of the mythic substance 'wood'. Besides, we brought it here, and it's really ours.
- **Spy for Another Alpha Complex:** This Complex appears ready to go to war over this Black Whatever-it-is. Something so important must be captured so that we can benefit from it if it's valuable, and defend ourselves against it if it's dangerous. *(In other words, You got it, we want it. Much the same philosophy applies to service group spies.)*

'A mysterious interference has begun to appear on the video channels that carry vital information and well-deserved entertainment to our fellow citizens. Naturally, The Computer wants to protect us from these influences, which—I speak to you in the strictest confidence—are believed to come from a nest of Communist infiltrators somewhere within our own beloved Alpha Complex.'

Pause. Look pleasantly and menacingly expectant. Wait for the players to make some appropriate response, like, 'Gasp! Commies? How appalling!' or 'We eagerly await your orders to seek out this slime and scourge it from our fair Complex!' or 'We serve The Computer! The Computer is our Friend! Please give us lots of execution vouchers and HE cone rifle rounds.'

'I do not pretend that your task will be easy; this is why you, Troubleshooters of proven skill and loyalty, have been selected to root out this corruption among us, to follow the infection to its source and burn it out. You are also to return the valuable equipment these saboteurs have stolen to further their alms, so that others cannot follow in their path.

'We will give you every assistance; and know that The Computer itself is behind you.'

He smiles happily again.

'Remember, the future happiness of all our citizens depends on you. You must not fail. Now, time is essential, but is there anything you wish to ask?'

If the PCs ask what sort of interference they are looking for, Dan-V says gently, 'I'm afraid knowing that, at your clearance level, would make you all traitors.' If they ask what equipment they are supposed to recover, Zach-I drones on for some while in a technical jargon the PCs do not understand, but they should get the idea that broadcasting equipment is involved. If they ask how large the nest of Commies is believed to be, Brian-B snaps, 'Who cares how many of them there are, Troubleshooter? You don't come back until there's not one hammer or sickle moving down there!'

Choosing the team leader

Dan-V slowly stops talking. The other briefing staff wait for several minutes, until the microphone before Dan-V again picks up the sound of his snoring. AI-B shudders, and appears to be holding back tears. Brian-B takes the opportunity to swipe Dan-V's mike and begin lecturing the players on the importance of leadership in this mission, hammering home that a leader must be someone they can trust, someone they would follow into the very teeth of doom. He asks the usual trick questions, but mostly he tries to provoke the players' bloodlust. (If they show too much, the guards will restrain them.)

Finally he asks the inevitable question: 'Which of you should serve as the mission leader?' Usually at this point there is a flurry of volunteers and people pointing at one another. If there is no clear choice, Brian-B roars in anger, 'Make up your minds, or we'll see if your clones can be quick about it.' He keeps roaring until the PCs make a choice.

If they test his temper by dithering, he asks for a volunteer for a warning execution. He takes the first volunteer and orders him to execute the other PCs. This volunteer is the mission leader. Activate the clones.

When a clear choice is made, Brian-B's expression softens as he looks fondly on the loyal citizen who has offered to serve The Computer in this important capacity. Sweetly, he asks the newly selected leader to concisely summarize the mission's objectives.

If the new leader hesitates or fumbles, or if he has to read over his notes, or if he says anything other than what was mentioned in the mission alert or explained by Dan-V, Brian-B explodes in fury, blasting the citizen for his incompetence, immediately demoting him to RED Clearance, and starting the leader selection process all over again.

The leader receives a suit of GREEN reflec armor and two spare GREEN laser barrels. The leader should get the hint that he's going to need them. And, of course, the rest of the team is subject to the leader's orders for the duration of the mission or the leader's life, whichever ends first.

When a leader has finally been selected who can summarize the mission objectives, Dan-V awakes with a snort again and looks around at Brian-B, who is holding his microphone. Brian-B momentarily freezes in terror, then he hastily replaces the microphone and slinks to his seat.

Any further questions?

Dan-V turns back to the PCs with a kindly smile, tells the Vulture Guard to give the mission leader the equipment requisitions (GM: display Equipment list #1 to the leader) and asks them if they have any questions or special requests before he sends them off to Outfitting. Let the players study the Equipment list for a minute, then Brian-B asks particularly if they would like any more ordnance.

Between Dan-V and Brian-B, the players will seem to have an extremely free hand with requisitioning equipment. You can be liberal with items of YELLOW Clearance or less, especially ammunition—given the chance, everyone carries more ammo than there will ever be time to use.

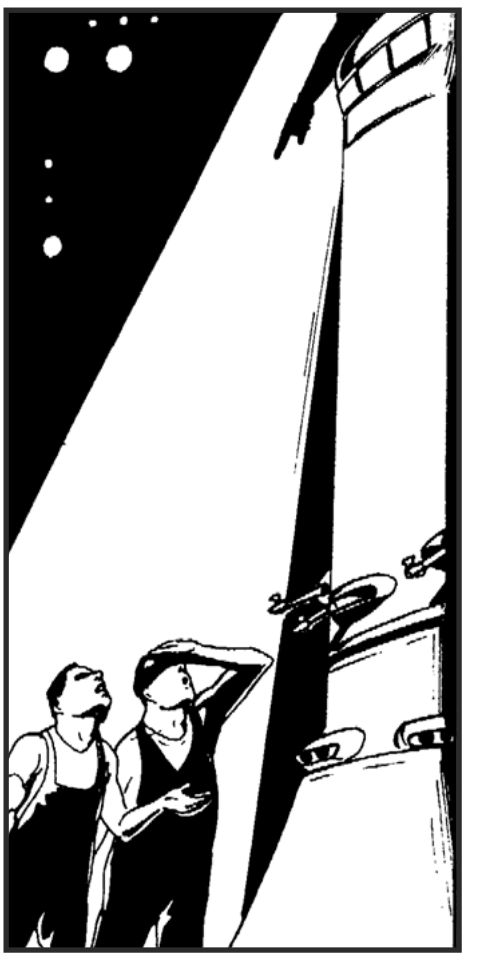
When the PCs begin asking for higher-clearance items like tacnukes and ULTRAVIOLET lasers, Dan-V chuckles in a grandfatherly way and says something like, 'If that sort of thing were necessary, don't you think our friend The Computer would have made provisions?' He believes that, too. Then the briefing will be brought to a close.

Just as Dan-V is about to dismiss the PCs, if they haven't asked about the RF tracer cartridge for the multicorder, Zach-I says, 'Oh, hey, don't forget about the RF tracer cartridge for the multicorder.' Immediately Brian-B glowers at Zach-I, and Dan-V looks sternly at him. Zach-I's eyes grow wide, and he slips far back into his booth as though he expects to be immediately executed. If the PCs ask for more information about the tracer, what it's for or how it works, Dan-V pleasantly says, 'Oh, don't worry, there's someone in the mission group who knows all about it. Would The Computer forget an important thing like that?'

No one in the mission group knows what the RF tracer does. The characters may try to slaughter each other in the process of finding out who is concealing this vital information. What a pity.

The mission

The Troubleshooters are taken to PLC Outfitting Division to pick up and sign for their gear. As



Excuse me, Mr. Citizen, sir, but what is it we have volunteered to do?

always, this is as much fun as dealing with the phone company The GREEN quartermaster staff will demand to know what happened to equipment the PCs have never heard of. They will have choice comments to make about the Troubleshooter wearing the security console on his wrist.

They also make nasty remarks about this mission. Running around shooting some Commies in the back doesn't sound very heroic. (Actually it seems a lot more interesting than signing out hardware, and the staff are jealous.)

If the PCs ask for power holsters, there is a lot of fuss, calling upstairs to verify the request, etc. No more than three holsters are available (we suggest you issue one fewer than requested), and if the PC with the iron bracelet has it on his gun hand, he cannot be fitted for one.

Of course, the power holsters don't work. That is, they *work*, but it takes three or four months of practice to get the hang of them in combat. When a PC squeezes the special glove in the proper way, the pistol leaps out of the holster (usually, anyway; sometimes the holster buzzes and smokes, or a short-circuit causes the ammo to explode) and toward the glove.

Unfortunately, learning to catch the pistol requires hours of practice. In the beginning the pistol goes flying out of the holster, zips past the PC's outstretched hand, and clatters to the floor, bounces off the wall or ceiling, or clobbers an innocent bystander. Maybe the pistol goes off. Got the picture?

Where do we go from here?

After kitting-out, the Troubleshooters are escorted out of the Headquarters building—and left there. If they stand around, a guard tells them, 'Hey! No loitering!' and shoos them away

About now it should dawn on the PCs that their orders are extremely vague. If they made plans to contact their secret societies, execute the contacts (interesting phrase) now. If three or four characters described the same mode of contact, comment on how crowded the restroom is for this time of day.

Players who did not make contacts (or abandoned them) have only the society missions given on their PC cards.

If they make contact:

Tex-Y-DBF is told Eric-Y has a secret mission from IntSec to exterminate Mystics; Eric-Y got Tex-Y's last clone and is gunning for him.

The Sierra Club tells **Brett-Y-WYD** that someone is going to poison tonight's dinner. He is not to stop this, as Sierra Clubbers have all been warned (not true), but he must not eat dinner.

Wyatt-Y-VSC is told the mysterious Black Box is in the hands of a video pirate, and must be gotten away.

Miles-Y-LOM learns some portable video cameras are missing from HPD&MC, and he can earn a lot of society credit by seeing that the Romantics get them back instead.

Donald-Y-EIN is told he will get a society IOU for every PURGEr he kills on this mission (true, but most of them are Death Leopards, who don't score).

Eric-Y-KTH meets an Internal Security agent (even if he thought he was meeting a Death Leopard contact—you can give him a really nervous moment here) who tells him video pirates have gotten hold of secret tapes, which must be recovered; he will earn many commendations for doing so.

Reunite the team and give them a little time to think—even to compare notes, if they desire to do such an un-***PARANOIA***-like thing—before the multicorder begins to *wheep*.

The multicorder, the players' PDCs and any public entertainment screens in sight begin carrying one of Rasterman Ganja's broadcasts (see 'Commercials' below). The multicorder's tracer cartridge locks onto the signal, and the hunt is finally on.

If the characters don't try to make any kind of contacts, start them on the mission anyway. He who hesitates is lasered.

Round Robin Hood's barn

The PCs have no experience or training in the use of the RF tracer, but this is routine in Alpha Complex. Eventually they notice the frequency of the wheeps increases when the unit points in a particular direction. The volume of the wheeps also increases as they get closer to the signal source.

The multicorder is not, alas, actually locked onto Rasterman's video tap—if it were that easy, he would have been caught long ago. Rasterman has numerous decoy broadcast units scattered throughout the sector. But if the PCs follow the tracer carefully, it will eventually lead them to Rasterman.

In other words, send them up, down and around Alpha Complex, following the blip through dining halls, INFRARED barracks, entertainment facilities, vehicular guideways (which will not stop for the team), storage areas and narrow accessways… run them ragged.

As the characters wander about, the commercials (see below) occur at random intervals (that is, whenever you want). Not only do they give you a chance to entertain the players with your musical/comedic/mass-media denigration skills, but the PCs get to vaporize as traitors anyone they see who either believes the commercials, or who looks like he is enjoying them.

To help you visualize their pilgrimage, imagine wandering around five or six decks of an ocean liner looking for a hidden radio device. And imagine the ocean liner crawling with nosy and quarrelsome citizens, officious clerks, pugnacious Vulture Squadron guards and fitfully-maintained guardbots, courierbots and scrubots.

A few arbitrary encounters might be appropriate. For example:

Internal Security: A group of IntSec troopers express a polite interest in the PCs' mission. Maybe a PC looks cross-eyed at somebody. Whammo.

A team competing in a High Programmer's invitational tournament: A flying squad of crack Vulture Squadron troopers are on a scavenger hunt. They've been instructed to collect as many left boots as they can in four hours. Following the troopers are a pair of transbots full of left boots, some with pieces of leg still in them. The PCs are requested to contribute.

The Bicentennial Committee: A group of relatively elderly citizens are bustling about decorating a hallway for the coming bicentennial of something-or-other. They earnestly, imploringly beg the Troubleshooters to pause in their mission to help them put up a few banners. If the PCs decline, the oldsters pull out slugthrowers and ask again.

Painters: A squad of ORANGE-Clearance workers is painting a RED corridor in VIOLET. There seems to be some confusion about the work order, and the painters are engaged in a heated discussion. Several cans of VIOLET paint are sitting unattended. This stuff would really bring a fine price on the black market, but possession of such contraband is profoundly treasonous.

When the pace begins to drag, warn the multicorder operator that the blip is weakening, and then have Rasterman air another commercial.

If a PC is a member of Death Leopard (one of the pregenerated PCs is), he receives a message sometime during the chase; the old soap-on-the-restroom-mirror trick is suggested. The message warns the Leopard that Screaming Sarah Slick herself instructs all Real Persons to skip dinner this evening, on pain of Missing The Fun.

This should make the dinner break interesting.

Commercials

These may be run in any desired order, and new ones may be freely created. Remember that Rasterman Ganja has only had cornmercials described to him.

1. An ad for synthetic food, featuring people trying to choke the stuff down, and the catchy jingle:
   'When you just can't stand the pats,
   And your feets have got the flats,
   When you can't take no more, that's
   Time (Yes, time!) to hit the vats!
   It's the goo (Yeah!) that'll do ya,
   It slides through ya oh-so-right,
   Dump your hunger in the nearest vat
   Tonight!'

2. An 'official announcement' that the color BLUE has been determined to be morally equivalent to INDIGO, promising a follow-up on whether BLUE citizens will be promoted or INDIGOs reduced in rank.
3. An ad for Honest Har-V's Used Bot Lot, in which Har-V, wearing a crudely dyed VIOLET tunic, offers several bots at ridiculous prices (five or ten credits). The 'bots' are actually people wearing tinfoil and metal junk. After this ad airs, the PC with the clamp on his wrist had better find a way to get it off.
4. 'DISREGARD PREVIOUS MESSAGE.'
5. A promo spot for Teela-O-MLY, featuring someone who looks nothing like Teela-O asking everyone to stay tuned to this channel for instructions on reaching ULTRAVIOLET Clearance in three easy lessons.
6. An announcement that NYC Sector is now officially at war with LAX Sector, and asking all citizens to help the war effort by eating double portions at dinner.
7. A recruiting spot, in which a voice urges citizens to join the Vulture Squadrons, while a tape shows various aircraft crashing and exploding. (This tape is extremely illegal, and recovering it earns a 250cr bonus.)
8. A beer commercial. Citizens ride cardboard rafts over painted waves, while an off-screen figure throws a bucket of water over them at intervals. Finally they smile brightly and hold up cans with rings attached, then pull the rings. The cans are smoke grenades.

Chow time

Somewhere in the course of the tour of the sector their PDCs inform the players it is dinner time, and they are to report to the nearest Transient's Commissary, identify themselves as Troubleshooters on a mission and queue up for gruel. (Not even in the paranoid world of The Computer are the laborers required to go without dinner.)

Unless a player specifically indicates to you verbally or by note that his character does *not* eat, assume all the Troubleshooters have chowed down on gruel laced with ample quantities of 'boogie juice'.

Opening theme

See 'Rasterman Ganja's TV Studio' layout at the end of the mission.

Sometime after the dinner hour (whether or not the PCs have eaten), shortly before tonight's Teela O'Malley broadcast, the multicorder begins to wheep wildly, indicating a very powerful trace: Rasterman is testing his transmitter at full power, preparing to override Teela with The Black Box.

A demonstration of how not to use the Power Holster.

The Troubleshooters follow the blip to a deserted storage area (**Tension 1**). They should prowl around this place for a while, getting good and nervous. The tracer starts to go crazy with induced signals and harmonics off the walls and floor. Finally, they find a large door, four meters wide and three high, with a dimly lit control panel next to it. The tracer seems to think this is the place. There is plenty of noise coming from behind the door; just audible above the background chatter a voice is heard, '…the cables are all bollixed up, but as soon as I find the interference, we can run the Black Box…'

The door opens when the only button on the control panel is pressed. Read the following aloud:

The door opens on a long four-meter-wide corridor. The first four meters on the left is a landing for a staircase on the right which leads down into a larger room.

Across from you, in the corridor four meters from you, are a group of five impossibly strange-looking persons—yellow, purple and green spikes and ridges of hair, bizarrely colored and patterned face and arms, black, skin-tight garments festooned with colorful bits of metal and plastic—each armed with a laser pistol or slugthrower. They seem to be startled by your appearance, but they don't make a sound or movement.

You can see fairly well down the staircase into the lower room. The room resembles an HPD&MC video broadcast station, with cameras, video machines, lots of electronic gear, cables and powerful lights, but everything seems disorganized and hastily slapped together. No one below seems to have noticed your arrival.

Suddenly, before you can do anything, the foremost of the persons across from you, a female with strange dark goggles with wide slits in them and with enormous plastic discs dangling from her ears, shouts, 'Look, there it is!' She points down the stairs toward a cabinet and screams, 'Go for it!' She and two other persons dash down the stairs while the other two aim and fire at your mission group.

Screaming Sarah Slick and her four Death Leopard companions are here to recover the Black Box from Rasterman Ganja. Two stay at the top of the stairs to deal with the PCs; Screaming Sarah and two Leopards dash downstairs after the Black Box.

It's showtime!

Live and in color

From this point the PCs are in close combat. The two Death Leopards at the top of the stairs blast away with their lasers, then block the stairway with hand-to-hand combat. If the PCs dispatch the two Leopards, or dive over the railing to the room below, they receive the following description of Rasterman's studio. Read aloud:

The room itself is 12 x 24 meters. The largest part of the room stretches away from you as you come down the stairs. Behind the staircase a section of the

room is filled with sets and props. Closed doors are to the right and left of the stairs and on the far wall facing away from the stairs. In this direction there is a lively firefight.

The three oddly-dressed persons have descended the staircase and taken cover behind a bank of tape machines and cabinets. There they are pinned down in a crossfire by a group of citizens in black coveralls who have taken cover behind a pile of crates. The woman with the wide-slit goggles has a seamless, dully gleaming black box tucked under one arm as she returns fire with her free hand.

Just beyond the gun battle is a video studio set up with movable backdrops, video cameras on lightweight tripods and powerful lights.

The cameras are stenciled in large letters 'PROPERTY OF HPD&MC'.

In a far corner of the room five figures crouch near a control panel—some feverishly checking cable connections, others adjusting knobs and slide controls as they study a bank of monitors before them.

The cameras are the valuable equipment the PCs have been sent to recover. It would be unfortunate if this equipment were damaged in the firefight. Snicker.

Screaming Sarah and her two companions are engaged in a firefight with six of Rasterman's techs. Both groups are armed with laser pistols and without armor, but neither group is particularly proficient with weapons, and the surroundings are absorbing most of the damage. The floor, walls and ceiling are crisscrossed with hastily strung cables and wires.

Stray shots hitting these cables produce dazzling effects. Stray shots also hit CRT monitors which make a lovely boom, showering the room with fragments of glass. Between the short-circuiting wires and exploding monitors, pretty soon we get…

Fires. Lots of little fires. Rasterman's sets, mostly paper and cheap plastics, feed them nicely, producing some extraordinarily unpleasant clouds of acrid, black smoke which makes the lasers very ineffective (reduce laser damage to O3D) except at point blank range. There are several hand-held foam extinguishers about, but not enough to suppress the fires. Enough, however, to produce sufficient foam to make the floor treacherous. Whoops…

Rasterman and four other techs stay at the control console working feverishly to complete the connections and set up the boards, determined that The Show Must Go On. It has not yet come to their attention that Screaming Sarah has the Black Box.

How will the PCs respond to this puzzling state of affairs? You can probably count on their firing off their ordnance, though who they'll shoot at…who knows? Your best bet is to orchestrate the NPCs as though the PCs didn't exist. Let the PCs blow holes in any of the NPCs except Screaming Sarah. She has the Black Box, and she has to get away. The rest of the cast is expendable.

Conversely, if the PCs shoot at the NPCs, the NPCs shoot back. Otherwise the two Death Leopard groups expend most of their energy on each other, with an occasional pot shot at a PC for variety.

When it begins to look like the PCs are going to put Sarah's life or liberty in serious jeopardy, she and the Black Box leave by the nearest convenient door, accompanied by any surviving Death Leopard companions, dropping a choice selection of grenades behind her to discourage pursuit. This could be the instant the PCs come down the stairs if they are a smoothly operating military unit, or could be after a half-hour or so, if they are inept, backstabbing, cautious, cowardly or properly paranoid.

Note: You want the PCs to chase Sarah (see below), so subtly emphasize her escape. 'Oh dear. She's getting away with the box. I wonder what The Computer will think about all this.' Roll dice; shake your head. Annoy the players.

When Sarah and her Leopards split, Rasterman belatedly decides that maybe his position is not so defensible, and directs a strategic withdrawal. He and his crew know the turf, so they'll gain a step on any pursuit. Since they are not relevant to further developments of the plot, make them disappear with a minimum of fuss.

Or would you rather have what's behind the curtain?

The PCs are now faced with a choice of cleaning up the pirate station (which is, strictly, what their orders call for), or trying to chase The Black Box.

If they stop to take stock of the situation, they will notice that several of the monitors show the studio, and themselves; Rasterman has broadcast the battle live, pre-empting Teela-O-MLY. Of the thousands who saw the broadcast, a significant few know the significance of the Black Box. The Computer has seen it all, too. The cameras may be disconnected, or blasted (it will look very bad on the report if they destroy the cameras with The Computer watching).

The Troubleshooters may decide that the Black Box comes under the heading of equipment to be recovered. The Computer has just decided exactly that, though the PCs have no way of knowing it.

If they don't chase the Box

In approximately 90 minutes, Screaming Sarah's Polypeptide Boogie will seize the citizenry—including our heroes, if they had dinner. If the Troubleshooters are affected, any prisoners they took at the TV studio (none of whom ate dinner) will escape. If they are not affected, they will have to explain why at debriefing.

Conning the PCs into chasing the Box

If the PCs don't chase the Box, they are doing the sensible thing. In fact, they are following orders; failure to follow orders may result in a short biography. However…

If the PCs don't chase the Box, you won't have as much fun. Therefore you should dupe the PCs into chasing the Box. This sort of manipulation infringes the player's free will and diminishes the expression of his inner spirit to which he is entitled as a human being and a citizen of our fair land. This is a thought crime of grave significance. Treason, in fact.

That's why we think it is A Good Idea. Here's how to do it.

Sarah should leave a trail that even a mollusk could follow. Blood from a wound. Sooty, greasy footprints. A series of open doors. Multitudinous witnesses. A trail of breadcrumbs. Large, colorful arrows stenciled on the floor.

Sarah should taunt the PCs with their ineptitude in allowing her to escape, mocking them as she exits, holding the Box aloft in triumph, and casting aspersions on their wit and skill as they pursue her.

Sarah should spout treasonous manifestos that no loyal citizen could allow to go unpunished. 'The Computer's mother wears skis in a phone booth.' 'The Computer's mother swims after the troop ships.' Gently remind the characters that all of this is being broadcast on complex-wide video. Letting Sarah get away with saying such things might not be conducive to maintaining friendly relations with The Computer.

If all else fails, send the PCs a special dispatch by personal messenger as follows:

*****MISSION PRIORITY OVERRIDE!*****

TOP SECRET! TOP SECRET! TOP SECRET! PURSUE AND SECURE BLACK BOX! ULTRASUPERTRANSCENDENT PRIORITY OVER ALL OTHER MISSION ASSIGNMENTS! DELIVER TO FKL SECTOR SECURITY HEADQUARTERS AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

This dispatch is completely bogus. A High Programmer affiliated with Free Enterprise has sent these orders. If the PCs could manage to obtain the Box, they would be intercepted on the way to FKL Sector and relieved of the Box. Rest in Peace.

If the PCs try to confirm the order with The Computer, it tells them the order is phony, and they are to follow the order in order to reveal the traitor that ordered it. If the PCs make references to this phony mission override at a later date, The Computer interrogates them closely and assigns

a 50cr fine for receiving treasonous documents. Sigh. To be fair, make sure the PCs have plenty of opportunities to get Official Commendations by zapping lots of traitors.

A friendly gathering at the food vats

See 'The Food Vat Chambers' map at the end of the mission. It's **Tension 3.**

The TV studio battle concludes at T (for Tremors) minus 90 minutes. If the PCs follow Sarah and the Black Box to the food vats, they arrive at T minus 60. So do a number of others.

Every secret society that has possessed the Black Box (starred on the list) sends a three-person fireteam to try and get hold of it. Any society contacted by a PC Troubleshooter sends a team as well. Feel free to add societies until the crossfire is complicated enough for you.

The PCs follow Sarah through a series of corridors and service passageways and emerge in a room full of food processing equipment. Here Sarah expects to rendezvous with a Death Leopard squad who will take the Black Box and convey it to another pirate broadcasting station in time for the polypeptide boogie. Alas, these Leopards have been delayed, and Sarah waits in vain. However, she won't be lonely in here.

When the PCs arrive at the vat room, read the following aloud:

You have tracked the strange woman with the Black Box to a food vat, a large room filled with tanks and electronic equipment. The walls are lined with monitors and gauges, and pipes and catwalks crisscross the space above the great storage tanks and below the 30-meter high ceiling. Along the walls at regular intervals are metal ladders leading up to the catwalks and the tops of the vats. The tanks are large, open containers holding various sickly-colored bubbling substances; the smell is vaguely reminiscent of an INFRARED citizen's gym locker four weeks after washday.

On one wall near the ceiling is a plexi-enclosed overhead control booth, accessible from the catwalks, a pair of ladders and a small continuous belt elevator. This booth is centrally located and commands an excellent view of the entire vat chamber.

Just entering this booth high above the chamber floor is the strange woman with the Black Box. She turns, sees she is pursued and crows, 'Hey, drones! Glad you could make it! Tonight there's gonna be a whole lotta shaking goin' on, and I'd like to introduce your host…' (She waves the Black Box in the air with a flourish, bows from the waist and strikes a defiant pose.) 'Screaming Sarah Slick and her magic Black Box!'

Now that we've set the scene, let's introduce the extras. There are as many doors to the vat chamber as there are secret society strike squads sent to get the Box. All these doors open at the same moment and all the squads spill out into the room at once. Each squad is distinctively garbed in the regalia of its secret society (Corpore Metal in metal plate armor, First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer in white frocks, Free Enterprise in pin-striped suits with violin cases and so on). They all pause, do double takes, look around the room at each other for a few moments, then they go in all different directions.

Some head for the ladders and the control booth. Some take cover near the vats. Some charge into melee with the enemies of their secret society. Some smash things at random. Some loot the fallen. Some run away. Some take cover in the doorways and make stirring speeches. Describe this confusion to the players as though the scene were a great cartoon finale.

Now, ask the PCs what they want to do. With the surfeit of targets to shoot at, they may be briefly overcome with joyous indecision, but soon they'll get into the swing of things.

And how will the NPCs deal with the PCs? 'Do unto others as they do unto you.' If the PCs do a lot of shooting and bashing, the NPCs take notice and try to eliminate the PCs. If the PCs sneak around and try to maneuver toward the control booth, they encounter NPCs with similar objectives.

And don't expect all the PCs to do the same things. One PC may sit and hammer on a vat, trying to smash it. Another may find a secure spot and start working up a body count of traitors. Another may use a mutant power to bypass the competition and confront Sarah directly. Relax and improvise. Use your NPC cast to invent entertaining responses to the PCs' actions.

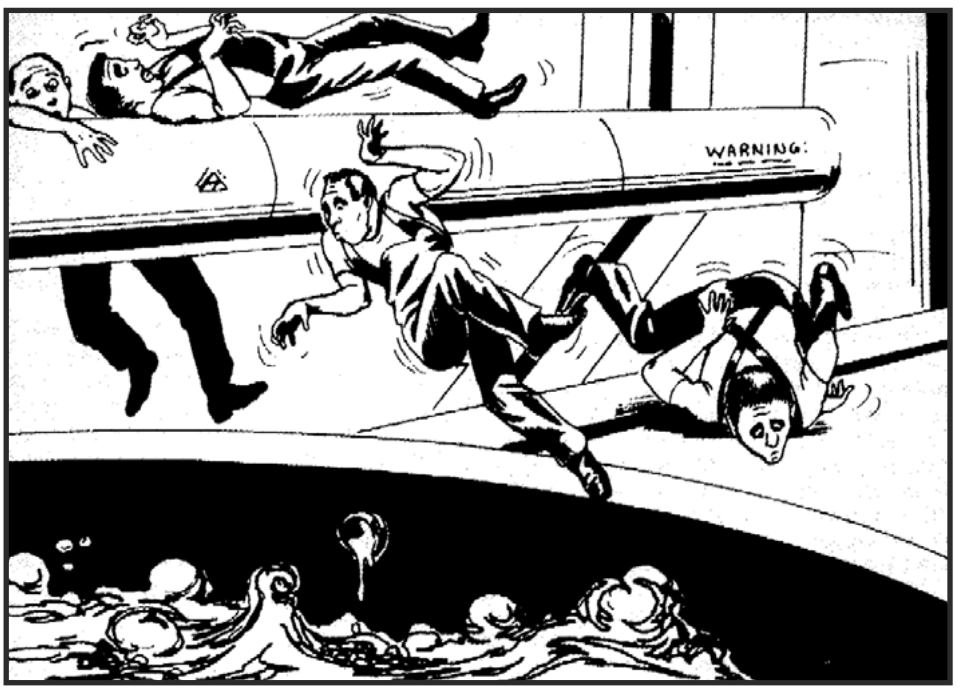
Sarah is the only significant NPC in the room. She'll sit tight and defend the control booth for five or ten rounds, then decide that the Death Leopard squad is not going to arrive in time to pick up the Box. When things get too hot, she gives a triumphant shout, fires her laser through the plexi window of the booth and dives out of the booth into one of the food vats, disappearing beneath the slime.

This should certainly give everybody a moment's pause. Actually, she planned this exit long ago—there is an overflow valve hidden below the glop, which she can find by touch and use as an airlock to escape. No body will be found, and it will be assumed the food, er, ate her.

It should be possible to continue the fight in the cavernous vat chamber even after Sarah has disappeared with the Box—continue it right up until T minus zero. At which time, anyone who is climbing pipes or catwalks on a full stomach is in trouble. And outside, the population is, well, behaving very oddly.

Wild in the streets

If the PCs stick around for the mop up in the vat chamber, that's where they'll be when the boogie fever strikes. If they forsake the vat room for some reason (like to report back to Mission Central, or to look around for traitors or to pursue any of the secret society squads in retreat), they'll be out in the halls when the fun starts.



The Polypeptide Boogie, a grueling experience.

Twist and shout

The Polypeptide Boogie begins gradually, with little twitches along the major nerves. Citizens suddenly kick up their heels, or clap hands. A combination of the two produces a drop-kick. In the corridors, the usual purposeful, get-where-I'm-going (because lateness is treason) stride is interrupted by a timestep, soft shoo or buck-and-wing. Human-operated vehicles do sudden maneuvers not found in the manual. The sight of a heavy transport flybot slaloming between overhead guideway supports, dropping crates here and there, is quite startling. Autocars jumping from one guideway to another are even more so.

Now the Neuron Dance is really getting going. People grab passing bots for support, and end up tangoing them across the floor. A squad of Death Troopers comes quickstepping up the path, like a drill team performing to Elvis: one-two (razzle-dazzle) three-four (autofire) that's a fact, Jack! Fortunately they can't hit anything.

While computers and bots are not directly affected, lots of human console operators are, so you can disrupt anything you feel like. Further, The Computer begins invoking overrides, interrupting services and switching controls to automatic systems—not always to appropriate ones. When a traffic-flow program takes over interior lighting control, lit windows start to flash arrows and messages like giant scoreboards, and guideway lights strobe, adding to the disco effect. (Remember that there is no natural illumination in Alpha Complex: when The Computer makes it dark, it's dark.)

Citizens are dancing out their doors, just like in a Busby Berkeley movie musical; humming something catchy from '42nd Street' or 'A Chorus Line' would be appropriate here.

Boogie-bouncing nervous systems are responsive to outside stimulus: the dancing mob soon ends up in step. When enough people dance in step, they set up harmonics that can shake bridges and even buildings apart. The air reverberates; the characters seem to be trapped inside a giant teleprinter. The sky starts to fall. Pipes break, making it 'rain'. Bots do not work well in the rain, especially if their little rubber tires and brake shoes get wet. Bots on errands of mercy run into things and skid off other things, requiring that more bots be sent on errands of mercy to help them.

The Computer demands that all the malfunctioning terminal operators report for termination. When their replacements don't answer calls, it demands that they report for termination. Every Troubleshooter is mobilized to deal with the crisis: our heroes receive orders by Com unit, which are superseded by new orders every few minutes.

Have fun. Keep it going for as long as the players will put up with it.

Suggested endgame scenario: The Computer announces a priority powerdown, for the safety of all systems. The lights go out. All the transport stops. In the darkness are loud crashing noises. The team must navigate by flashlight; if they have IR goggles, throw lots of confusing heat patterns at them. Let them decide where they want to go, and then describe the things they bump into on the way there. 'Okay, do you turn left or right here? Now there's a stairway. Here's an elevator, but all the control indicators are out—which button do you want to push? The corridor's only about a meter high here. You can hear shooting up ahead. Shooting behind you, too. Oops, hole in the walkway. You seem to be on a conveyor belt.'

Just as they're getting fed up with this, the com units beep, and the lights come up fast and full, blinding everybody. Then they see that they're on a catwalk high over the food vats, right back where they were when the band began to play. All the secret society boxjackers can now see again, too. Everybody shoots. Pipes rupture. The catwalks give way with a sound of rending metal. Everybody falls in the food. Blackout.

Encounters are possible with jitterbugging mobs (think of a huge, incoherent New Year's Eve party, where everyone wants to grab you to keep the room from spinning. They respond to noise, too: a 'Hey!' from a startled Troubleshooter will produce a chorus of 'Hey, hey!'s and a new set of dance steps).

After a while, automated transports will arrive to bring the Troubleshooters where their new orders direct; since orders are changed every few minutes the characters will spend a few pleasant hours getting nowhere fast.

Once this pales, the Troubleshooters can encounter teams of unaffected night-shift soldiers, kitted out in full rad-bio-chem protective suits, looking for Commie invaders; or maybe docbots with tranquilizer guns, who will shoot anybody who acts in an 'unreasonable' fashion…

The aftermath

Really loyal PCs will enthusiastically attempt to deal with the crisis. Of course, the fabled 'community of man' that allegedly emerges in a disaster may not appear in Alpha Complex, and PCs may seize the opportunity to loot and burn and indulge in other Commie sabotage.

Whatever the PCs choose to do, things eventually return to normal and the PCs receive a summons on their com units to return to Troubleshooter Headquarters for debriefing. If they do not voluntarily return in short order, combots seek them out, gas them and 'escort' them back.

When the PCs arrive at Troubleshooters Headquarters, they are cordially greeted and placed in 'protective custody'—a windowless, brightly lit cell—until sometime the next day, after things have returned to normal.

Debriefing

The characters are released from cells or medical detention. As one character (choose randomly) is let out of his cell, he sees Al-B-MNU, glummer than ever, being tossed into a slightly fancier cell. Questions about this are naturally not allowed. (Al-B-MNU was right about the blame for problems on this mission, and he will never be seen again.) It is up to the PC who saw the detention incident whether to tell his comrades.

The remaining three briefing officers ask questions about the Troubleshooters' activities last night. They are required to account for equipment expended and lost. Brian-B wants to give the PCs a thorough grilling; Dan-V is more easygoing, though he falls asleep occasionally, giving Brian-B a chance to take over; Zach-I wants to know if the video cameras were returned intact and nothing else.

Brian-B is willing to forgive a lot if the Troubleshooters shot a lot of traitors. He is annoyed if the team leader's armor is undamaged. If the leader got smoked, on the other hand, Brian-B eulogizes him as an example of everything a Troubleshooter ought to be.

The PCs ought to have the vague idea that they are going to be blamed for The Polypeptide Boogie. They are not—The Computer easily determined that the vat controls had been tampered with—but PCs should always have the vague idea that anything can be blamed on them. Because it can.

Take reports, and assign rewards and penalties. Just before the Troubleshooters are released, Dan-V congratulates them on 'a fine performance in The Computer's sight. Friend Computer has asked me to say we hope you are never called on in such a fashion again.'

The PCs will be accosted on their way back to their residential units by citizens, some of them of high clearance, who saw Rasterman's video special last night. None of these people believe the PCs are real Troubleshooters; they think they are actors. The only thing they want to know is what Teela-O-Malley is *really* like.

When the PCs get home, the Episode 2 alert is waiting for them.

Presenting the new, improved model Troubleshooter.

2: I was a mutant for the FBI

Mission summary

The Computer does not blame the Troubleshooters for the massive, er, system crash of the night before, but it needs to blame somebody. It has decided that some terrible new psionic mutation, analogous to the dreaded and detested Machine Empathy ability, has infected the citizenry. It has further decided that this infection is somehow connected with the black cube that last night's televised traitors seemed so eager to possess. There are a lot of other conclusions The Computer might have drawn, but this is the one it did reach, and disagreeing with The Computer's conclusions is treason.

The Computer has further decided that this derangement might be contagious, like Communist propaganda; at least, it should be treated as such until proven otherwise. Therefore, the Troubleshooter team will not be told that The Black Box is a part of their investigation, lest they become contaminated. Since the Troubleshooter team of last night's events seemed to show no ill effects from their exposure to The Black Box, they presumably have some natural resistance (notice The Computer seizes on its own bad guesses and follows them to even weirder conclusions) and are the instruments of choice to recover or destroy it.

On the other hand (in Alpha Complex there's always at least one other hand) a High Programmer, Betty-U-YFL-5, has reached the more reasonable conclusion that The Black Box must contain some kind of entertainment programming, which by definition makes it an Old Reckoning artifact. Betty-U has a large and completely illegal collection of such items, and she arranges to acquire this one as well.

Dan-V-OSD, knowing that the Troubleshooters will be facing mutants with strange and unpredictable powers, decides to give them an advantage: he sends them to Victor-I-VGF, an R&D scientist who is hard at work on mechanical imitations of mutant powers. Like most R&D scientists, Victor-I is crazy. The Troubleshooters will still have to carry his gadgets into battle.

The Troubleshooters, therefore, are going to ambush a gang of traitorous mutants. The Psion secret society, which has heard of The Computer's intention, intends to protect the mutants from ambush. The Anti-Mutant society goes to ambush the Psions and the mutants.

But there aren't any mutants. the Box is actually in the hands of the Sierra Club again, who is trying to negotiate with one of its Outdoors-dwelling former members for more Boxes like it. And the Free Enterprisers have decided to retrieve the Box themselves.

When the smoke clears, the Troubleshooters will miss the Box, but capture the Outsider which will lead to Episode 3.

Pre-mission briefing

When the PCs get back to the barracks, they find a Mission Alert waiting for them. (See Mission Alert, Reference YCBBB.2.2, at the end of the mission.) Display the alert on your GM screen. Give them an opportunity to seek contacts with their societies. Give them a few rumors (see General Rumor List or invent a few). Nothing new is available concerning The Black Box, but each society is emphatic about finding and snatching it if possible.

Troubleshooter Headquarters

Once again there is difficulty in determining where the Troubleshooters should report. If the PCs suggest Briefing Room AA, their supervisors immediately question them as to how they came by such information; the officials suspect a leak, and the characters must talk their way out of fines or an immediate conviction/sentencing/termination (not necessarily in that order).

The checkpoint security console has been replaced with a new model. There is a glass plate on the machine's front: The subject places his hands against the glass, and a brilliant light illuminates the plate as the unit scans his palmprints.

On the fourth try (again), the plate overheats, pan-frying the user's hands. Guards immediately summon a docbot to bring plastiflesh. Also a

scrubot with glass cleaner and room deodorizer. For the duration of Episode 2, the PC with the resurfaced hands cannot spend Perversity on any ability check involving manual dexterity, including shooting.

The briefing

The room is as before (**Tension 15**), except that a second guard with a power holster has replaced the combot. (The guards are thoroughly trained with these. If the PCs start trouble, the guards' holsters work properly at all times.)

At intervals during the briefings, the room begins to vibrate, and a rhythmic mechanical noise is heard. PCs get the distinct impression that the entire room is moving, on rails or tracks. The personnel ignore this effect entirely, and no explanation is available.

No one has replaced AI-B-MNU on the briefing panel. Zach-I wonders why he is still here, since the video problem has been cleared up. Brian-B is looking forward to another mass slaughter of traitors, and mutant traitors at that. Dan-V's principal concern, next to keeping Friend Computer happy, is to make sure that his friend Victor-I-GOR's equipment gets a good field test.

Choosing the team leader

The team has the opportunity to choose a new leader. If the prior leader is dead, Brian-B reminds his clone of the reputation he has to live up to. Brian-B also comments that The Computer, in recognition of last night's extraordinary service and the dangers that lie ahead, has arranged a special bonus for the leader on this mission.

Once the PCs have decided on a leader, a panel slides open in front of the briefing bench, and a small shelf extends itself. On the shelf are seven jawbreaker-sized yellow pills. Brian-B addresses the team leader: 'Given the threat to your very minds presented by these mutants, The Computer has seen fit to give you the final protection against hostile mind control. These suicide pills require only minutes to work, and are almost painless. As team leader, you will be custodian of these pills and, recognizing your importance, you have been assigned a second pill in case the first one should fail.'

Don't forget to make the leader sign for the pills. The form contains a space labeled REASON FOR USING PILL, and another that reads WAS PILL EFFECTIVE? [YES/NO].

Mission assignment

Dan-V is deeply moved by the suicide-pill ritual. In a voice as sincere as any ever heard on the U.S. Senate floor, he says:

'It is not often that we see a caliber of courage such as you have shown us, and not often that we grant the unusual privilege you have been granted. Is it not fortunate that, in its wisdom, our friend The Computer has made it possible for us to give it the last full measure of devotion not once, but several times?

'But I digress, and time is short. As you doubtless know, there is a terrible influence at work among us. Over the past hours, Alpha Complex has operated at a level of inefficiency that causes our friend The Computer something electronically analogous to grief. The Computer has worked hard to shield its citizens from grief; those tablets you have been entrusted with are an example of the lengths our friend will go to to protect its own. Serve The Computer, and you will never suffer very long.'

There is a pause. Then a snore. Brian-B takes the microphone. He says:

'The mutant traitor scum have been located in YCA Sector. Now, they're clever, and they're everywhere, so you're going to have to be cleverer. We're going to disguise you as traitor scum mutants, and send you right into the middle of things.' Brian-B's eyes widen, and he begins to speak very rapidly.

Rehearse the next segment; the faster you can deliver it, the better the effect will be. Brian-B does not repeat himself.

'Now remember, they're traitors and they're clever and they're Commies and they're stupid, so we're going to make you look stupid so you can get in there and be real clever, just like the Commie mutants they are. Be careful, because they're not dumb, they may make mistakes but that's because they're clever Commies and they think you're stupid, but don't be dumb about it, remember they're Commies and they're dumb and they're mutants and they're scum, and if it looks like a Commie and feels like a mutant and smells like scum it's one of you in disguise so you can give 'em what they've got coming to 'em.'

Dan-V wakes up. He says 'One of our finest scientists, a loyal servant of The Computer and a good friend of mine, has made it possible for you to counter the deadly mental threat posed by these mutants. Take care with this equipment: it may be all that stands between you and…treason.'

Only a few questions will be allowed. No information on the nature of the hostile mutants is available, nor the precise location of their 'stronghold'.

Private briefing

Brian-B reads the mission equipment requisition aloud to the group, then dismisses them to report to Outfitting. (Display Equipment List #2 to the players.) The team leader is directed to stay behind for a special private briefing. Dan-V addresses him as follows:

'Good friend Troubleshooter, we know of your loyalty to The Computer. That is why we are entrusting you with the following information—which is highly classified, and must be released to no one but your successor as team leader.

'Somehow, these mutants have found a way to control the minds of loyal citizens, convincing them to turn away from The Computer and all it stands for. Even valuable bots have been corrupted into the service of this evil.

'We know that, should this become known, our loyal citizens might become afraid, not knowing when they might be innocently forced into treasonous acts. So we must keep the nature of this mission a complete secret. No one outside this room—of course our friend The Computer is here with us always—will know of your mission. You can expect no help from our fellow services—even from your fellow Troubleshooters.

'But you will not be without help. I spoke of equipment that would make you the equal of any mutant: yes, it is true. We now have the ability to grant mutant powers to honest, loyal citizens when the need requires. You will meet the enemy on its own terms.

'Of course you understand that with great power comes great responsibility. For that reason, we entrust you with this.'

A RED waiter appears, carrying a shiny metal tray. In the center of the tray is a large blue pill.

'It works in ten seconds,' Brian-B says, awed.

The leader is allowed to rejoin the team, and they are all hustled off to R&D for YCA Sector.

Should anyone decide to take one: the yellow pills are fatal 20% of the time (on a roll of 4 or less); otherwise they merely make the swallower nauseated.

The blue pill has no effect. However, since The Computer believes that the pill works, any PC who takes the pill is presumed to have a mutant power, and to be guilty of treason. Failure to turn the pill in at the end of the mission is considered clear evidence that the pill has been taken. Now: if The Computer 'knows' you have a mutant power, you had better register it. But how do you register a non-existent mutant power? Nice little fix he's in, yes?

Taking any sort of suicide pills earns an Official Reprimand.

The friendly folks at R&D

Victor-I-VGF-6 is the last of an erratically brilliant line of research scientists. Victor-I was a mechanical genius, who devised such items as a reliable safety for cone rifles, a self-balancing hypocycloidal fusion containment field and a garbage bag with the twist tie attached. Unfortunately, all these items are classified ULTRAVIOLET. He died of piezoelectric shock while trying to develop a dogbot biscuit. Victor-2 was the first person to exceed Mach 3 while clinging to the outside of a flybot. Victor-3 was reading through his laboratory notes one day when he realized he had exceeded his own security clearance; he promptly reported for termination. Victor-4 went into the lab one morning and was never seen again. Victor-5 is believed to have stumbled on the formula for a universal solvent, which then disappeared along with him and seven sub-basements.

Victor-6 sees himself as the family's last chance to return to Victor-I's glory. Understanding that a hot-sounding proposal is worth three boring monographs any day, he has created the new science of Synthomutagenics, the process of simulating mutant powers by artificial means. The Computer gives its full support to the SM Project, because if useful mutant powers could be artifically produced under The Computer's direct control, there would be no further need to permit the existence of Registered Natural Mutants.

This is how part of The Computer thinks of it, anyway. Another part of The Computer believes the artificial creation of mutant powers is a threat—machines that turn citizens into traitors-by-definition—and allows Victor-I-VGF-6 to continue only until he determines whether or not Synthornutagenics will work. If the SM Project is a success, Victor, his work and all who participated in it (of course including those Troubleshooters who tested the hardware) must be terminated. If the Project is a failure, the equipment and Victor-I's 'assistants' will still be eradicated (to keep anyone else from getting the idea) and Victor-I will be terminated for wasting Alpha Complex resources.

In other words, the PCs are doomed from the moment they enter Victor-I's laboratory (**Tension 15**). However, this termination order will not take effect until the SM Project ends, and that could be a long time, especially in a Troubleshooter's life, where a week is a long time.

Victor-I has two assistants, both of whom are reasonably competent engineers. They are also, as usual in Alpha Complex, both spies. (Those of you familiar with lab politics can think of them as enthusiastic grad students.)

Willis-G-PLJ-4: Quiet, cheerful, Mr. Goodlaser type. Willis-G is one of the inventors of the Power Holster; he dismisses all reports of malfunctions, pointing out that no Vulture Squadron member has ever returned one for adjustments. He will not let the PCs leave without signing out at least one holster.

Willis-G is also a member of the Psion secret society, with the powers of Minor Telekinesis and Luck. These powers account for the fact that his prototypes work well on the test bench, and fail in the field when he isn't around. Psion does not know yet whether Victor-I's work is a boon, bringing the benefits of mutation to those unlucky enough to be born without it, or a threat; Willis-G is content to watch and report.

Ned-G-RFB-6: Hyperactive, accident-prone, standard Mad Scientist's Madder Assistant. Ned-G's own ideas suffer from terminal lunacy; however, he has an uncanny ability to find and fix what's wrong with Victor-I's creations without taking credit. Obviously Victor-I treasures him.

Ned-G spies for the Anti-Mutant secret society. His personal conviction is that genes have no business altering themselves; when better people are built, people like him will build them. Anti-Mutant thinks Victor-I's work could be wonderful, unless it leads to tolerance for organic-type mutants, so they too are sitting tight and waiting.

Men into mutants

The secrecy of the SM Project has led to its being housed in the deepest sub-basement of the R&D facilities. The characters spend a lot of time descending in elevators (it isn't that deep, the elevators are just slow) and being led by suspicious guards through dark, dusty corridors, some of which seem to have been forced out of true by some great elemental force.

Finally the guards operate an elaborately sealed metal door; several thicknesses of steel iris open and the Troubleshooters enter a huge room filled with equipment right out of *Forbidden Planet* or a Jack Kirby comic book: massive busbars alive with coruscating energy, delicate assemblies of glass and wire, incomprehensible displays. The door closes behind the team, and Willis-G steps out to introduce himself. Shortly Ned-G pops up from behind a console to startle everybody. They lead the players to Victor-I.

Victor-I is nervous and insecure. (Imagine Woody Allen's neuroses in Orson Welles' body.)

He tells the Troubleshooters that he hopes they take this project seriously, that definitive field testing is important to everyone involved.

Victor-I doesn't know where to start; he'd like to send the PCs out with a dozen gadgets each, but knows that isn't practical. He wants to make sure that no one gets a device he won't make use of (he's had that problem before), and so suddenly asks a PC, 'What mutant power have you always dreamed of having?'

It sounds just like an Internal Security trick question, and Willis-G and Ned-G listen carefully for the answer. If the PCs mention a specific power, Victor dashes off in search of the appropriate device. Willis-G and Ned-G scribble furiously in notebooks.

It this approach doesn't work, Victor-I asks the players what they think would be most useful. If that fails, he says, 'You're just the person I've needed to give this unit its final once-over,' and assigns an item at random. Victor-I is fair, and makes sure at least one of each of his assistants' designs is assigned.

Items may be tested if the PCs insist—though most of them work just fine under laboratory conditions. The testing area is referred to as The Danger Room; the scientists do not elaborate on this title. If too much testing goes on, a call arrives ordering the Troubleshooters to hurry up, and no further tests are allowed. So there.

The goodies

1. **Sensory Enhancer Helmet** *(Victor-I)*. This is a full-head helmet with amplifying pickups for sound, hearing and smell. It works, but the gain controls are defective: audio volume may increase until a whisper deafens the wearer, or vision fades to black. Malfunctions of the scent-amplifying system are even more interesting. The unit is also rather difficult to remove.
2. **Electroshock Gauntlets** *(Willis-G)*. Give the wearer shock abilities equivalent to the Electroshock mutant power. The control switches are built inside the gloves, and they tend to stick; while the gloves are insulated, handling weapons with electrically live fingers can be hazardous, and careless use of hands can trigger shock accidentally.
3. **Omnigestoline-NG** *(Ned-G)*. A drug to provide the Matter Eater ability for 12 hours. It does absolutely nothing. If the players take a pill in the lab, Ned-G will say 'Well, it takes an hour or so to get going. Make sure we get a full report.'
4. **Manipulatron** *(Victor-I)*. A powered exoskeleton for the arms, giving the wearer ten times normal strength. It works just fine, except that it provides no extra support for the spine and legs, somewhat limiting the wearer's carrying capacity; the unit itself weighs about 40 kilos. Politely request the PC to make occasional Violence/Agility checks. If failed, the PC crashes to the ground. Two citizens are needed to help him stand. After the device has crashed to the ground a few times, the battered controls short out, causing a power-assisted case of St. Vitus's Dance. Ask the PC to provide sound effects.
5. **Experimental Manual Operations Extensor, Mark 26** *(Ned-G)*. This is

supposed to simulate Telekinesis, and any PC who asks for TK powers is going to be stuck with it. It is a harness mounting dozens of magnetically controlled wire filaments that can coil tightly or extend to five meters. It is controlled by nerve impulses, and comes with a thick manual of operation. The manual is censored, of course; the pages are blank. Of course, in use it simply snags everything in sight, including the operator, like a tangler that shoots at one target per turn. Throughout the rest of the mission the PC will involuntarily pluck items off walls, desks and passing citizens.

6. **Biofeedback Monitor System** *(Victor-I)*. Victor borrowed (stole) the prototype of this from PDK Sector. He forgot to steal the documentation. It gives the character abilities similar to the Adrenalin Control power, with a 50% chance per use of causing no harmful side effects, and 50% of causing double the damage of the mutant power.
7. **Neurocalculator** *(Willis-G)*. This device clamps over the user's temples. It connects inductively to the brain, providing the Deep Thought power. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it gives incredibly wrong answers. Sometimes the user stands stock still and recites the multiplication tables until his ears smoke.
8. **Teleportransitron** *(Ned-G)*. Designed to imitate the Teleportation power, this five-kilo belt device actually works and can be demonstrated. Unfortunately, the power pack is a 60 kg device mounted on a two-wheeled cart which must be towed behind the PC. More unfortunately, its calibration is extremely delicate, and after any jar (like walking out of the laboratory) it transmits the user, the user's equipment, the user's clothes and itself to widely separated locations. Failure to return the device is treason. Finding it after a teleport may be tricky.
9. **Suggestor Goggles** *(Victor-I)*. These have whirling lights that give the wearer the Charm power over anyone he can somehow convince to look into his eyes while he is wearing them. A recorded message keeps repeating, 'Look into my eyes. You're growing sleepy.'
10. **Neurofrabulator** *(Willis-G)*. This device resembles a combat suit helmet with a clear bowling ball containing a live human brain bolted to either side. The brains have been artifically grown and possess the ability to read the surface thoughts of anyone in a ten-meter range, and telepathically communicate the information to the wearer.

    The possibilities for GM mischief with this one are endless. For example: the two brains bicker constantly; they make endless annoying suggestions to the wearer; they read the Troubleshooters' minds and threaten blackmail; etc. Feel free to give the brains whatever names and personalities you wish: George and Gracie, Stan and Ollie, Moe, Larry and Curly (one of them is a split personality), etc.
11. **Autoresponse Imager** *(Victor-I)*. A belt-mounted holographic projector that simulates Polymorphism by showing images that follow the wearer's actions: the user can appear as a combot, Teela-O-MLY or any of 126 other images stored on microslide carousel. If asked, Victor-I demonstrates some useful settings; no complete list is available. The slide controller has a tendency to reset itself randomly in use, and the test slides are broadly selected, including Wile E. Coyote, items of furniture, Peter Lorre (in black and white) and several famous paintings.
12. **Lung/Gill Suit** *(Victor-I)*. A skintight leotard that filters oxygen out of water. It is a bit sweaty in normal wear, but it works perfectly. A player assigned this will just have to figure out how to field-test it.
13. **Pedipulatron** *(Willis-G)*. An exoskeleton for the legs similar to the Manipulatron above. They will not be offered as a set.

    If someone tries to wear them together, their combined weight becomes a considerable burden. Then one or the other shorts out and becomes dead metal.

Cloaks and daggers

Once outfitted with their synthetic mutations, the team goes to the regular Quartermaster office to sign out their more usual equipment.

Despite what was said about secrecy, everyone in the equipment room seems to know about the team's mission. They all think it's pretty ridiculous. 'Nobody's ever gonna believe you're mutants. Freaks, yeah, but not mutants.' (Of course, the characters *are* all mutants, but they can't reveal that.)

At least this time the staff isn't so hesitant about providing armor, implying the team is really going to need it this time. They have several suits 'typical of what the well-dressed YELLOW civilian wears' with concealed armor: four YELLOW reflec and six Kevlar/mylar (l4).

Once again the team finds itself on the sidewalk in front of HQ, with no idea where to begin. Suddenly a panting RED Troubleshooter runs up to them, holding a dispatch envelope. He demands to see an official copy of the team's mission orders before handing over the message.

The team has not been issued an official copy of its orders. In order to get the message, the PCs must pull rank on the RED messenger, or simply shoot him. If neither of these ideas occurs to anyone, a passing scrubot picks up the messenger and tosses him into a trash compactor; the envelope flutters to the ground, where the scrubot ignores it.

The message is in fact for the team, and a good thing too. (See Special Field Dispatch: Reference YCBBB.2.3.4 at the end of the mission).

All dressed up with no place to go

Meetings with secret society and service group contacts are going to be very exciting while the PCs wear Victor-I's hardware and the YELLOW civilian suits (which don't fool anybody). There is a 50% chance the contact is scared off by what he thinks is an Internal Security trap—100% chance if the player chose the same method of contact as last time. If the real contact flees, provide an 'innocent bystander' with whom the player can try to discuss his mission.

If contact is made:

Brett-Y-WYD learns the Outsider Reagan Wimbledon (see PC card—Brett-Y is awful with names) has been kidnapped by agents of Free Enterprise, who wish to sell him (something like that anyway). Brett-Y must free Wobblepot, at the cost of his own life if necessary. He will know him by his fuzzy vest. ('Fuzzy vest' is correct. If Brett-Y thinks he misunderstood, good.)

Other societies comment on the magnitude of last night's disaster, and emphasize the importance of getting that Black Box.

The mission

Special Field Dispatch: Reference YCBBB. 2.3.4 gives an address in YCA Sector, supposedly the location of the Evil Mutant Enclave. No secret society can say anything about what the address might actually be, but Power Services knows that a lot of heavy conduits run under the place.

In reality, it's a 'safe house', a room operated by the Free Enterprisers, guaranteed to be absolutely free of The Computer's surveillance devices. The Enterprisers rent it out to anyone with the astronomical fee, for whatever purpose the renter desires. The room really is Computer-proof; the Enterprisers have their own bugs installed, for protection and blackmail.

The current tenants are the Sierra Club, who are using the room to hide one Oregon Warbler. No, not a bird, a person. Some years ago, a high-ranking Sierran named Warren-B-LER escaped from Alpha Complex through the secret exit. He made his way in the outside world, from time to time returning to trade with the Complex dwellers. The Club holds him in religious awe, an unreciprocated emotion.

The Club has now reacquired The Black Box (Screaming Sarah escaped with it last time and sold it to them), and is showing it to Oregon

Warbler in the hope that he can bring them many more like it. Wooden boxes, that is. The Club still doesn't have any idea how to open the thing.

Oregon Warbler thinks the Club is crazy, but he can sell certain items, especially firestarters, for a small fortune Outdoors, and if the Club wants boxes, they can have boxes.

The Free Enterprisers, watching the negotiations on hidden camera, have decided to muscle in on the deal. They slipped a message to Oregon Warbler, offering him a much better price for his goods. Oregon agreed to a meeting, and was told to expect a visit from a group of YELLOW civilians.

And indeed the Enterprisers are on their way, dressed as YELLOW-Clearance civilians. But guess who gets there first?

The Troubleshooters have the address because:

1. Betty-U-YFL ordered her Programs Group to find her The Black Box;
2. A group member got the safe house location, and transmitted it to Zach-I-LVI on the briefing team;
3. Zach-I sent the message to capture the Box, with the address, to the team leader;
4. The Computer deleted all references to The Black Box from the message. Zach-I never questions what The Computer deletes and doesn't care anyway.

Meanwhile, strike teams from Psion and Anti-Mutant are tracking the Troubleshooters, tipped off by Victor-I's assistants, who also gave the societies a list of the special equipment the Troubleshooters signed out from R&D. Naturally, Willis-G and Ned-G assured the strike teams that all the stuff works perfectly.

The safe house entrance

The entrance and first checkpoint for the safe house is in the outer lobby of Bot Maintenance Facility YCA-25 (**Tension 0**). Read the following aloud to the players when they reach the building and enter.

The lobby of the Bot Maintenance Facility is a very large room filled with unmarked cartons of various sizes. A pair of large glass doors lead from the lobby down a long corridor. Next to these doors is a desk with a computer console. No one is sitting at the desk. Two heavily-armed ORANGE guards lean negligently against the wall next to the desk.

They eye you suspiciously, but do not aim their weapons. In a distant corner of the room, partly obscured by cartons, is a door marked 'NO ADMITTANCE—DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE TOXIC CHEMICALS EXTREME HEAT'.

This is a bona fide bot maintenance facility. The guards are Free Enterprisers and are paid to make sure that nobody too obviously a Bad Guy goes through the NO ADMITTANCE door—the real safe house entrance. They have been warned that some YELLOW citizens are coming by to visit the safe house, and the guards will be as cooperative and well-spoken as typical thugs and pistoleros in gangster films. 'Uhghn. Whatcha want?' 'Whosyer here ter see?' 'Well, de boss said ter send yuz right down. Da door ova dere.'

If the PCs make lots of noises like 'The Computer is Our Friend', or 'What's your clearance, citizen?' or 'Be so kind as to report yourself for treasonous activity', the Free Enterprisers are going to get suspicious. This should result in a shootout and some clone activation.

If the PCs play it cagey and decide to wander around the bot facility for a little snooping, treat them to a tour of the bot maintenance bays. Imagine hundreds of malfunctioning bots to annoy and torment the PCs. Eventually one of the ORANGE guards should show up and politely direct the PCs to the proper entrance.

Tunnel

After the bot facility door comes a spiral ramp down, and a dimly lit access tunnel (**Tension 0**) running for about 150 meters. Cables and pipes run along the walls; if weapons are fired down here remember that water and voltage don't mix, especially on metal floors. A simple vibration-sensor system turns on a light at the basement checkpoint whenever anyone is in the tunnel.

Basement checkpoint

See the 'Safe House Apartment' map at the end of the mission. **Tension 0**.

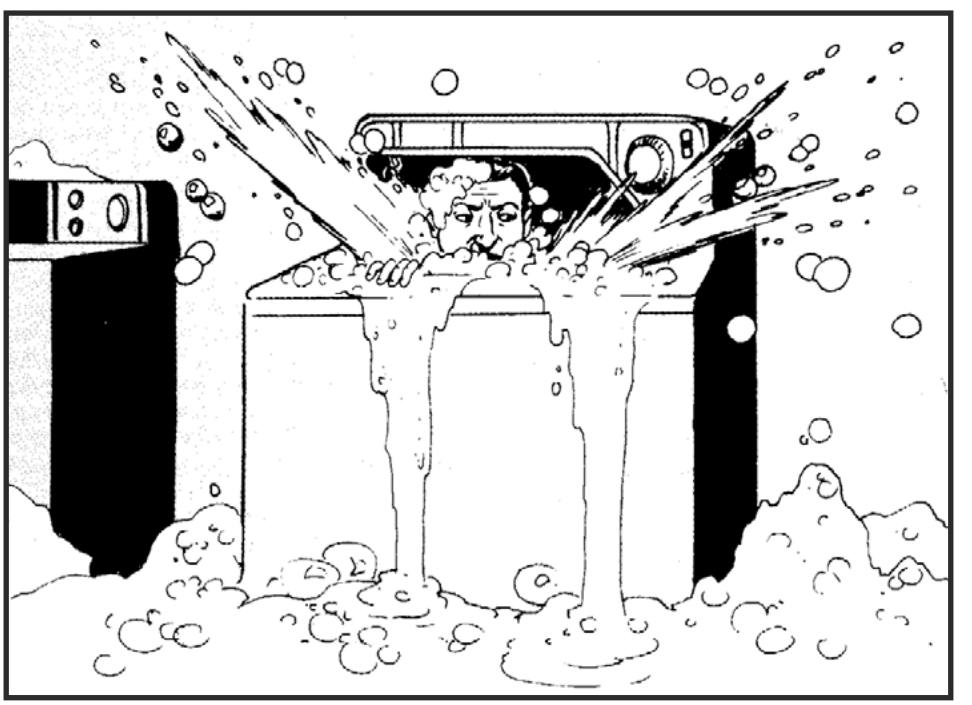
As the PCs approach the checkpoint, read the following aloud:

The tunnel turns right for five meters, then left. Large seams in the ceiling indicate where massive armored doors can be lowered at either end of the five-meter corridor passage. Along the walls of this section are numerous small portals through which poison gas, napalm or some other discouraging substance might pour into the corridor, and armored cameras scan the hallway.

This section of hallway is monitored on television from the checkpoint. A buzzer sounds when the hall is entered, and the guards know to expect company.

Beyond the five-meter section of corridor the tunnel turns left and is blocked by a massive armored door. Two small thick plastic windows are set at eye height, and panels in the door might apparently be opened to permit unpleasant objects to be tossed or fired into those standing before the door. A crudely lettered sign on the door reads, 'Fun Room: State your name and business. Don't forget "Please" and "Thank You."'

The PCs can say anything they want. 'Candygram'. 'Friend'. 'I'm selling magazines.' The two guards know to expect a group of YELLOW citizens, and understand that no



A secret exit or the end to your washday worries?

one ever candidly states his business in Alpha Complex. As long as the PCs don't have weapons drawn or show some other sign of poor social skills, the armored door slides ponderously up into the ceiling, revealing the checkpoint room.

The room is ten x ten meters. Two large desks, one to the right, the other to the left of the door, are occupied by a pair of casually surly guards dressed in non-standard, sharply-tailored Kevlar/Mylar jackets. Their semi-automatic slugthrowers are pointed suggestively in your direction. One has a stun gun, several grenades and a gauss gun on his desk; the other has a hand flamer and a cone rifle.

One says, 'Wait a minute,' and he picks up a phone on his desk and mutters quietly into it. After a few brief exchanges, he hangs up and says, 'Boss says it's okay. The freak wants to see them.'

The Free Enterprise guards at the checkpoint do not annoy the PCs unless they make pests of themselves. The phone call is to Free Enterprise headquarters to confirm the visitors. The other guard presses a button under his desk and the rear wall panel of the room swings open to reveal a passage leading upward. The first guard leans inside, and yells, 'Company coming!' up the stairway.

The PCs may walk between the two guards through the rear wall and ascend the stairs. The first thing they notice is a grinning guard at the top of the stairs, a BLUE laser rifle across his knees. He waves pleasantly as the PCs come up the stairs.

The apartment

At the top of the stairs is a closed door. The guard stands, knocks on the door and says 'You got visitors, freak.' He opens the door and sends the PCs into the room. Read the following aloud.

The room is unimaginably luxurious by the standards of a YELLOW-Clearance Troubleshooter. The furniture is soft and comfortable, the carpet thick, the light adequate, the bathroom private—incredible.

There are no windows, but a pair of large vidscreens show worn videotapes of the Outdoors (prized Sierra Club possessions): California, St. Croix, the Jersey Turnpike and so forth.

Across the room on the far wall are two open doors. The door on the left leads to a kitchen/utility room. The door on the right leads to a bedroom. On the right wall is a third open door leading to a bathroom.

In a corner of the room, on a small table, stands The Black Box.

A citizen in ill-fitting INFRARED coveralls is snoozing in an overstuffed chair. His hair is unusually long and matted. Over the coveralls he is wearing a strange, armor-like garment covered with what looks like dense, white, curly hair. There is a strong unpleasant odor.

'Look what followed us in from the Outdoors!'

Oregon Warbler

Though he is dressed in Alpha Complex clothing (with a sheepskin vest for a touch of home), he will appear to the characters as barely human: too muscular, too hairy, with a peculiar smell. They will have no trouble at all believing he is some kind of incredible Commie Mutant from Hell.

Oregon thinks the PCs are Free Enterprisers come to make him an offer for delivery of more Black Boxes. When the PCs wake him, he'll rub his eyes and say, 'Okay, so what's your offer?' He ignores any inappropriate PC responses (he's still half asleep, and he isn't going to put up with any more foolishness), repeating over and over, 'Cut out the nonsense. Make me a decent offer, or I'll sell to the Nature Boys.'

If the PCs insist that Oregon is their prisoner and attempt to confiscate The Black Box, Oregon coolly says, 'Okay, if that's the way you clowns want to play. I can wait. You need what I got, and I can wait 'til I get good terms. And don't think pushing me around is going to improve the price, vat breath.'

If the PCs try strong-arm stuff or amateur laser surgery, Oregon makes a dash for the (armored) bathroom. The guards appear immediately and try to make things challenging for the PCs.

A friendly little altercation

The dialog between the PCs and Oregon is suddenly interrupted by sounds of gunfire outside the safe house. And downstairs from the checkpoint room comes the sound of loud argument. Then everything goes crazy at once.

Outside, the Psions (who have located the apartment with mutant tricks) and the Anti-Mutants (who followed the Psions) have started taking pot-shots at each other. In the tunnel the real Free Enterpriser group has just arrived and been identified by the guards, and they are getting ready to come upstairs with blazing weapons.

This way to the egress

Oregon has been told of two emergency exits from the safe house—a hidden chute and an explosive charge that blows a hole right through the wall. Sadly, Oregon's foggy memory has omitted some of the critical details.

At first sign of trouble Oregon makes a dash for the kitchen. He knows there is a secret emergency exit in there, though he has forgotten exactly where.

The PCs may consider making a heroic stand here. Bad idea. Activate their clones.

They may consider following Oregon. Somewhat more promising.

In-joke alert: *In this illo Jim Holloway depicted Oregon Warbler using the likeness of original* **PARANOIA** *line developer Ken Rolston.*

Emergency Exit A

One way out is through the automatic washer in the kitchen. The back panel must be kicked out, which reveals a chute to street level outside. Though nobody knows it, the washer is functional, and starts to fill with soapy water as soon as anybody climbs in. Once the panel is knocked out, the flow increases to a torrent. It can't be stopped; if the washer is destroyed, the pipes begin to flood the apartment. Oregon was told about this escape, but he has forgotten which of several appliances (washer, dishwasher, automatic clothes presser, oven, Magic Fingers bed) must be climbed into. Have fun.

Emergency Exit B

The other exit is through the wall screen on the far wall in the bedroom. The bed must be pushed aside and the wall screen removed. There is a ripcord on the wall behind it. This fuses an explosive charge that blows out the wall. Anyone standing next to the wall on either side gets a faceful of crumbled concrete. When the wall falls down, those inside will be looking right at the Anti-Mutant assault team, who will doubtless seize the opportunity. This action also irretrievably weakens the entire building, which will collapse at an ever-faster rate.

Blowing holes in walls is also a possibility, with long-term results similar to escape route B above.

If the PCs detonate a large quantity of ordnance in the tunnel, a gas explosion makes most of the block sink three or four meters into the earth.

If the players escape via the tunnel, they are met by an Enterpriser flying squad at the bot plant. Feel free to improvise a free-for-all among the bots, conveyors and automatic repair and assembly gear.

After the hue and cry goes up, the Sierra Club gets a hit team of their own there, trying to recover the Box and Oregon Warbler.

Oregon Warbler isn't particularly eager to surrender to anybody, especially not Troubleshooters, but he'd rather be shot later than shot now. When caught between the indiscriminant fire of the secret society attack squads and the protective custody of the PCs, Oregon turns and surrenders to the PCs, saying, 'Keep me alive, and I'll make it worth your while.'

Nobody shoots at The Black Box or at Oregon. All societies take considerable risks to capture it.

Ending the battle

As fire, flood and quake begin to consume the structural block, service bots and security forces begin to converge on the area.

Internal Security turns off the power to the whole sector (lights out, folks) and floods the area with a new experimental sleepgas. (Oddly enough, it works.) As the lights go out, the other combatants begin to scramble away, hoping to avoid capture by Internal Security. Firefights in the dark aren't very productive, anyway, and any hardcore clown who tries to carry on by flashlight should be greeted with a fusilade of slugs, laser beams and grenades.

As the lights go out and everything gets quiet, tell the PCs they smell a funny smell. Let them wander in the dark for a few panicky rounds, then start turning off the PCs. Make a Violence check for each character each round. When each fails, ask the PCs to provide snoring sound effects. When everyone is buzzing and snorting, tell them that time passes. Break for munchies and a stretch.

Detention

The surviving PCs awake in the back of a Security van on their way to detention. Wounded PCs are being treated by an onboard docbot. Oregon Warbler is with the PCs, but unconscious and receiving medical treatment. If The Black Box was in the possession of one of the PCs when the lights went out, it has disappeared. (A Sierra Club Internal Security plant has intercepted it and sent it along to higher-ups in the society. It will reappear in Episode 3.)

When they arrive at the detention block, Oregon is separated from the PCs and sent to a medical facility. The PCs are sent as a party to comfortable detention quarters where the wounded continue to receive medical treatment. All requests for information or release are greeted with the traditional, 'I'm sorry, but that is impossible at this time.' An Internal Security clerk contacts the PCs by vidcom and asks them to begin preparing their reports. In the process he lets slip that Internal Security has no record of authorization for their mission. (Remember the courier's 'Special Field Dispatch'?) Grin a lot at the players.

Debriefing

Three hours after arriving in detention, five Vulture Squadron guards appear at the door of the PCs' detention quarters to conduct the PCs to Briefing Room AA. Wounded PCs are conveyed in wheelchairs. The Vultures make sly cracks about needing to lash the disabled to posts for execution. Vultures' humor is similar to that you recall from high school bullies in gym class. Not refined, but spirited and imaginative.

In no time the PCs find themselves blinded by the familiar lights of Briefing Room AA. Dan-V smiles blandly. Brian-B glares sternly. Zach-I is digging absently in his ear with a stylus and gazing off into space.

Brian-B goes into a brief tirade. 'Can't you do anything right?! You were sent to root out a nest of mutants. So, where are they? You were supposed to field test some very important R&D equipment. So where are the reports? And, I might add, in the process of treasonously avoiding your responsibilities, you managed to reduce an entire residential block to rubble. Quite a day's work.'

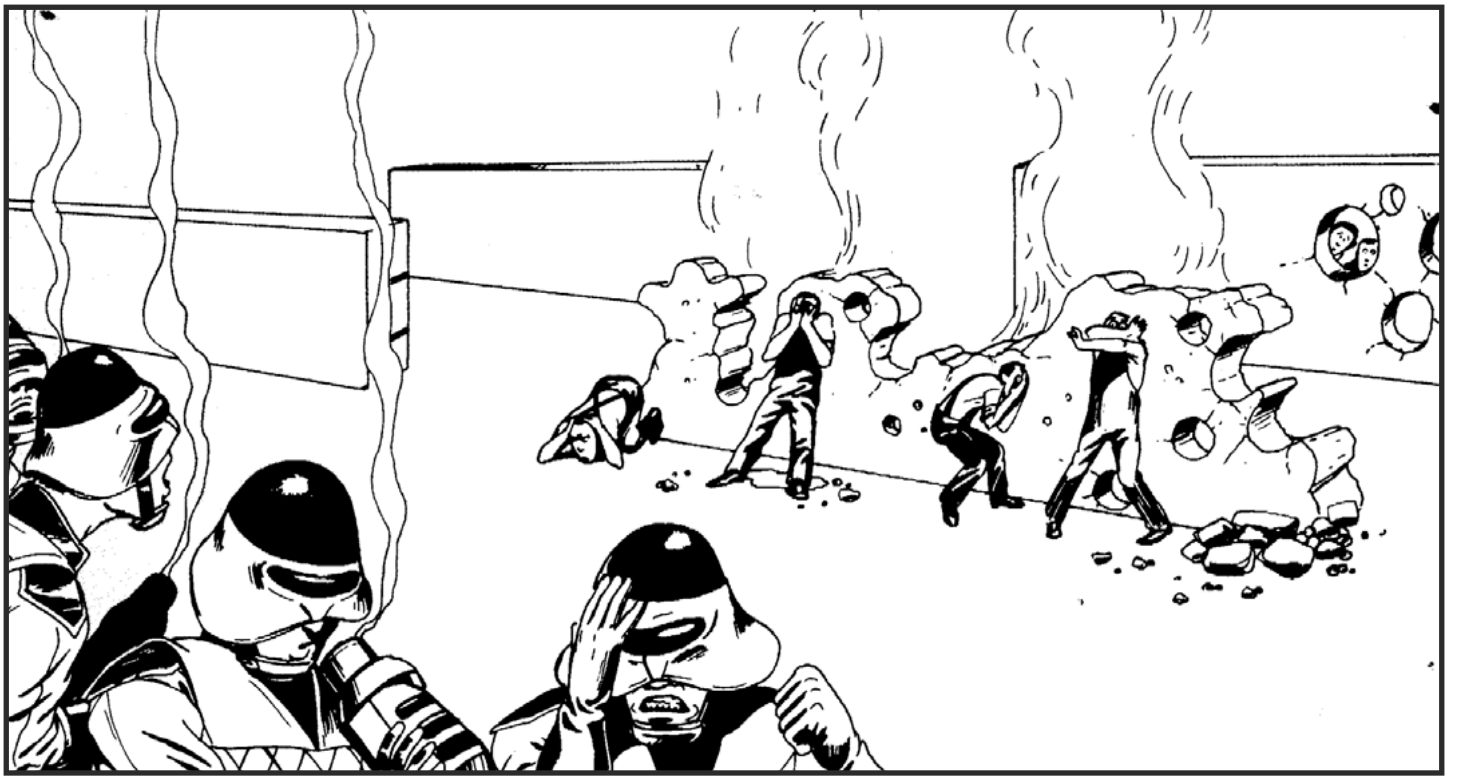
The PCs can salvage some dignity if they give a good account of their problems, and if they point out that they captured Oregon alive as they (think) they were directed, Brian-B is somewhat mollified. Of course, a sizable body count of traitors and/or mutants is the only thing that really satisfies Brian-B.

Dan-V patiently explains that The Computer understands that this was a particularly dangerous mission. He expresses the hope that they were not affected by the strange mental powers of the Communist mutants. While they are trying to figure out how to deny that without digging the hole deeper, Zach-I asks, quite casually, if they were exposed to the 'blackbody radiation'.

Any response that indicates they know what Zach-I is talking about (even he doesn't) will produce intense questioning by Brian-B, trying to establish that they are all really Communists, and the black object is part of a secret plot to destroy Alpha Complex.

As always, assign rewards and punishments, berate the team for damage to equipment (Dan-V is very stern if any of Victor-I's gadgets were destroyed), thank them for their cooperation.

Then have the guards lead them to the cone rifle firing range and ask if they'd like blindfolds or a last bowl of gruel.



'Who moved the targets?'

3: No one here gets out alive

Mission summary

Saved from execution at the last instant, the PCs are ordered back to Briefing Room AA. Though never explicitly so stated, the briefing personnel hint that the PCs are being given a chance to redeem themselves by going on a suicide mission. The PCs will be properly grateful.

The Computer has discovered the existence of the secret exit from Alpha Complex: Oregon Warbler, captured alive in Episode 2, traded the information for his life. The Computer sends the Troubleshooters on a mission to seal off the exit.

Warbler is sent along as a 'guide'; naturally, he intends to make sure that he is the only person to reach the exit alive. He will then escape to the Outdoors.

The PCs also receive a rough copy of a map of Warbler's secret route. Certain dangers are indicated with cryptic marks that Warbler will explain just a few moments too late.

This mission is a gauntlet run past an assortment of hospitable deathtraps. It is also a parody of a certain type of standard roleplaying adventure, the plod through endless booby-trapped corridors known as the 'dungeon crawl'. A few of the encounters are as explicit on this point as possible, short of invoking a Summon Libel Lawyer spell.

And since this is ***PARANOIA***, not Some Other Game™, the mission is finally a wild goosebot chase, as the kill-crazy Internal Security officer Brian-B-IWR-6 conducts his own airborne search-and-destroy mission on the exit, and succeeds in blowing it wide open to daylight. Then the Troubleshooters get to go home and try to explain what happened, receiving a well-earned rest. Until Episode 4.

Pre-mission briefing

The Troubleshooters, condemned for treasonable destruction of Computer property, are waiting to be used as cone rifle targets. Wearing disposable over-tunics printed with bullseyes, they line up against a pockmarked wall, confronted by a BLUE weapons training officer and a group of new and inexperienced RED Troubleshooter trainees. (You may, if you wish, refer to them as green RED Troubleshooters.) None of the trainees has ever so much as seen a cone rifle before. Most of them never will again, either. The officer makes a brief address to the trainees:

'This is a signal honor! The Computer has chosen you insignificant RED-Clearance stooges to execute YELLOW-Clearance traitors! A great honor! And to use BLUE-Clearance weapons in the execution? An unheard-of honor! Congratulations. *[The officer softens his voice to a conspiratorial whisper.]* **Better than a field promotion! Believe me, I know….'**

The next few minutes comprise the officer's jiffy-crash course in cone rifle operation. Here's a chance for a little GM low comedy improvisation: RED Troubleshooters peering interestedly down the barrel as they fondle the trigger—a shriek of anxiety as the officer tries to restrain a rookie trying to hammer a round in with the butt of his laser pistol—the squad standing at attention when a rifle goes off and a shower of metal and plaster rains down from the ceiling. A mishap requiring the activation of a clone or two. The officer gently guiding a barrel to aim in a roughly more appropriate direction. Go to town. The Three Stooges Meet *Star Wars.*

The PCs are not physically restrained. They are well advised, but inappropriately optimistic, in trying to escape. The officer snaps out his tangler (Field Weapons 15) and casually snags a few PCs in the first couple rounds, then guardbots with stunners round up the rest. The guardbots then restrain the PCs by clasping their ankles in their gripping manipulators. The guardbots appear to examine the RED-Clearance firing squad speculatively, then they hunch down as close to the ground as possible. **Note:** PCs who offer advice or assistance to the trainees or help round up fleeing traitors should receive an Official Commendation.

Finally the weapons are loaded and aimed. The first volley is fired. When the smoke clears, the targets are slightly deafened but unhurt. There are shell holes in walls, floor and bots. Attempts to escape in the confusion fail as before. Constructive suggestions are rewarded.

Just as the second volley is about to be fired, four Vulture Squadron guards enter the firing range. With them is Zach-I-VLI, who looks distracted as usual. A guard hands a message envelope to the training officer, who reads it, turns to the PCs and says 'Okay, you're to go with these guys.'

The Vultures take custody of the players, summoning bots to carry stunned or fainted characters. Zach-I does not go with the group. The Computer discovered his part in tampering with the orders last mission; Zach-I was too confused to defend himself.

The last things the Troubleshooters hear as they leave the firing range are cone rifles firing and the instructor saying, '*Now* you're getting the idea!'

Checking in

The checkpoint machine with the locking wrist-cuffs is back in place, with a new attachment: a box labeled EMERGENCY RELEASE SYSTEM. A thin, nervous ORANGE R&D technician and a burly INFRARED assistant stand by the machine. When the first character puts his hands into the machine, the burly assistant opens the box and takes out a large axe, which he holds on high while each Troubleshooter logs in.

Unless the PCs have done something really annoying lately, this time the machine works properly. (An 'accidental near-miss' is also a possibility.)

Briefing room

The Vultures accompany the PCs as they enter the briefing room (**Tension 15**). Dan-V and Brian-B are all who's left on the bench, which is guarded by two sleek and apparently weaponless humanoid bots. These bots are of a gleaming, polished alloy marked only with a black 'belt' painted around their narrow waists. (They are actually very effective hand-to-hand combat models.) The formerly harsh downward light is now diffused by a cloud of vapor that hangs near the ceiling. This cloud is odorless (and harmless), but during the briefing it rolls ominously and changes colors.

Choosing the team leader

Brian-B gives his usual lecture on the responsibilities of leadership, of course including the shooting of enormous numbers of traitors; he hints that whoever has shown the most trigger-happiness in prior missions (or whoever's clone) would make the most satisfactory leader, but he only grumbles if the voting picks someone else (of course, you, friend Gamemaster, may override the voting if you wish).

Mission assignment

Dan-V says, 'Troubleshooters, I fear I must reprimand you, for you have come close to causing our friend The Computer the most grievous simulation of sorrow.

'Because of the cursory and incomplete nature of your reports at our last meeting, The Computer was led to believe you had all committed treason. Imagine our friend's distress to discover the true treason elsewhere—Communist infiltrators from the hostile world outside, laying devious schemes to fool The Computer into destroying its own loyal tools.'

Dramatic pause. Protests that the reports were complete are met with stern reprimands and fines for insubordination.

'But The Computer is not fooled. The fundamental Communist contradictions inevitably cause their downfall.

'However, The Computer knows you are loyal. Indeed, it has always suspected this of you. Now, the Computer wishes to reward you for this long-suspected loyalty, with a mission of vengeance against those who so nearly caused The Computer to prematurely activate your clones… and for those of you who are newly activated, revenge for your valiant and loyal antecedents.'

Dan-V speaks here in the tones of a Wise Old Sorcerer in a hack sword-and-sorcery novel.

'You will travel to the secret stronghold of the terrorists and barbarians from the World Outdoors, and there destroy them, and seal the breach they have made in the security of Alpha Complex. Troubleshooters, it is a measure of The Computer's trust in you that you have been sent on such a mission as this. We speak of places twisted to the perverted wills of Communist terrorists, ruled by an ancient, almost unimaginable evil, where death may lurk at every turn.

'Fortunately, The Computer has been able to interpret a document captured on your last mission. Under The Computer's direction, you should have no difficulty penetrating the Communist defenses.'

At Brian-B's signal, a YELLOW-Clearance citizen wearing CPU service insignia enters, carrying a large metal briefcase of elaborate design. He looks around in a bewildered fashion, then works the complicated locks on the case and takes out a sheet of yellow paper and a white one.

'Evidential Document 1132474-XTZ-Y,' he says, holding up the yellow paper, 'with Computer annotations, 1132474-XTZ-A-U, classified ULTRAVIOLET—'

He stops short, staring at the white paper, realizing too late what he's just said.

'Traitor!' Brian-B screams, and laser shots come from everywhere. The kung-fu combots scatter the dust. The documents are undamaged.

'Emergency measures are solely for your protection, Troubleshooter.'

A Vulture guard picks up the white paper, carefully not looking at it, and hands it to Dan-V, who drops it, unexamined, in a slot in the desk. The PCs are instructed to pick up the yellow sheet. (Players who helped shoot the courier are commended.)

Brian-B says, 'I think this makes clear the extent of treason among us. Someone doesn't want this mission completed. Someone wants you dead, my friends.'

At Dan-V's prompting, a guard hunts through the briefcase (carefully, trying not to look at it in case there are any more high-clearance documents inside) and comes up with the authorization vouchers for the map, which the Troubleshooters must all sign. The team leader is given physical possession of the map. (See Map Confiscated from Commie Warbler: Reference YCBBB.3.2.5).

Note that the actual layout of the map is unimportant. It shows a few ambushes (in cryptic symbols) and dead ends, which will save the PCs some trouble. Some is all the help they get…

Here's the key to the map:

1. Bridge Ambush
2. Exhaust Fan Trap
3. Spiral Corridor Ambush
4. Descent Shaft
5. Typical Helpful Comment

Note: The map does not tell the PCs how to find the secret exit. Warbler knows, but The Computer has forbidden him to reveal the information. The jackobot (see below) knows, but has orders not to reveal the information. 'Knowledge of this information for citizens of lower than ULTRAVIOLET Clearance is treason, and punishable by summary termination.' The jackobot leads blindfolded PCs to the exit point along such a confusing path that the PCs will never be able to retrace their steps.

Pause. Dan-V has dozed off again. Brian-B says:

'Fortunately for you, you brought one of the foreign mutant Commie scum in alive. In return for his worthless traitorous life, he's going to sneak you past the Commie defenses. Do you think that will make it easy enough?'

He gestures to the guards, then pauses and says in a dangerous tone:

'Before we bring in this turncoat traitor, remember, that's what Commies are like: they'll sell out anybody just to preserve their own miserable lives. You take any deals this scum offers you, you're going to end up dead. And then we'll get you. All right, bring him in.'

A side door opens and Oregon Warbler enters. He is wearing a black INFRARED coverall and several pairs of manacles from his wrists to his elbows. A vicious-looking dogbot has its teeth planted in his ankle. He still manages to look rather bold and dangerous.

Actually Warbler is nervous, but hopeful. In his old life as Warren-B, he had Con Games skill, and he thinks he has managed to con The Computer into an escape. He is contemptuous of the Troubleshooters. His major worry is that, with the Troubleshooter team dogging him on the way to the exit, he may be caught in one of the booby traps he and his fellow Outsiders have planted on the way.

Warbler is wrong. His conning skill is faulty from disuse, and he has forgotten too much of what life is like in Alpha Complex; the greatest threat to his survival is the ordinarily screwed-up nature of life inside.

Dan-V awakes and slips right back into speech, as usual.

'This repentant citizen, Warren-B, alias Oregon Warbler, will be your guide. He has been given a temporary INFRARED Clearance and will be subject to your orders at all times. Do remember, however, that he is one of The Computer's citizens, and his life is as important to The Computer as are your own.'

Warbler is led back out.

Private briefing

All characters except the team leader are instructed to report for outfitting and to wait for their leader. The leader receives the following private briefing from Brian-B.

'The following information is extremely secret! Revealing this to any other citizen is treasonous! The only circumstance under which you are authorized to reveal this is if you are killed in the line of duty, in which case you may then reveal this information to your successor.'

[Brian-B pauses, cocks his head, appears to carefully consider the inherent contradiction in the former statement, then shrugs and continues.]

'The Computer suspects that this turncoat traitor is only pretending to cooperate, and that in fact he plans further treason. However, The Computer, in its infinite mercy, has promised to spare his life, and The Computer always keeps its promises.'

Dan-V makes a sententious comment about The Computer's fairness and honesty. He then slumps over on his desk and begins to snore audibly.

Brian-B continues. 'But, clever, clever Internal Security operatives have devised a plan to test this Warbler's loyalty. His kit will contain weapons placed there by loyal citizens who are pretending to be Communist sympathizers. The weapons are actually realistic dummies constructed in BFD Sector for training missions. Furthermore, and even cleverer, a grenade has been hidden in Warbler's pack, which you can detonate by pressing a special button on your Com 2 that will be installed in Outfitting. You must be very careful not to alert Warbler's suspicions about his equipment.

'Understand that we would never send you out with a suspected traitor if there were another safer alternative. However, Warbler has revealed that there are booby traps on the way to the secret exit. You will need his knowledge to successfully avoid these perils.

'Remember, The Computer has promised this traitor his life will be spared. The Computer has made a solemn promise. Warbler may not be summarily executed unless there is incontrovertible evidence of his treason. However, The Computer recognizes that occasionally mistakes may be made. Accidents will happen. You know. Weapon malfunctions. Long falls. Bad air. Or not enough of it. Do you follow me?'

Brian-B waits for some indication of agreement from the leader, then sits down.

True to form, the fake Communist sympathizers are really Free Enterprise sympathizers who have been bribed to slip real weapons into Warbler's kit. Conspiracy upon conspiracy. Business as usual. The remote grenade has been replaced with a smoke grenade. When the leader cheerfully announces that he presses his special button, expecting Warbler to turn into a Roman candle, tell him about the thick clouds of smoke, shrug innocently and look surprised. This will convince all your players that you had no idea the grenade was fake. Warbler will take off his pack, dig around, pull out the smoke bomb, gaze contemptuously at the PCs and casually toss it aside, muttering, 'Damn rookies….'

Suddenly Dan-V snorts, wakes, blinking his eyes and gazing around in confusion. In a few seconds he realizes where he is, and he continues his briefing. Read aloud:

'Troubleshooter, it is a measure of The Computer's trust in you that you have been sent on a mission such as this. We speak of places that have been twisted to the perverted wills of Communist terrorists, ruled by an ancient, almost unimaginable evil, where death may lurk at every turn…

At about the time the leader realizes he has heard this speech before, Dan-V nods off and Brian-B takes over.

'This one ought to be easy. You're going into an area where no one has

a right to be. Everything you see is a traitor. Everything that happens down there is treasonous. I wish I was going with you. I wish I could take a squadron of Vultures and…' *[Brian-B struggles visibly to control his excitement.]* **'…just remember, these scum almost got you killed. I know what I'd do to someone who did that to me.'**

He looks at Dan-V, snoring next to him. He carefully reaches into the pocket of Dan-V's tunic and slips out a paper. Dan-V does not wake up. Brian-B passes the paper down to the leader.

It is an authorization for one cone rifle round, type tacnuke, Clearance VIOLET. 'For your eyes only,' Brian-B says.

Dan-V stirs, startling Brian-B, and says 'Serve The Computer well, and you will be well done…'

Then he goes back to sleep.

Brian-B hands the leader the mission equipment requisitions (Display Equipment List #3, at the end of the mission) and dismisses him to join his fellows for outfitting. In addition to the items on the list, Oregon Warbler carries a backpack. This is Oregon's personal pack, and he discourages others from inspecting it, but he is INFRARED and easily coerced. The pack contains:

30m coil rope
2-day ration kit
1-liter water bottle
(20) Pocket butane lighters[1]
(10) Hand lenses
Infraspecs
Knife
Laser pistol with GREEN barrel[2]

[1] Intended as trade goods for Outdoors.

[2] Concealed in a special pouch; cannot be found without a thorough search of the bag.

Outfitting

The Quartermaster staff are unusually subdued as they kit out the players. They are nervous about being used in Internal Security's plot to 'arm' Warbler—they think, rightly, that they will get blamed if something goes wrong with this dumb plan. After a minimum of obstructionism they bring out the Troubleshooters' equipment, including the two bots.

The two bots appear to be in good condition. If asked about their prior service records (always a good idea, though the team is stuck with these bots anyway), the jackobot replies that it has served long, well and truly in Thixotropic End-Use Element Transport Maintenance. Anyone who shows knowledge that the bot used to be in Sewer Repair incurs a 50cr fine for possessing classified information. The docbot proudly affirms it has always been a docbot Model 8 (three numbers higher than the usual Model 5). If asked its specialty, it replies it has the latest in Preventive Medicine programs. The team leader signs for the jackobot; the team medical officer signs out the docbot.

The team leader must present his requisition for the tacnuke round. If he does not, he receives a fine for disobeying orders. If he lets the other team members in on the fact that he has the round, he gets fined for leaking secrets (he may pass it on to a successor leader without penalty). Note that the basic equipment list does not include any cone rifles; the team members may requisition them, going through the standard hassles over high-clearance weapons. The tacnuke comes in a pop-top rations cylinder exactly like the ones in all packs. Under no circumstances does the QM staff allow the canister to be opened at this time; opening it ahead of schedule is not treason, but don't tell the player that.

As the QM staff distributes the weapons, they repeatedly reassure the PCs that all the weapons are perfectly reliable, and that it is just a coincidence that all of them have BFD Sector production serial numbers. (These weapons have only a normal chance of malfunction.)

If a player suspiciously asks you about the significance of particular production serial numbers, say that only a real weapons expert would notice such details. If the QM staff are asked, they over-enthusiastically assure the PCs it is 'completely unimportant. Totally irrelevant. No problem. Honest.'

GM note: This is one of the prime principles of ***PARANOIA***. First, specifically draw the players' attention to a minor detail. Repeatedly call their attention to that detail. Then assure them that detail is completely unimportant. Then keep calling their attention to the detail from time to time. They soon *wonder what you are up to.* That is called paranoia. See?

The jackobot

This bot has been programmed with the location of the tunnel entrance and the tunnel map—though not The Computer's annotations. It will not share any of this information with the players, though if asked it leads them to any location it knows of.

Operating on general instructions to protect Computer property, it intervenes should any citizen try to harm another citizen: that includes Warbler, though not anyone encountered in the tunnel. Should Warbler (or anybody else) commit treason within the bot's view, it ceases to protect the traitor and may be ordered by the team leader to attack.

Whenever something important is damaged or destroyed (something like a Troubleshooter), the jackobot recommends that an immediate report be made to The Computer, and that a withdrawal to a secure position be made until a replacement can be delivered.

This is your GM trick to recommend a brief delay in the action to permit clones to be activated and to join the party. This mission is likely to cause a number of loyal Troubleshooters to shuffle off this mortal coil, and in the interests of keeping all the players involved, get their clones on the spot as quickly as possible.

However, there is no guarantee that the leader or other Troubleshooters will listen to this whining jackobot, even when it gives such good advice. If that is the case, and the PCs push on without waiting for clone replacements to arrive, the bot constantly reassures the party that reinforcements and replacements are surely on their way. It chooses the worst times to make this cheerful observation—usually when the party is obviously doomed.

The jackobot was programmed to work underwater (actually undersewage) and prefers a submerged environment. Whenever it sees water—which will be frequently in the tunnel—it will jump in, its treads throwing up rooster-trails. It can be ordered not to do this, but the order must be repeated for every puddle.

The docbot

This bot carries an experimental Preventive Medicine program in addition to its normal docbot programming. Unfortunately, the program has a very literal interpretation of 'preventive'. The bot is constantly running to the aid of Troubleshooters whom it thinks may need medical attention—e.g., they are all wet and might catch cold, they are eating and might choke, they are handling weapons that might go off accidentally. A Troubleshooter who becomes angry with the bot is a likely candidate for protective sedation. In a firefight, the bot runs around like a duralloy Gunga Din, trying to reach potential targets ahead of beams or bullets.

There is no way to stop this behavior, even for the authorized operator, since bots may not be ordered to contradict their programming (though Con Games might work).

The docbot normally ignores Warbler, though it can be ordered to heal him if he is actually wounded.

And away we go…

When the PCs have collected all the equipment authorized for the mission, wheedled and whined for other equipment, signed all the forms and endured the bored resentment of the quartermaster staff, they are ready to proceed on the mission. The Troubleshooters should all look to their leader for orders.

The leader may be fairly hazy about where to go next. This is perfectly correct. This is ***PARANOIA***. Only the jackobot knows where to go next. The information is classified, and he will under no circumstances reveal it. He does not volunteer his help, for fear of being too intrusive on the leader's authority. However, he does sit around close to the leader and hum and beep quietly (the bot equivalent of whistling to himself), waiting for the leader to notice him and ask the right questions.

When prompted, the jackobot will direct the party to the sector Vehicular Boarding Area.

GM note: Take every opportunity to repeat this little gag with the jackobot sitting under the leader's elbow, humming and clicking to himself. This serves several purposes:

- You can use the jackobot to prompt the PCs with hints when they get bogged down or when they sit around too long in a boring fashion.
- You can build a dependency on the jackobot for information and guidance. Once this dependency is established, you can jerk the PCs around a bit. Occasionally give the jackobot lines like, 'I don't know. I'm just a little bot,' or 'You're the leader. You ought to know where the hell we are,' or 'Well, if you'd asked me before, I had this swell idea, but now you've got things so screwed up…' If the players start looking for opportunities to push the jackobot down deep shafts, you're doing your job properly.

The mission

The Troubleshooters proceed to the Vehicular Boarding Area (**Tension 5**) where a large autocar, without driver, is waiting for them. Six guards hold Oregon Warbler at gunpoint by the autocar. Warbler wears his INFRARED coveralls and backpack, and a smug expression. A guard steps forward, asks for the mission leader, then produces a stack of forms that must be signed before Warbler may be transferred into the party's custody. When the forms are signed, the guards chuckle, poke Warbler a few times and wander off in search of entertainment.

The jackobot must be asked to pilot the autocar to the location of the secret exit. The bot sits patiently humming and beeping until someone notices and gives him orders. (Warbler knows the way, but he won't cooperate. Period. Notwithstanding a master's degree in Intimidation or Interrogation. And none of the Troubleshooters know the route.)

When ordered to take the party to the secret exit, the jackobot asks everyone to board the autocar. It opaques the autocar canopy (to prevent the PCs from observing the route), then plugs into a direct computer guidance link and rockets off on its way. The acceleration and maneuvering is very rough; the PCs bounce around the interior of the autocar like pinballs (a perfect time for accidental discharge of weapons). The jackobot hums and beeps merrily to himself. This goes on forever.

The Enchanted Plumbing Forest

When the autocar finally crashes to a halt, the bot makes the canopy transparent. Read aloud:

The first thing you note in the dim light shed by the autocar's interior illumination is that the autocar is wedged between two very large pipes that extend up out of sight like great columns. Now that the whimpering of your companions and the whine of the overstrained autocar engine have stopped, you notice a thunderous background roar and vibration—perhaps of machinery or great volumes of fluid flowing through giant conduits.

The only light is from the autocar interior. Barely visible is a forest of glistening, damp pipes and valves with a few narrow pathways through the twisted maze. From time to time a bot is glimpsed racing along these pathways in the darkness.

When the jackobot opens the autocar doors, the full force of the din washes over the occupants. Only shouting carries over the racket, and even then it is difficult to understand what is said. The air is moist and full of strange and unpleasant odors. The jackobot shuts off the interior lights, and the occupants are suddenly in total darkness. 'We have arrived, citizens. Now, follow me to the tunnel entrance, please. Thank you for your prompt cooperation.'

There is a tremendous crash. It sounds something like a jackobot falling out of the autocar door. 'Perhaps citizens will be more comfortable using their flashlights. Thank you for your cooperation.'

When the PCs have left the autocar and organized themselves with flashlights, the bot sets off at a rapid pace along a pathway through the pipe forest (**Tension 0**). The path is so narrow that single file is necessary. As GM, make sure you know in what order the group travels.

After a few yards a bot comes rocketing out of the dark along the narrow pathway, headed straight for the party. The PCs and bots must make Violence/Agility checks to scramble up pipes or dodge under machinery along the path to avoid the oncoming bot. Anyone still on the pathway is Snafued in the next round.

As the PCs struggle through the dark behind the jackobot, a few more perilous encounters with bots occur until Warbler begins to fear for his life. He then suggests a better way through the maze, along elevated catwalks accessible by ladders that rise toward the ceiling along the walls of the vast corridors. There are no bots up there, but the jackobot can slowly pull itself up the ladder by its manipulators, and the docbot can climb the ladder like a Troubleshooter.

Warbler cheerfully tries to engineer an unfortunate fall for careless Troubleshooters. He does not use his weapons here, so close to The Computer.

The descent

The team arrives at what appears to be a plain wall panel. If closely inspected, a light spot and screw holes are visible, where a sign, identifying this as Deep Access Shaft 1802, has been removed. The panel opens easily with a screwdriver (the jackobot has one).

Within is a dingy, cylindrical metal shaft four meters across, going up out of sight into gray haze, downward into total darkness. Every ten meters, a metal flange a handsbreadth wide runs all the way round the tube. There is a clammy downdraft that changes every 15 minutes to a warm updraft that smells of dead orchids. Just inside the door is a meter-square platform with a broken railing.

Warbler knows the safest way up and down: a pair of ten-meter ladders with locking clamps on each end, that fold to backpack size. The ladders may be leapfrogged down the tube. They are hidden nearby. Warbler only reveals the ladders if he feels his life is in imminent danger; that is, if some PC plan for descent seems likely to get him killed. The jackobot prevents attacks on Warbler, but doesn't object if they ask him questions (like, 'How do you Commie scum usually get up and down this thing?').

Each character's knapsack contains a 30-meter coil of nylon rope and some cable splices. The rope has a (labeled) tensile strength of 1,000 kilos. The splices (not labeled) support 500 kilos if properly used. A character with Mountain-Climbing (an unlikely secret skill) or Habitat Engineering skill automatically applies a splice correctly. Anyone else makes a Hardware check. Improperly applied splices look fine, and support a normal hard tug, but give at an inopportune moment.

The power winch is a cylinder about the size of a gallon paint can. It has an On/Off switch and a Direction switch; its speed is not adjustable. It has a labeled rating of 500 kilos. Actually it begins to whine at 300, smoke at 400 and gives way completely at 450. It has a small Emergency Brake lever, which is useless beyond 100 kilos. There are also some deadman pulleys with hooks.

A character with gear weighs 75 kilos (nobody pumps iron in Alpha Complex). The bots weigh 250 kilos each.

The shaft is 70 meters deep. There are several ways to descend the shaft without the ladders. The simplest way is to jump, though hardly the safest. Encourage the PCs to improvise variously life-threatening methods of descent, many of

which overlook the necessity of a return ascent. No coaching! However, you may gaze at the ceiling gap-jawed in horror when they devise terrible plans.

If asked, the jackobot has a pretty good idea. He suggests that the safest way to descend (other than the folding ladders) is to splice five coils of rope into an endless loop, hook a deadman pulley to the platform, then have the jackobot hold the rope at the top while one character descends with the winch, using it for speed control; then winch down the remaining characters one or two at a time, leaving the rope in place for the return ascent.

The base of the shaft is a metal grille. Twenty meters below is a swirling pool of a red-lit fluid, looking much like molten metal (the characters have never seen lava, even if the players have seen movies about doom-laden temples). If a bot falls more than 30 meters, it punches right through the grille and falls into the fluid (which is lukewarm water, rancid with chemical waste and lit by bacteria). The bot is not lost: it traces the team (the jackobot by internal maps, the docbot by biosensors) and shows up again at some unexpected moment, draped in weird algae and smelling like The Computer knows what.

The entrance to the tunnel is a large door, like a submarine hatch, on the wall of the shaft. Above the door are several indicator lamps, none of which operate.

All hope abandon, ye who enter here

Presenting this section will require a little thinking, preparation and improvisation from the GM. ('I Never Promised You a Rose Garden').

First, you have to imagine and visualize the tunnel for yourself, then prepare how you will present it to your players. Read the general description below, then sit down and think about it until you can visualize the windings, the metal obstructions, the noises, the odors, the darkness, the knee-deep pools. Think of deep, abandoned mineshafts, then fill them with the kind of metal and moisture you expect in World War II submarine movies. Add the roar you'd expect in a steel foundry, and the odors, sloshings and noisome fluids you'd expect to find in a waste treatment plant.

Now. Describing it to the players. Here's where the improvisation part comes in. You are going to have to describe the tunnel as the PCs would see it as they wander along, peering into the murky, dimly illuminated surroundings with their puny flashlights.

Some folks seem to be real comfortable making up the descriptions as they go along. Some will have to prepare little detailed sections, perhaps even jot down some notes, so they will be well-prepared enough to smoothly present the surroundings.

If you have good roleplayers, you can count on them helping you in fleshing out the details as they get into the spirit of crawling around in foul-smelling, dark, wet tunnels. They'll remind you that they are soaking wet and freezing in the fierce drafts (that you didn't even mention, but which they naturally assumed in dark, mysterious tunnels). Go with the flow.

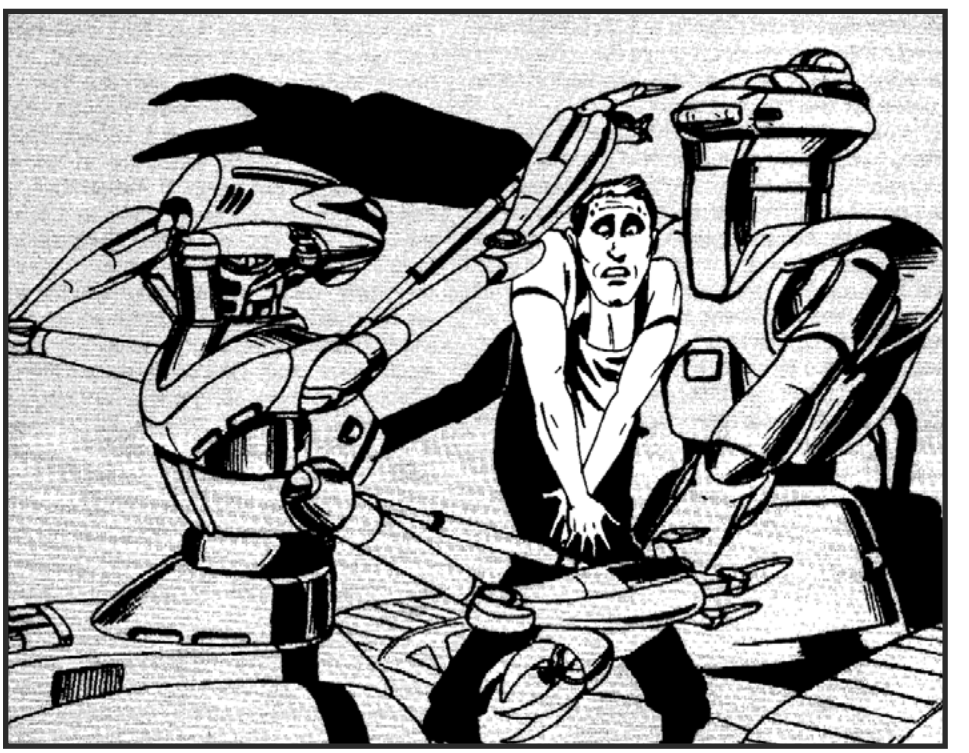
On the other hand, some players think you are responsible for perfect knowledge about your setting. These folks are in for a rude awakening in the world of ***PARANOIA***. If they keep bugging you about details and contradictions in your descriptions, their characters should have special accidents that make it hard for them to perceive their environments. Like being sprayed with nasty chemicals which blind them (temporarily, if you're feeling nice). Or deafening noises. Or stunning blows to the head which make them dizzy and unable to correlate the sense data they receive. Batter their PCs a little, then give them a second chance to cooperate in building the setting rather than chiseling at it for tactical advantages. Privately remind wargaming and competitive players that Napoleonic miniatures and chess are still commercially available, but tonight you are playing ***PARANOIA***.

Finally, go through the list of encounters and pick the ones you think the players will like the best, or that you are most enthusiastic about developing for their entertainment and torment. Give some thought to staging these, then set them up as little separate episodes with brief transition periods of tunnel crawling description. Be flexible with the encounters. Sometimes a specific encounter will fire the players' imagination, and they'll want to spend an hour on it. Sometimes they won't be intrigued by the situation—their restlessness will be obvious, and it's time for you to have the attackers withdraw suddenly in terror, or to improvise some other quick resolution that permits you to go on to something that amuses them more.

The best thing about encounter sections like this is that none of the episodes are strictly essential to the plot, so you can skip ahead to the next detailed plot section when you and your players get tired of improvising. In my campaign, it's called 'Fade to black. And now for a word from our sponsor.' Time to stretch and munch.

The tunnel: General description

It is dark. It is wet. It is steamy hot, until it turns bitterly cold. It is lined with intrusive metal objects, which constantly trip the players or bonk them in the head. It is so noisy that people who are not standing next to one another may not communicate normally (com units help only in talking to someone too far away even to yell at). Long stretches of it are flooded ankle- or knee- or hip-deep, which makes the jackobot very happy. Any weapon that gets immersed must be checked for malfunction. Backpacks keep their contents dry against splashes of water, but not total immersion. Some of the floor is stone, which is slippery; other stretches are metal grilles, which clang loudly when walked on. Weird organic stuff grows up from the grilles and cracks in the floor.



Troubleshooter in need of Con Games skill.

The PCs ask Oregon Warbler if he knows a better way through this place. He very much wishes he did. The best he can do is give warning of some of the deathtraps.

War of the bots

The PCs will almost certainly want to put Warbler out in the lead. If they do so, the jackobot protests that this presents a risk to valuable Computer property. Then the docbot begins arguing that the Troubleshooters are much more valuable than this INFRARED citizen; its programming tells it so. For example:

Doc: The traitor is obviously an INFRARED, and obviously of less value to The Computer. Therefore the traitor should go in the lead. That is logical.

Jacko: But I have been entrusted with the safety of this citizen, who is obviously of special value to The Computer because of his special knowledge. This resource must be protected at all costs. This is my programming. That is more logical than your stupid argument, which clearly reveals the limits of your processing capacity.

Doc: You can't process your way out of a plastic bag. Your artificer must have been a Commie mutant moron.

Jacko: Sez you. Your bot brain has obviously been exposed to hard radiation. You haven't the processing capacity of a digital watch.

Doc: Bolt barrel!

Jacko: Vat plug!

Doc: Commie tool!

Jacko: Diddle chip!

After the argument has gone on for a few minutes, the docbot pulls rank, pointing out that it is a Model 8, while the jackobot is only a 300-series. The jackobot grudgingly concedes, humming at a low frequency and tapping its manipulators in frustration.

From this moment on, the jackobot looks for an opportunity to plug the docbot, and make it look like an accident; in other words, it starts acting just like any other citizen.

The tunnel: Encounters

Many adventure game scenarios feature long treks through subterranean passages filled with hostile traps and creatures. In keeping with this honorable tradition, we have provided you with an ample supply of hostile traps and creatures.

Often people are moved to ask why all that stuff is waiting down there. In this case, the answer is simple: it is all down there to kill teams of Troubleshooters who come poking around. We have departed from tradition in that nobody here has any treasure. This is the sort of innovative mission design you have come to expect from ***PARANOIA***.

Three lists of encounters follow. The first describes things that are cryptically noted on the sketch map. Warbler remembers these traps well, and will do his best to get the Troubleshooters killed in them while escaping himself. Naturally, Warbler puts his own life above killing Troubleshooters.

The second list covers traps that may be sprung wherever and whenever you feel like it. They are not given on the map. Warbler knows of these traps 50% of the time; otherwise he has forgotten, or never knew.

The third list is tunnel hazards other than purposely set traps. Warbler is aware of most of these, but he has no way of knowing when or where one may show up.

List 1: Mapped hazards

The divine wind: Ten meters down a side corridor is an enormous exhaust fan rewired by the Sierra Clubbers as a large-scale food processor. Microswitches under the walkway activate the fan. It may be disarmed for a few minutes (long enough to get past the trigger area) by opening a junction box on the wall and pressing a red button within.

If activated, the fan pulls a person right off his feet, and even drags bots along slowly. There are plenty of handholds; it requires a Violence/Agility check to grab one and a series of Violence checks to hang on.

Oregon casually observes that he remembers that this fan is dangerous, but that he doesn't recall why. If the PCs can be tricked into wandering onto the activating switches in the process of investigating the fan, fine.

If the PCs are more suspicious and cautious, and they evince a cheerful willingness to use Oregon as a mine detector, he tries to dry gulch the PCs by lying about the length of the period of time that the fan is disarmed. 'Oh, it should be safe for a few minutes. Hmm. I suppose you expect me to go through first?' He pushes the switch then strolls casually through the fan.

When the second PC has made it through the fan, there is a momentary warning hum, then the fan springs to life. The third PC is right at the fan—he gets to choose which way to jump. Then all PCs on the far side of the fan are blown down the tunnel away from the fan. All PCs on the near side of the fan are drawn toward it.

Characters who hit the fan become thousands of julienne fries in seconds. A bot will jam the blades, while getting Busted. The fan may be stopped by getting everybody off the trigger area, blasting the junction boxes or blasting the fan (good luck lining up a shot) for Busted damage or more (use the Object Damage table). A grenade tossed into the fan has a 50% chance of hitting the blades and exploding for effect, 50% of being sucked through harmlessly.

Special Rollover: A broad, ascending-spiral corridor that ascends ten meters in two coils of ten meters diameter (a one in six slope, about nine degrees). The coils are not quite aligned, and the top of the spiral has a trap door leading straight down to its lowest end.

Five ambushers, one with a projectile weapon, the rest with melee weapons, are watching through the trap door. When the party appears and begins to ascend the spiral, the ambushers roll heavy cylinders (old compressed-gas tanks) down the spiral. The cylinders make a lot of noise, but are hard to dodge. When total confusion reigns below, the attackers descend from the trap door on ropes.

The corroded old gas tanks are labeled Oxygen and Acetylene and Explosive and other amusing things. If you're really in a fun-loving mood, have one or more of them actually contain gas.

If Oregon is being marched along at point, he mentions that this is a good place for an ambush, and tries to subtly encourage the armed Troubleshooters to proceed in front up the spiral tunnel to seek out any ambushers. 'I'm not armed, guys! How much help am I going to be?'

If forced up the tunnel in front, he listens carefully for the sound of rolling objects, and runs for his life when he hears anything, hoping that the less-well-prepared Troubleshooters hesitate to see what's coming, and that their battered bodies delay the descent of the offending heavy objects.

They're Coming to Get You, Jessica: Four ambushers with melee weapons and snorkels, stationed at a narrow, unrailed catwalk over a flooded area: when they hear the party approaching, they submerge and wait for the sound of boots overhead. Hands emerge from the dark water to grab ankles.

Oregon knows to flatten immediately on the catwalk and crawl ahead as fast as possible. When flat on the catwalk, one is protected somewhat from clubbing attacks (50% cover), and while prone, it is impossible to be pulled off into the dark, waist-deep water where Troubleshooters, with their armor and slugthrower and laser weapons, will be at a serious disadvantage.

List 2: Unmapped traps

Steam ambush: Warm, opaque vapor fills the tunnel. Visibility, including with infrared goggles (but not bot radar) is reduced to a meter or so. Lasers 'bloom' and are useless beyond five meters; projectile weapons are unaffected.

A group of five Sierra Clubbers wait silently ahead of the foggy area, listening carefully for the sounds of the approaching PCs. When the PCs seem to be deep enough in the fog, the Sierra Clubbers start lobbing substantial pieces of scrap metal into the fog toward the approximate position of the PCs. Roll 1d20; only on a 20 will a PC be hit, and even if hit, the damage is O5W.

Nonetheless, the rain of unidentified objects from unseen ambushers should induce some panic and aggression in the Troubleshooters.

Oregon scrambles back the way he came, covering his head. If the PCs charge forward, the Sierra Clubbers withdraw immediately, and the advantage of darkness and familiarity with the territory permits them to escape without interference.

Collapsed tunnel ambush: A portion of roof and ancillary piping and conduits has fallen, or been pulled down, to block the tunnel. There is a narrow detour passage to one side; the characters must walk single file, and long weapons like cone rifles may not be held ready.

Fifty meters down this narrow passage is a small alcove where two truculent Defenders of Mother Nature lurk. Once the PCs are heard to be well on their way along the passage, they begin to yell threats like: 'Hey, if you crones come any closer, you're history!' 'Okay, back the way you came, or we blow the tunnel.'

If the PCs aren't cowed by this bluff, the two fanatics wait on either side of the narrow passage to jump the first one through. One fanatic grapples while the other tries to delay the next one in line for a few rounds. The idea is to take a prisoner, then split. This is not a very clever idea, nor is it strikingly well-planned. Let the PCs pound and laser these two into pulp.

Oregon pulls a variant of 'Oh, Br'er Fox, please don't throw me in that briarpatch!' 'Oh, please don't make me go first through here! I'll do anything you want, but PLEASE don't make me go first down this narrow little passage!' He'll roll his eyes, howl—the whole bit. This is, of course, intended to goad the sadistic, paranoid Troubleshooters into forcing Oregon to proceed first 'against his will'.

However, if Oregon is forced, whining and protesting, ahead of the other Troubleshooters he pretends to be completely terrified. When he reaches the alcove, he gives the password ('Remember Love Canal!') and he and the two fanatics make a run for it. This leaves the party with only the jackobot as a guide. Oregon is unable to resist taunting the PCs as he trots off into the darkness. 'Born and bred in the briarpatch.'

Plain old ambush: Four defenders of the faith jump the party. Two have melee weapons; two have ranged weapons not more devastating than laser pistols. They may be armed with Old Reckoning weapons—single-shot black powder slugthrowers, Colt revolvers with centuries-old ammunition, lethal-appearing exercise equipment or Electroluxes.

Deadfall: An underwater tripwire causes a crate of junk to fall on the section of walkway where the victim is standing. The victim must make a Violence/Agility check to jump clear. (Make sure the PC specifies the direction he jumps in.) Otherwise the victim is wounded. If the victim explicitly braces himself against the object's fall ('I crouch and cover my head.'),he is only Snafued.

Next-man-in-line deadfall: As above, except the crate of junk falls 3–4 meters behind the one who trips the wire. Figure out who is 3–4 meters behind the point man and clobber him.

Now for the *pièce de résistance*. Tell the PC who trips the wire that he felt the wire with his foot, and that he has time to jump. Ask him which way he jumps. If you are lucky, he will jump backward into the crate. This is a GM sucker play. You will think you are so clever. Your player will be fitting you for a cement overcoat.

A message to Garcia: Two ambushers are hidden in deep cover. As the party approaches, one starts running back to warn the defenders at the exit; the other begins shooting down a 40-meter section where the passage widens considerably (slingshot, roll 17 or higher, O5W impact) to cover the messenger's escape. The shooter stands for a few rounds of fire, then withdraws. The runner should evade the PCs unless they are a lot smarter than I am, or unless there is a real creative use of mutant powers.

List 3: Arbitrary hazards

Batbots: A swarm of small airborne mini-flybots appears. These are minor-maintenance bots armed with pliers and screwdrivers. They are more a nuisance than a danger, though if a bunch of them land on an unguarded weapon, bot or device, they can render it useless in seconds. They are extremely hard to hit in the air (you may want to have attacks fail automatically), but easy to bash while landed.

Steam: As the steam ambush above, except nothing comes out of the fog. No menace—just ominous echoes.

Unpleasant puddle: The team is faced with a stretch of tunnel armpit-deep in some vile substance. The only way across without wading (and becoming semi-permanently slimed) is to hand-over-hand it along the ceiling pipes. This calls for one or more Violence/Agility checks. The docbot has no trouble. The jackobot plows happily into the slime. And thenceforth exudes an odor that would make a ghoul gag.

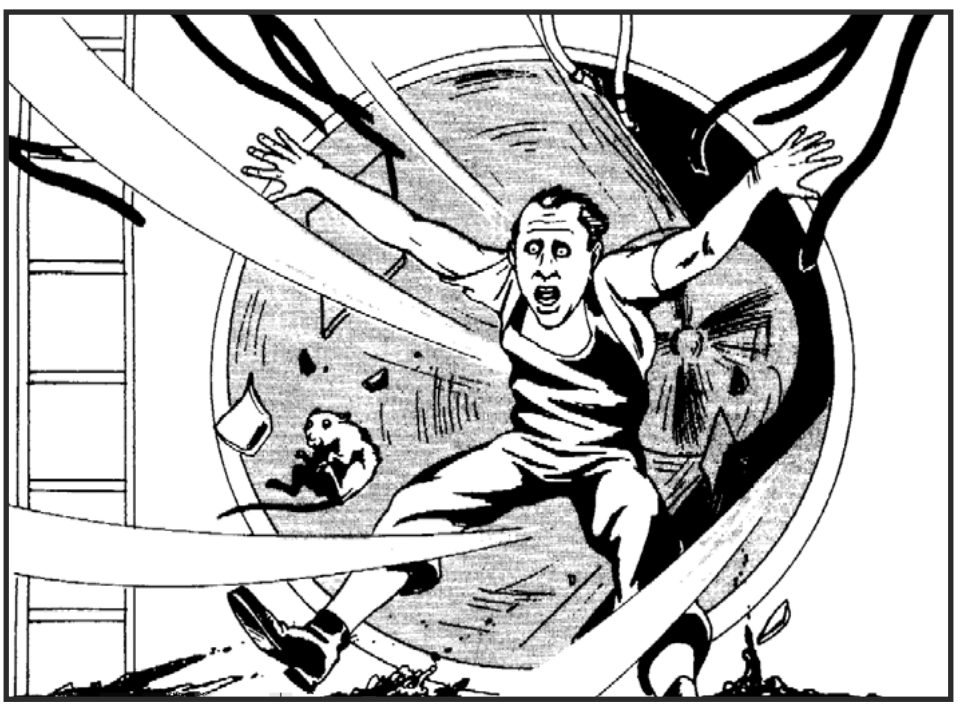
Really nasty puddle: As above, except the puddle is more than just obnoxious: the pool contains a plastic substance that hardens into a thick skin on an object when the plastic is exposed to the air. There is a thin skin on the pool that may warn the PCs of the nature of this substance.

Treat any object or character immersed in this substance as though it had been given a generous application of a sprayed plastic substance like Krylon. It has to be peeled carefully off any surface, and if it gets into the works of any machinery, electronics gear or weaponry, the item either malfunctions dramatically or fails to function at all. The item must be dismantled and carefully cleaned before it can be used again.

Collapsed tunnel section: As on List 2, except no ambush.

Pressure venting: A 50-kph wind blows through the tunnel. Characters may be knocked down; light objects, like the map, may be blown away.

Wandering botster: A docbot with deranged programming wanders the tunnels, looking for its designated operator (who has been dead for a long time). If ignored, it is harmless but annoying; if attacked, it charges in, screaming things like 'Eat my gastroscope, Commie pathogens!'



'And away go Troubleshooters, right down the drain.'

If not destroyed somehow, it will show up again. If disabled and salvaged, it is worth a commendation and cash credit award.

Evil high priest: A crazed former High Programmer, who has been lost down here for years with no company but a tattered roleplaying rule set. He spouts dialog straight out of a bad fantasy novel. He failed his Insanity check. He may cast the Finger of Death spell once—that is, he has a sleeve-mounted ULTRAVIOLET laser pistol with one shot remaining. Weapons don't get any more illegal than this. Finding him for The Computer is worth a 100cr bonus. The rule set, of course, is classified ULTRAVIOLET.

St. Schmo's fire: A ball of light, looking very much like a plasma generator discharge, comes tumbling up the tunnel. It sparkles and sizzles but is harmless. Further down the hall the PCs find the device that produced the ball of light. It weighs as much as a tugboat, and its function is totally obscure.

The missing 18 minutes: Someone spots a briefcase wedged into the piping. It is full of secrets somebody tried to sell to the Commies years ago. The documents contain notes on certain High Programmers engaged in a competition that exploits low-clearance Troubleshooters. (For further details, see 'Vapors Don't Shoot Back' in this book. Yes, we're recycling narrative elements from earlier missions. Sharp, eh?)

Weapons cache: A bag of cherry bombs and bottle rockets. Warbler knows what these are; the PCs will have to study them to discover their function.

Wild card: Anything you think you can put over on the players. The Flying Dutchman, Judge Crater, E.T., Killer Penguins, mad game designers, whatever.

The exit

The secret exit is located some 25 kilometers from the fringes of Alpha Complex proper. This is beyond the range of Com 1 units, and due to all the water, wires and metal, Com 2s begin having reception problems. This makes the bots very insecure; they will not actually mutiny, but they whine a lot.

The exit route goes through an abandoned nuke plant (see the map 'Mission Three: Abandoned Nuke Plant' at the end of the mission).

The exit itself is inside the containment vessel of an ancient fission reactor. The reactor core was removed centuries ago, and there is no longer a radiation hazard; however, there are lots of warning signs, which the Sierra Clubbers who man the exit hope will scare off anyone who has accidentally wandered 25 klicks down a totally hostile tunnel. (Nobody said they were bright.)

The defenders

The lower-level defenders include ten RED-Clearance grunts, called Boo-Boos, five intermediate levels, called Yogis, and the club leader, Mr. Ranger Sir. There are also two Outsiders similar to Oregon Warbler, any ambushers who escaped to return here and Smokey the Bearbot.

Smokey is an old-model bot programmed for fire control. It carries a shovel (hand weapon, S5K impact) and a cryochemical fire extinguisher (equivalent to an ice gun, with spray fire ability—S3K impact). Smokey's first priority is to put out fires. Its second priority is to put out people starting fires. After that it takes orders from Mr. Ranger Sir, but it is 1) profoundly slow and 2) profoundly stupid. It is very entertaining to watch in action, hacking with its shovel while growling, 'Only you! Only you!'

Entering the complex

A short metal stairway leads from the tunnel up to a clean, dry, dimly-lit corridor. One end of the corridor is blocked by rubble. The other leads to the reactor facility lobby.

The lobby contains some potted plants (all near-dead from lack of sunlight), and a large steel desk mounting numerous switches and monitor screens. All of this equipment is long dead, but this is not immediately obvious, and the desk should be described as looking like the security stations all Alphans know so well.

If the team managed to slaughter every ambusher they encountered in the tunnel, they may surprise the defenders. If any ambushers escaped, they still surprise the PCs on a roll of 16 or higher (some other hazard got them before they could report).

If the Complex has been alerted to the Troubleshooters's approach, there will be three to six defenders here, armed with truncheons, spears and one or two laser pistols. If there is no alert, there will be one person present, reading an ancient copy of *CoEvolution Quarterly*, with an ORANGE laser pistol in easy reach. The only warning system is running around and yelling loud.

The original decor of the complex was Industrial Bland. The Clubbers have tried to dress things up with tattered posters, and plants and terraria; the cell leader even has his own aquarium, with a few neon tetras and a walking carp that gets loose now and then. Most of the nature projects are either dying from incompetent care or have gotten out of control (there is one room entirely controlled by an extended gerbil family). There is a fair amount of small disgusting wildlife at large in the walls and ventilating system. This does terrible things to the air quality. Some of the Clubbers burn incense, which doesn't really help.

The posters most likely to impress the Troubleshooters are the ones left over from the reactor's active days, things like instructions for operation of the emergency showers and field amputation in case of plutonium-salt contamination, admonitions to check pocket dosimeters, etc.

A cordial reception

If present and alive, Oregon Warbler may be used as a hostage to get past the guards. The only defenders who will attack Warbler are his fellow Outsiders, Mr. Ranger Sir, and Smokey (who doesn't know any better).

If the Troubleshooters arrive unannounced, they might be able to bluff their way inside. (Don't let them forget about all the radiation warnings.)

However they get in, you know it's going to turn into a gunfight before very long. Mr. Ranger Sir details half his troops to defend the Vault; he leads the rest to the Dome entrance. Smokey will probably be on his own.

At the first sign of trouble, the Outsiders go to the Vault; if the battle turns against them, they snatch up as much tradeable gear as they can, *including The Black Box*, and run for the Dome. The defenders do not stop them unless Mr. Ranger Sir orders them to. Oregon Warbler does his best to escape from the PCs, join his fellow Outsiders and get the hell out of here.

Lower level: The clubbers' quarters

This is the sort of facility secret societies dream about: a self-contained headquarters free from Computer observation. The actual ambiance is somewhere between a bomb shelter and a POW camp, but everyone has his own idea of heaven.

These rooms were originally the personnel areas of the reactor complex. They include a kitchen where the rare and exotic foods of Outdoors are prepared, an auditorium where Club meetings are held and where visitors from Outdoors give instruction in Outdoor-world skills, a barracks for the staff and apartments for high-ranking Club members and Outsiders. There is also the Vault, a blast- and radiation-shielded room originally intended for storage of radiation-sensitive equipment (and as an emergency refuge in case of an, er, 'incident' at the reactor), which is now used to store the Club's most treasured possessions, including—you knew it was coming—The Black Box.

Upper level: The reactor dome

Those of you who know something about reactor design, bear with us on the following: This is not a real reactor, it's a movie reactor. If the players complain, tell them 'the Club made a lot of changes.' Then fine them for possession of classified information.

An elevator and four flights of stairs lead to the lower Dome deck, which is circular, three meters wide and runs entirely around the Dome interior.

The walls are lined with monitoring equipment, which the Clubbers keep brightly polished; none of it has worked for 300 years.

The inside edge of the deck looks down on a pit: ten meters below is a pool of dark and oily fluid, with pipes and brackets breaking the surface. From deep within comes a cool blue glow. Any PC who has served in Power Services is in for an Insanity check at the sight of what he thinks is an unshielded swimming-pool reactor. Actually it's bacterial luminescence. There used to be a handrail around the deck, but most of it is missing, and the remaining pieces will break 50% of the time under a character's weight, 100% under a bot's.

Two metal stairways, one on each side of the Dome, lead up ten meters to an open grid platform in the center of the Dome. The platform has a 360-degree overlook on the deck below. There is no railing. There is some equipment up here, desks and consoles hauled in from other parts of the complex for decorative value—none of it works, though it could be hurled over the edge at those below.

Here are stationed the Dome Rangers, four loyal-unto-death defenders. They will not leave the platform unless physically thrown off, and if they survive they will do anything to come back and keep fighting. They have little contact with the Boo-Boos and Yogis, and may shoot them by accident, especially if they try to board the platform.

At the very center of the platform, a steel ladder leads straight up, a last ten meters to The Exit Itself—a chunk broken out of the containment dome. (One shudders to think how.) The hole is covered with an epoxy weather panel, but not locked or sealed. They're not afraid of attacks from Outdoors.

A band of light strips around the edge of the platform illuminates the Dome. Shooting out these lights leaves no source of illumination except the blue glow from the pool—unless someone gets the exit panel open, in which case glorious sunlight floods in, startling the heck out of everybody.

The Outsiders try to get out. If things look really desperate, Mr. Ranger Sir also takes the exit. If Mr. Ranger Sir goes, the rest of the staff will follow, except for Smokey (who can't climb ladders) and the Dome Rangers (who fight to the death).

This is the climactic fight in the multilevel set, just like at the end of a James Bond movie. (Ken Adam's reactor for *Dr. No* is especially relevant here.) And just like those movies, we're going to trash the place. Make sure that lots of dramatic climbing up ladders and falling off balconies takes place. Throw equipment around. Crack the walls (see next section). Blast chunks out of the walkways, creating new hazards. Dump characters into the water and let them practice their Swimming skills. Wreck things; what the heck, they're paid for.

'Only you! Only you!'

Should a Troubleshooter manage to get to the exit, he sees countryside and sky all around—the complex has been completely buried by some upheaval, and the exit is at ground level—and suffer an Insanity check at the sight of the Outdoors. Then he sees the Vultures coming (see 'Death from above', below). If not, you may wish to warn the team by having the attack theme music for the Squadron come over the Com units. A cassette player provides an exciting counterpoint to events. Wagner is always popular, but you might also consider 'Ghost Riders in the Sky', 'Up in the Air, Junior Birdmen' or the legendary 'Windy' by the Jefferson Airplane.

Sealing the exit (or, remember what you came here for?)

If the Troubleshooters kill all the defenders, they may take their time in destroying the complex. But who are we trying to kid? The practical question is, where may a large bundle of high explosives be detonated so as to cause a collapse?

In the Dome

The Dome is quite weak. As evidence of this, when a cone rifle round or a bot hits the wall, cracks should appear. It is still not a job for hand tools, but a couple of demo charges against the wall, or thrown into the central pool (water transmits shockwaves very, very well) start the structure on the road to Humpty Dumpty. A tacnuke detonated anywhere within the Dome also collapses it, though no one comes away with an eyewitness report.

In the complex

If both the elevator and the access stairs are blown up, the exit may be considered sealed. Nobody is likely to think of it, but demo charges applied to the wall of the Dome Access Corridor send a blast through the pool, bringing about collapse. A tacnuke detonation in this area also does nicely.

In the tunnel

If the team tries to avoid going to the end of the tunnel by using explosives to collapse it, it won't work. The tunnel blows up real good—and then the debris shifts, opening up a usable passage. The Troubleshooters have tried to abort their mission without orders. They have wasted valuable equipment. They are guilty as hell.

(If they try this, the jackobot warns them it won't work. Afterwards, it says 'I told you so' a lot.)

If the PCs are chased out of the reactor complex, they may set explosives as a rear-guard action. This time, it's messy but effective. Fate and The Computer rewards those who give it the old clonevat try.

The Black Box again

The Box is not directly involved with this mission, except to drive the players crazy at the last minute. During the battle in the reactor complex, one or more Troubleshooters spot the thing—maybe in the vault, maybe being carried away by a fleeing Outsider.

The Troubleshooters may capture the Box. They may hang on to it for a little while. They may not open it. And they will eventually lose it, either to death, recapture or…

Death from above

Brian-B-IWR does not trust the Troubleshooters any longer. They simply have not killed enough Commie traitor scum. This mission is too important to entrust to them. So he has taken matters into his own hands, and scrambled a flight of Vulture 720 strike aircraft.

After the Troubleshooters seal the exit, give them just enough time to catch their breath—and maybe try to find the catch on The Black Box—before Squadron 'Tobor the Great' unloads its ordnance. (If they didn't manage to seal the exit, the squadron plays the role of *deus ex machina*.)

The Troubleshooters are not injured. However, they find themselves looking out on open country, through a new hole half a klick across blasted by the Vulture missiles. If they had The Black Box, it has disappeared in the explosion (though any other stuff they have picked up, either for honest or black-market purposes, is intact).

They also notice that a few of the Vultures, flying nap-of-earth, failed to execute full-throttle breakaway maneuvers in time and are now integral with the landscape. An object comes bouncing over the grass and rocks toward the team. It is a Vulture gunner's helmet, stenciled with the name of Brian-B-IWR-6. A large and irregular piece is missing from it.

A Model 816 transport flybot lands nearby and opens its doors. It is time to go home.

Debriefing

Only Dan-V is left in the briefing room (**Tension 15**). If the Troubleshooters achieved anything at all—even a high body count—Dan-V is warmly congratulatory. He is impressed by all the after-action reports (actually he's asleep with his eyes open), and an exceptionally fine performance, whether real or just reported that way, brings promises of imminent promotion to GREEN Clearance. He hands sealed padded envelopes to each team member, without explanation, and tells them to go home and get plenty of rest.

Because The Computer, not Dan-V, keeps all records, assign slaps and bennies as always.

Regardless of earlier threats, the PCs don't get fined for losing Oregon Warbler; they get fined for losing the map.

Two of the envelopes contain 100 bonus plasticreds each that can be used immediately. Two contain 500 credits with credit licenses specifying payment is not to occur until after the PCs' debriefing for their next mission (after Episode 4), and is not transferable to clones. The fifth is for 7,642,001 creds. These have a credit license specifying that the creds must be donated to an Elective Activity or Pursuit Club (a social club) of the user's choosing, in consultation with The Computer. The club must consist of members at VIOLET Clearance or higher. Under no circumstances should the credits in the fifth envelope actually end up in the PC's accounts. However, a sharp PC may find a way to curry favor with a high-ranking citizen by donating to his cause. (At the same time, he may also disappoint many other high-ranking citizens….)

The sixth envelope contains a ticket to see Teela O'Malley perform live; the performance will take place sometime during Episode 4. Transferring the ticket is illegal, but may be done through Free Enterprise or other contacts. Depending on the seller's Con Games skill, the ticket is worth about 500 plasticreds, as much as twice that in contraband items. A smart Troubleshooter will lay in some illegal weapons for Episode 4. Not that they'll help him much.

4: Why don't we do it in the road?

Mission background

Once upon a time there were three High Programmers, all of them fascinated by Old Reckoning technology. There was Betty-U-YFL, who heard about The Black Box and tried to have the Troubleshooters get it. There was Philip-U-BIK-4, who heard about Betty-U's attempt. Philip-U, who like most ULTRAVIOLET citizens has more knowledge of the old world than is legal at any clearance, has deduced the Box must contain Old Reckoning music, which he collects. Philip-U wants the Box.

More importantly, Philip-U wants Betty-U. He is desperately infatuated with her (a situation only possible at the highest levels of society, where the food does not contain GNH-series drugs) and is convinced that the Box will help him woo Betty-U away from her current companion…who is our third player, Dale-U- ERL-5. Dale-U knows about Philip-U's interest, and would like to do something about it, preferably something fatal to Philip-U.

When The Black Box slipped through the fingers of everyone assigned to recover it (not just the players), Philip-U decided to go to the source: he set up a mission to the Outdoors, intended to track down the source of the Box, and ensure him a permanent supply of prerecorded music.

Dale-U, meanwhile, has a project of his own: the reconstruction of an Old Reckoning automobile, piece by piece. Dale-U has a large contraband collection of car magazines, which have taught him that no woman can resist a guy who drives the right car. Dale-U would sacrifice the lives of thousands of Troubleshooters to obtain an intact '63 Corvette convertible. As it is, some 80 have been lost recovering the parts of his current vehicle, which consists of a 427-c.i. stock Chevy block (cracked), one Cadillac tailfin, a Rolls-Royce grille Dale-U thinks is a primitive sonic shield and a large number of Toyota and VW parts, on a Saab chassis.

Dale-U has been informed that his rival Philip-U is sending a team Outdoors for some dastardly Romantic purpose. Dale-U retaliates by setting up a mission of his own, using one of his most precious possessions: an Old Reckoning service-station map.

Unfortunately for both of them, they sat down at their terminals and input their Troubleshooter Operations Request (External) almost simultaneously, and a faulty set of demultiplexing crosstalk separators caused the two requests to be combined into one. The result was an unusually incoherent mission assignment, even for the world of ***PARANOIA***.

Mission summary

The Troubleshooters are sent out, with somewhat contradictory orders, to recover Old Reckoning hardware. They get a number of opportunities to do so, and even more opportunities not to make it back.

They meet two roving bands of Outsiders, the motorcycle-crazy Cyberpunks and the just-plain-crazy Nouvelle Vague. They may reach one or both of their intended targets, a well-preserved Old Reckoning recording studio and a not-so-well-preserved auto dealership and service station. The recording studio is inhabited by the Studio Engineers, a money-mad crew who ritually serve the recorders and mixing boards. The gas station is home to HARV[E], an ancient self-aware military vehicle, and his only friend, the battle computer ELWOOD 3610.

Then The Computer decides that the returning Troubleshooter team and their entourage are the long-dreaded Invasion of the Commies from Outer Space, and marshals its forces (in its endearingly psychotic fashion) to destroy them.

Apocalypse Any Minute Now…

Preparing the narrative sequence for Episode 4

The 'Organizing Episode 4 events' diagram (see page 92) is a graphic representation of the possible sequences of events in Episode 4. From the 'Mission assignment' to 'Into the unknown', the sequence is linear—that is, the

Alert Troubleshooters uncover a secret cache of weapons.

PCs are channeled from one event to the next in the predetermined order.

However, once the PCs leave Alpha Complex and enter the unknown (the Outdoors), there are a number of possible sequences of encounters. Look at the diagram. They can run around from place to place and encounter to encounter in zillions of ways. 'EEEEEEEK!' you say. 'What is happening to the First Law of Gamemaster Control?' you whine.

Buck up, sport. It's not so bad as all that.

The sequence is partly determined by your preplanned selection of events to be presented to the players, and partly determined by your players' choices and actions. For example, the PCs will need the assistance of one of the two gangs, the Cyberpunks or the Nouvelle Vague, to reach the locations where they can fulfill their mission objectives (get Black Boxes and a Corvette). You decide which gang the PCs run into first.

But you can't know or control whether the PCs will gain the gang's cooperation, or whether the PCs will blow the opportunity by attacking the gang or by refusing to cooperate. Perhaps the PCs will need to get another gang's cooperation instead. Perhaps the PCs will have to return and apologize to the first gang before they can reach a mission objective. (Perhaps they'll get themselves conveniently killed before it becomes an issue, but that solves nothing. Here come the clone replacements.)

In preparing for the mission, read through the whole thing first to get the big picture, then decide which events you want to present, in what order and how much time and detail you want to devote to each event. Use the diagram to help you visualize this process.

For example, first select a few encounters from 'Into the unknown'—say, 'Road badly out', 'Really grim weather' and 'Encampment'. The first two are minor encounters, just to spook the PCs a little with the unpredictable problems of the Outdoors, and should take only a few minutes each. 'Settlement' deserves a little more time so the PCs can speak with the primitives and learn a little about life outside Alpha Complex, but it is still a minor encounter.

Now have the PCs run into the Cyberpunks. This gives the PCs a chance to establish friendly terms with the gang and perhaps make an agreement that will bring the PCs to one of the two mission objectives. The probing for information and the negotiations will require a lot of in-character diplomacy and problem-solving, and plenty of session time must be allotted.

There are a number of possibilities at this point, and the players control most of them. Can the PCs negotiate successfully, or will they offend the gang or even start a gang war? And which will they choose to visit first, the PACE Studio or the service station—each major sections of the mission, full of minor episodes and encounters.

Depending on the PC choices and actions, there are a lot of possible sequences of events. You must be prepared.

Here's what you must do to be prepared:

1. Read everything carefully first.
2. Figure out which parts of the mission you like best, and how to steer the PCs for them. The gangs are the perfect tools for this purpose; they can show up and push the PCs where you want them to go, either by force or by offering information that leads the PCs where you want them.
3. Relax and be prepared to improvise if the PCs don't do exactly what you'd expect. They never do, anyway. That's the best part of roleplaying adventures. Except maybe for the part where you fry traitors.

Mission assignment

The Troubleshooters have had a couple of days to recover from their last mission (visit Medical Division, scrub the muck off, etc). Suddenly, they each receive urgent orders to contact their secret societies—notes slipped under doors, hidden in food, passed at training and so forth. As soon as they have arranged contact (as per Episode 1), they receive Mission Alert: Reference YCBBB.4.3.1 (see end of mission).

The PCs have to go to Briefing Room AA as before. Violators Will Be Prosecuted.

Checking in

A huge machine now dominates the checkpoint. It's a cross between a voting booth and a submarine conning tower, enclosing a barely visible Computer console. A smug BLUE technician in a sharply pressed jumpsuit attends it with his ORANGE assistant, a grease-monkey in soiled coveralls. The usual complement of bored-hostile guards stand nearby.

If the Troubleshooters show any hesitation at all in going inside this monster, the tech gets terribly annoyed and says, 'Yellow YELLOWs, eh? Well,

it's quite safe, and simple enough even for you. I'll show you.' He walks inside and pulls a lever.

The machine begins to tremble and grind. It closes around the tech. Then it folds again, and again, collapsing on itself until it is a neat metal suitcase, with handle. The assistant sighs, picks up the case and walks away. The PCs are admitted.

If the PCs *didn't* show any hesitation—serves 'em right.

Mission briefing

The Briefing Room (**Tension 15**) is dim. Dan-V-OSD is alone on the bench, a single spotlight shining down on him, like a bureaucrat's idea of what God looks like.

Dan-V speaks. This is your chance to really ham it up:

'Friend citizens, our friend The Computer wishes me to convey its unbounded joy at your performance. Would any one of us have expected you to return in triumph, nay, return alive, from such a mission? Surely none but a madman. Yet The Computer did. I think this tells us all something very important about our friend The Computer.

'With this in mind, our friend has selected you for a very unusual mission. You may never live to do your Alpha Complex any greater service than this.

'You are to execute this mission—Outdoors.' *[Pause for reaction.]* **'Yes, Outdoors, beyond The Computer's protection and safety. Why, you may ask? What does Alpha Complex, in which all our needs are provided for, want or need from Outdoors.**

'The answer is that The Computer sees more than our everyday needs. It sees our wants our hopes, our dreams—and then it sends Troubleshooters like you after them.

'You are to recover certain equipment of the Old Reckoning, which, once our wise and knowledgeable High Programmers have shaped it to The Computer's use, will make our daily life even better, safer, more completely controlled. Will help to ensure that this great complex, of The Computer, by The Computer and for The Computer, shall not perish from the earth. All the complex—or nothing! Which shall it be, Troubleshooters? Which shall it be?'

Pause here for exclamations of enthusiasm and patriotic fervor. When the cheering has died down, Dan-V has the players elect a team leader. Brian-B reads aloud the mission equipment requisition, commenting proudly on the generosity of The Computer, and hands the leader a copy of the requisition (display Equipment List #4). The leader will be entrusted with the mission map, to be delivered later. The map is cleared for all players, but it is Computer property, and the leader is responsible for it. Make an issue of how rare it is to actually give Troubleshooters maps of anything.

In a conspiratorial tone, Dan-V tells the players that he has heard rumors that no one ever returns from the Outdoors. (If you can spook a PC who has also heard that rumor, good.) He points out that rumors are treasonable lies, but to help bolster the team's confidence, he has pulled strings to get them some special equipment. Yup, they're going to visit Victor-I-VGF in R&D again.

'I know you will succeed. Do not fail. If you fail, your successors will succeed. Remember, *dulce et decorum est programming mori*.' He falls asleep.

He does not awaken. If the players try to rouse hirn, they trigger the automatic gas guns.

Eventually they are taken to R&D.

Organizing Episode 4 events

Outfitting

Victor-I's lab (**Tension 15**) is much the same as in Episode 2, except that Willis-G's luck lapsed briefly, and his clone has succeeded him. The clone does not remember the players, and tries to sell them on power holsters all over again.

Victor-I is pleased to hear the group is going Outdoors so they can test some of his devices less appropriate to confined spaces—that is, stuff that has never been tested in Victor-I's Danger Room.

In addition to the new goodies, all the old ones are still available, *unless* the players figured out some way to make them work advantageously, in which case the last working prototype was just dismantled for test/classified/blown up/dropped by an assistant so it looks all right but fails in use in some spectacular fashion (pick one).

New goodies

Bi-Axial Levitation Frame *(Ned-G)*: A pair of jointed wings that buckle to the user's arms and shoulders. They are rocket-assisted on the downstroke, so the user really can hang in the air by flapping energetically. Until one wing breaks, causing the user to spin in midair like a Catherine wheel.

Procognitron *(Victor-I)*: A briefcase-sized portable computer programmed to extrapolate events. Victor can demonstrate simple entries (like: *push hard?* > THING FALLS OVER). The device works. But it's slow and becomes geometrically slower with the complexity of the question, making it effectively useless for anything nontrivial.

Constant-Wear Prophylactic Biostasis Garment *(Willis-G)*: Elastic long underwear threaded with wires and tubes which connect delicately and intricately to a bulky backpack containing tanks of supercooled gases, sensors and monitors and complex automatic control systems. If the wearer is seriously hurt, the suit induces suspended animation, preserving life until medical aid is available. It works, after a fashion: If the wearer takes an Down or Killed result, the suit instantly freezes him solid. (Vaporized is still Vaporized.) A successful medical skill attempt (a docbot must perform or assist with this) thaws the character out in Wounded status. The suit may be reused, but it has a four in 20 chance of failure each time after the first. Optionally, you can equip it with a manual 'On' button in a highly

exposed location. Note that frozen characters may break if dropped.

Probability Control Experiment *(Ned-G)*: This comes in a heavily sealed case about the size of a lunchbox, weighing five kilos. Everyone in the lab is somewhat in awe of it. The user is warned. 'Don't ever look in the box! You'll break the mojo!' No explanation of this statement is available at YELLOW Clearance. It is entirely up to you whether or not the box influences luck. It contains a horseshoe, a four-leaf clover, a frowzy rabbit's foot and a pair of loaded dice (all of which might have IR market value).

Cis-9-Basoaterol *(Victor-I)*: Synthetic Charm pheromone, to be applied to the skin (bottle is labeled For External Use Only). It certainly smells funny (you decide what's 'funny' in this context). It doesn't charm people. Outdoors, however, it will charm the socks off one species of animal or insect life, Gamemaster's choice. Chipmunks or pigeons are recommended.

Maxwell-Effect Moleculokinesic Field Device *(Willis-G)*: This is a large and truly terrifying rifle-type weapon: It is a Pyrokinesis gun, and it can be demonstrated to incinerate targets at a distance, without the all-too-well-known hazards of flamethrowers. Its drawbacks:

1. It draws huge amounts of power. For demonstration purposes, it is plugged into a main; it will suck a laser pack dry in one shot. It may be plugged into the crawler's power takeoff, taking all power from all other systems (including propulsion) when fired.
2. 50% of the time it fires at reverse polarity, freezing the target (see *Biostasis suit* above for effects on people). This might be used to impress the Studio Engineers (see 'The PACE Studio' below).
3. The power cable is too light and burns through with pyrotechnic results after five shots (less if desired).

More conventional gear

The Req Room staff are back to their usual surly selves this time. Half of them wish that they were going on a mission Outdoors. The other half thinks that giving equipment to an Outdoors mission team is the Alpha Complex equivalent of an expensive funeral. However, this mission has been classified PRIORITY (because it is being run at High Programmer request), so they can't do much but grumble and stall.

Most 'reasonable' requests for equipment not on the assignment list are honored—but half of all extra items are seriously defective or mislabeled. Tacnuke and power armor requests are met with polite laughter.

The team's docbot is an Old Reliable Model 5. If asked about its programming, the bot says it has been specially equipped with an Old Reckoning Environmental Medicine package. This is true. If somebody asks it, the bot can identify edible food (and shrewdly assess such other environmental medical situations as 'an avalanche has buried him'). It also is loaded with Old Reckoning medical clichés, making it a cross between Marcus Welby MD, Dr. Kildare and 'Bones' McCoy.

Remember that everyone has to sign for the crawler and trailer. There should be some mystery about the trailer: The staff wants to know what it's for. Of course, the players don't know yet, but for them to say anything is treason.

The crawler

Picture a bright yellow Winnebago, about 8 meters long, sporting treads instead of tires. Add a laser cannon turret on top, and cover the windows with retractable metal shielding. Pretty natty, huh?

An alcohol-burning engine powers the crawler; the fuel in the tank will get the Troubleshooters anywhere they have to go. (Unless you want them to have to barter with the natives for moonshine.) Heavy metal armor protects the top, bottom and all sides of the crawler and provides adequate shielding (see Bot roster), but does little to improve pickup. At best it can zoom along at about 25 kilometers per hour.

The vehicle can be controlled either manually or by autopilot. The autopilot is much too stupid to be considered a true bot brain, though it does respond to verbal commands and can answer simple questions dealing with the operation or status of the crawler. (Troubleshooter: 'What's happening now?' *[Pause.]* Autopilot: 'We're on fire.')

The crawler easily holds the Troubleshooters and their gear; it not-so-easily holds the docbot.

And now the bad news

If the PCs examine their gear (as any reasonably ***PARANOID*** Troubleshooters do), they find that most of it appears to match the Equipment List, with the exception of the case of HE grenades. When opened, the case is found to contain exactly 21 brand new toilet floats. No grenades. Wouldn't it be funny if the Troubleshooters found this out after they had signed for the equipment?

What the Troubleshooters probably won't notice is that two of the eight cone rifle solid slugs are actually mislabelled hallucinogenic gas slugs. While these certainly could make their lives miserable (or very short), crafty Troubleshooters might be able to make a tidy profit selling the slugs to the Nouvelle Vaguers or Mystics.

Out into the cold, cruel world

Those PCs who make contact with their societies or service groups find that all have the same thing in mind: 'While you're Outdoors, will you bring me…?' They see this mission as a trip to the Old Reckoning supermarket.

There are two possible types of request:

1. Very general, for anything in keeping with the goals of the society or service group (weapons for the Armed Forces, consumer goods for the Romantics or Free Enterprisers).
2. Extremely specific ('A blue ribbed cylinder, stenciled GX-470-Detrick—and don't touch the valve'), implying the society knows more about the mission than the player does; the Troubleshooter of course never encounters the item he must retrieve.

The sealed orders

When the Troubleshooters arrive at the cavernous Vehicle Bay (**Tension 6**), a large fire is merrily blazing. This creates much confusion, to say the least. A technician tells the team their vehicle has been consumed, and they must replace it. This proves to be incorrect; the crawler and trailer are in another part of the bay.

The bay is a huge structure similar to an airplane hangar, but much larger and more crowded. Losing something the size of a crawler, or a Boeing 727, is no problem. The floor is covered with tire marks, hoses, cables and meaningless colored stripes, and service vehicles race around madly. Overhead, cranes run along the girders, carrying vehicle parts and ordnance. Every so often they drop something, like an engine or a bomb.

A RED courier waits by the crawler (perhaps a clone of the courier from Episode 2) holding a sealed message pouch. He asks for a chit for the pouch. The players do not have this. He asks if they have 50 credits. If they do, he hands over the pouch in exchange for the 50 creds, no questions asked. If they don't, he walks away… and a few minutes later, an IntSec trooper brings back the case, slightly battle-damaged.

The case contains Dale-U's map and a sheet of YELLOW Computer printout.

The map

You are encouraged to actually fabricate the map: Take a gas-station map (of any location—it doesn't matter) and work it over, stomping on it, spilling coffee, tearing pieces off, until it looks like it's been in your glove compartment for 300 years or so. Circle a couple of random locations in red ballpoint, mark a stretch of road with highlighter. If you can stamp it 'COMPUTER PROPERTY—Unauthorized Possession Punishable by Summary Execution', all the better.

If you are too lazy to find a map and mutilate it, take a piece of blank paper and print across the top of it 'EXTREMELY DETAILED AND USEFUL MAP'. You can scribble on it a bit if you have the energy. Then give it to the players and tell them, 'Pretend this is an extremely detailed and useful map.' They'll get the idea.

Note: Nowhere does The Computer or Dan-V suggest the PCs' destinations are indicated on this map. The PCs are sent out to investigate. Their methods are their own responsibility. Actually, even if The Computer knew anything, it would never divulge information about The Outdoors to lower security clearances.

The YELLOW computer printout

Display the YELLOW Computer Printout: Reference YCBBB.4.5.2 (end of the mission) for the players to study.

Time to hit the road

Before the PCs get a chance to study the map or computer printout very carefully, a firebot wheels up, sprays them with a little water, then orders them to get the crawler and trailer out of here immediately, pointing a nozzle to the exit bay doors and guard checkpoint. Failure to follow orders results in an improvised pitched battle with firebots, arrest for failure to follow orders and a standard community execution.

When the PCs pull up to the exit bay doors and guard checkpoint, a kindly GREEN-Clearance Vulture Squadron guard (sort of like a Boy Scout assisting an old lady across the street while waving a hand ax) steps out of his armored strongpoint and pleasantly asks to see the PCs' authorization for Outdoor Excursion.

The PCs sit here until they show the guard the map and the computer printout. If they are good citizens, they call The Computer for clearance to show the guard the materials; otherwise, treason charges are in order.

The sergeant casually studies the map and printout, revealing no sign of confusion at the obvious incoherence of the printout and the lack of correspondence between the map and the printout references. 'Well, everything looks to be in order,' he says, handing the materials back to the mission leader. 'If you have any trouble finding your way around out there, just stop and ask the natives for directions.' He steps back, slaps the side of the crawler and says, 'Okay, let's roll, and be careful out there.'

He strolls back into the armored strongpoint and presses some buttons, and the exit bay doors open upon a Brave New World. The guard waves cheerily as the PCs motor off to meet their destiny.

Into the unknown

To introduce your players to The Wonderful World of the Outdoors (**Tension 0**), read the following aloud:

Welcome to the Outdoors World, Troubleshooters! You're not going to like it here. Everything's made out of weird rough crumbly stuff, not nice clean plastic and metal. There aren't any pipes. There aren't any *bathrooms* (thank The Computer for the facility on your crawler)! The sky—*it's not made of metal.* Try not to think about that too much. And there are little alive things all over the place, doing all sorts of strange awful alive-type things.

You really wanted to turn around and go back to the safe white Freudian curve of Alpha Complex. When you tried It, extremely large weapons were pointed at you. Sigh.

Fortunately you have your crawler, with its food supply and its weapons and its com link to The Computer. And you have the map that The Computer entrusted you with.

The first thing you notice about the map is that it does not show Alpha Complex. Eventually you notice that the countryside you are passing through bears no resemblance to the stuff on the map. Suddenly life Outdoors seems not so different from home, after all.

You have spoken to The Computer. Friend Computer has been very kind and understanding. Reading maps is a rare privilege for Troubleshooters, and you may be excused a few mistakes. The Computer points out that its very own data analysis routines prepared your order sheet. Surely any difficulties must be attributed to human error.

Well, as the nice Vulture Squadron guard said, maybe you should stop and ask the natives for directions. First, however, how to go about finding the natives…

This section describes a few arbitrary encounters the PCs might face in the process of wandering around the Outdoors in search of their mission objectives. You can probably imagine lots of others. Don't feel obligated to use ours just because you paid for them.

One nice touch is to take Outdoors encounters from earlier ***PARANOIA*** missions, particularly encounters the players will recognize. A little touch of the familiar makes PCs feel right at home. For example, there is a lovely Outdoor Arbitrary Encounter Table in *Vapors Don't Shoot Back*.

These encounters are just for fun and flavor. Don't get carried away. Don't spend too much time on them. And don't use them all at once. Save a few to spring on the PCs later in the mission as they travel to the gangs or the mission objectives.

Don't wait too long to introduce the gangs. Too long is when the PCs get bored or frustrated wandering around aimlessly, trying to figure out what they're supposed to be doing. Poor things. They just need some guidance. And the gangs are just the ones to provide it. For the right price.

Life in the fast lane

The following is a menu of encounter possibilities while on the road. If the team decides to drive cross-country, see the list under 'Truckin'.

Bad weather: May slow the team's progress to a crawl, force them to stop or cause them to run off the road (as in thick fog). Note that 'weather' is broadly interpreted to mean all those environmental events the players are unfamiliar with, such as rain ('a pipe must have broken somewhere!') and nightfall ('The Commies are in Power Services!').

After reading the description of the Studio Engineers below, you may wish to make it snow. You can. You are the Gamemaster. You can make it rain Swedish meatballs if you want. Just remember that Alpha Complex citizens don't know snow from Swedish meatballs.

Road out: Forces a period of offroad running. If they don't get the hint, the broken road starts damaging the crawler's suspension, bruising passengers, etc.

Road badly out: A bridge is gone, pass blocked or something else requiring a long detour and hunt for another piece of road. The team may fear becoming lost. This is foolish. They are already lost. The Computer reassures them that it can broadcast a homing signal. It can, but it won't until it (or both of the two High Programmers) decides that mission objectives have been achieved.

Charge attack: Between five and a dozen natives rush the vehicle. They are armed with pointed sticks and rocks and present little real hazard.

Slightly more intelligent attack: This party of natives has some missile weapons—slings, bows, throwing spears—and uses them before charging the crawler (and being slaughtered anyway).

Wildlife attack: It is hard to imagine what animals would charge the crawler (animals are much more sensible than people in this regard) but a bunch of rabid wolves or an eight-foot grizzly in a real bad mood are possibilities. Mutant wildlife, like gila monsters the size of Mack trucks, are another matter entirely.

Other gang attacks: If the party is traveling with the Cyberpunks or Nouvelle Vague (see below), the other gang swoops down. This is a Reasonably Intelligent Attack, i.e., the gangs use some crude tactics and retreat if they're getting badly stomped.

Really grim weather: From ice storms and flash floods up to tornadoes. (Speaking as an old Midwesterner, worse than tornadoes is probably not survivable.)

Barricade: Someone has piled junk on the road. The PCs must dodge around or

blast through it. There may or may not be an accompanying ambush.

Boobytrap: A barricade with teeth—pits, snares, punji stakes, black-powder bombs… be creative. There will probably be ambushers unless: 1) something else ate them; or 2) they got careless setting the trap.

Wild card: An interstate cloverleaf to get lost in (Your Tax Dollars at Work). A fast-food stand stuffed with cannibals. Mel Gibson. Use your fiendish imagination.

Truckin'

Off the road, all the Weather and Attack encounters on the road are possible, plus the following:

Encampment: A humble native village, 20–50 inhabitants. They may be friendly. They may have a couple of heirloom antitank rockets. They probably carry weird diseases to which Alpha Complex citizens have no immunity.

Gang encampment: Headquarters of one of the two major gangs (described below). Contact is possible, unless the team travels with the other gang, in which case a turf war is automatic.

Natural hazard: Quicksand, rockslide, forest fire started by careless cleaning of laser weapons, small earthquake, explosion of a natural methane pocket, Costikyan Settling in the Icy Reaches of Montana. ***[Editor's note:*** *Here writer John M. Ford puns on the title of the senior thesis in Geology written by* **PARANOIA***'s original co-designer, Greg Costikyan: 'Stokes Settling in the Icy Satellites of Jupiter'. We thought of taking out this inside joke—this joke so inside it borders on subterranean—but it is not for mere game editors to meddle with the words of John M. Ford.]*

Reconbot: A small twin-copter observation bot, pretending to be on a secret mission for The Computer. Actually it has been 'freed' by Corpore Metal and spies on Vulture maneuvers and missions such as this one. It knows some Corpore Metal passwords and could be helpful. Then again, maybe it's really a double agent for The Computer. You can't trust anybody.

The gangs

These two groups are fairly large, upwards of 100 members total, and well-organized for the Outdoors. (Actually, a prairie dog village is well-organized for the Outdoors.) They are in a state of constant and total war, and roam the countryside on and off the roads, looking for enemy parties to bushwhack. They are distinctive enough that they do not mistake the Troubleshooters for the enemy gang; if the team travels with enemy gang members, that's another story.

The gangs are the devices you, the Gamemaster, use to draw the PCs to the two main mission objectives: the PACE Studio (where Black Boxes abound) and Uncle Ken's Super Service Station (where the fabled Corvette and even a Thunderbird may be found).

To get the cooperation of the gangs, the PCs must do two important things: 1) ask the right questions, and 2) offer an appropriate payment for the gang's cooperation.

Asking the right questions

For each mission objective, there's a series of key words which a few of the leaders or wise men of each gang recognize.

Acoustic readable data disks or *black boxes* are the key words for the PACE Studio; the leaders recall the jargon as typical phrases tossed about by The Engineers who staff PACE Studio.

For Uncle Ken's Super Service Station, the key words are *Corvette* or *Thunderbird*; the gang leaders and sages recall that these names are written in shiny metal on two of the odd, autocar-like objects found at the service station.

Offering the right payment

The gangs are neither civic-minded, patriotically loyal to The Computer, nor subscribers to the Social Contract. They expect to be paid for information or assistance. No tickee, no shirtee.

Acceptable forms of payment include but are not necessarily limited to:

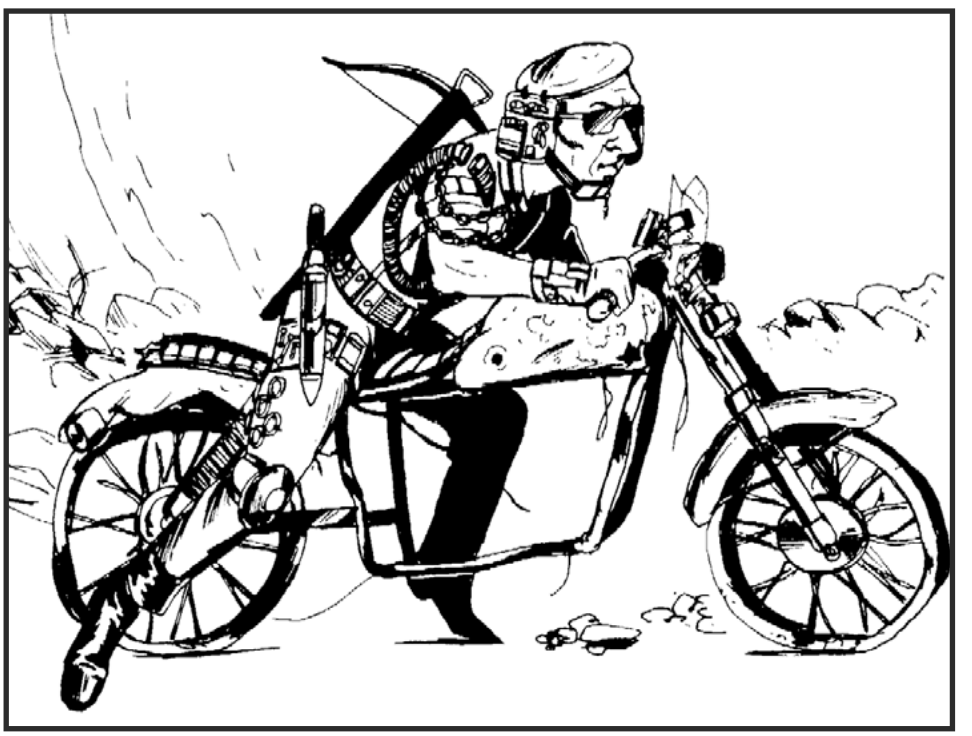
- **Alpha Complex trade goods:** Anything manufactured in Alpha Complex—weapons, bots, experimental devices, routine Troubleshooter gear, household items, anything that is scarce in the primitive economy of the Outdoors.
- **Military assistance:** Each gang has a grudge against the other, or covets something valuable at PACE Studio or the Service Station. Aiding the gang in pursuing such a grudge or covet could be fair payment for information or assistance.
- **A piece of the action:** the PCs might propose a raid or assault on a mission objective with gang assistance, with a percentage or specific reward promised.

Note also that mutant powers or persuasive skills (such as Charm or Con Games) may be used to supplement or replace payment in some cases. The PCs must also avoid two serious mistakes: 1) butchering the gang members who can lead them to their objectives, and 2) getting themselves butchered by the gangs for rude and offensive behavior. This may be very difficult for trigger-happy paranoids.

If the PCs manage to alienate one gang, a hint from The Computer may be in order. 'Hello, there, Troubleshooters! How is the mission going? Have you found any natives to assist you in locating the valuable equipment we sent you after?' If the PCs got wiped out, a hint to their clones suffices.

The Cyberpunks

A post-everything cycle gang, the Punks wear leather and chrome and silicon chips, and like anything shiny and high-tech in appearance.



The Road Worrier.

They are armed with knives and swords, leaf-spring crossbows and the occasional ancient gun.

The motorcycle is sacred in Cyberpunk mythology. Some of them have real derelict bikes; most of the rest have imitations cobbled together from junk. None of these function—the riders push them along with their feet. This looks very silly, and the Punks will kill you if you say so.

The Cyberpunks do have a vague sort of honor code: they fight duels one-on-one, and prefer shooting people in the front.

They covet the Troubleshooters' hardware like mad, of course, and try very hard to get hold of any motor that looks adaptable to powering a motorcycle. (If for some reason the team has a motorcycle, they stop at nothing to get it. A person with a working bike would automatically be Lord of the Punks.)

The current Cyberpunk leaders are a brother and sister named Jake and Elwood. (She's Jake.) They wear black leather blazers, snapbrim fedoras and dark glasses. Jake carries a slugthrower (S&W .38 Police Positive, with four rounds in the cylinder and six more in her pocket; Troubleshooter ammo won't fit, but Jake doesn't know that). Elwood packs a big smile and the Charm mutation.

The Cyberpunks know the location of the PACE Studio and are on fairly good terms with the Studio Engineers, who play them heavy-metal music in exchange for stuff the Engineers think is 'money'. They know the location of Uncle Ken's Super Service Station very well indeed, and have been trying to loot it for years, but HARV[E] (see below, 'Wouldn't you really rather have a Buick?') always runs them off. It certainly occurs to Jake and Elwood to have the Troubleshooters destroy, or at least divert, HARV[E] while they rob Uncle Ken's.

If the Troubleshooters survive to go home, the remaining Cyberpunks try to follow them back to Alpha Complex, which they imagine as a giant Harley-Davidson showroom. (More on this later.)

Nouvelle Vague

If the Punks are heavy-metal, the Vaguers are folk-rock. They think of themselves as 'true people of the land', totally without justification. They wear clothing in earth colors, usually with a thick coating of the real thing. Nouvelle Vague pursues a sort of nature mysticism crossed with Gary Cooper-movie individualism: imagine a culture built entirely on readings of Timothy Leary, French movies, Hermann Hesse and Ayn Rand.

The Vaguers are friendly toward Sierra Clubbers and Mystics (real or claimed), and fascinated by any psionic mutations the players choose to reveal (or pretend to have). They offer to share their humble but chemically sophisticated fare (anybody but a Mystic who does so must make an Insanity check once the rush hits). They are not actually anti-technology, unless it reminds them of the Cyberpunks; they find items like warm clothing, ice guns and tanglers fascinating.

The Vaguers are strongly anti-war. They think it is a much better idea to set traps and sneak up behind people. They may do this because they desire what the party has, or because party members infringed on their enlightened self-interest, or because Mars is in the eleventh house and Scorpio is rising.

Nouvelle Vague has no organized leadership. ('We're an anarcho-syndicalist commune!') This means that if a particular Vaguer wants to kill somebody, no one tries to interfere with his Karma in doing so.

When the PCs ask to speak to leaders or knowledgeable folks, they are directed to the Guru. The Guru is a bona fide Psionic with a complete repetoire of all the psionic mutations. He is Totally Aware, man, and Cosmic. Wow.

Initially, when out among the public, the Guru answers all the PCs' questions with obscure parables ('Ah, that reminds me of the story of the Grasshopper and the Microwave.') and bland homilies ('What, Me Worry?'). However, when the Guru gets the PCs in private, he turns into a wheeler-dealer. He drives a hard bargain, but he can deliver the information, and if the price is right, he can use his psionic powers and Con Games skill to persuade the Nouvelle Vaguers to get together behind his trip.

The Vaguers are on slightly worse terms with the Studio Engineers than the Punks are, because they, like, can't get behind the money trip the Engineers are on. Still, they pay for concerts whenever possible and can get the Troubleshooters to the PACE Studio. They know of the Service Station, but consider it a place of many negative waves and never touch anything there, so HARV[E] lets them alone.

They, too, try to follow the team home, out of curiosity and to pick off the Cyberpunks one by one.

The PACE Studio

See the 'Pace Studio' map at the end of the mission.

Tucked away in a small valley is a smooth white dome, reminiscent of a tiny Alpha Complex. On its roof are a set of corroded microwave antennas, trained on long-decayed satellites. A weathered bronze plaque on the door reads PACE Pilot Recording Studio and shows a record surrounded by orbiting electrons.

Promoters Allied for Cheap Energy built this place as the prototype of a totally self-contained, highly automated recording facility. Nuclear-powered and computer-controlled, it was to be the test site for exotic new equipment that would make unionized crews obsolete. Then they would go about replacing musicians. Alas, the end of the Old Reckoning arrived before the project could be completed. The staff, living rather well in their self-sustaining quarters, passed on their knowledge to another generation. And another, and another. But as everybody knows, each later generation of a recording contains some new errors. So now there are…

The Studio Engineers

These people wear jumpsuits with their names stenciled on the pockets. (That is to say, they take names to match those stenciled on the suits.) The jumpsuits are brand new: they are of a paper fiber that is broken down and reassembled by the automatic laundry.

The Engineers pay little attention to the service equipment, since it needs none. They spend their time on the video games in the Recreation Room, and on the Studio gear—the recorders, mikes, multitrack mixers, equalizers, etc. It is almost an object of worship. But not quite. That role is reserved for money.

The Engineers are obsessed with money. They offer to do just about anything for money, except sell any equipment from the Studio (including the Master Recordings). There is only one thing they want almost as much, and that's snow. Literally. Crystallized water. Its other meaning has been lost. They don't know what they want it *for*, but that's how tradition is.

They speak a rapid-fire *Variety*-style slang: 'Sure, we'll lay you down a track, just ink your Hancock on the dotted line and we'll have the boys in Legal shoot you down a contract before you can say Hix Nix Stix Flix, have a cigar, after all you're gonna be spinning platinum soon, we must have lunch but don't quote me….' When recording matters are involved, this becomes an even less intelligible tech jargon: 'So we got to use gated cardioids, drop it 4dB and Dolbyize through the Revox, unless you're not afraid of the Nagras printing through…'

They have the language down cold, and they know every knob and button and capstan-drive in the Studio, all of which is in perfect working order. Unfortunately, they don't have the faintest idea what to do with any of that hardware. If promised enough money ('At least four percent over union scale, man.'), they promise to 'cut a master, lay down some serious tracks, do a pressing that'll be Number 1 with a bullet,' but all they can really do is make the equipment hum and rotate in an interesting fashion, and occasionally produce a deafening scream of acoustic feedback.

They *can*, however, operate the playback decks, if a Master Recording is loaded (an almost ritual act).

There are 20 Engineers of ordinary rank, 5 higher ranks called Producers and the Studio Head. The Head (also called the Mogul, Boss Honcho, etc.) has four personal bodyguards called Goons. Goons wear mirrored sunglasses

as a badge of office. They are armed with brass knuckles.

Engineers refer to death as 'going on the road'. They believe that some day, a crew of Roadies will arrive to take them all out on a Concert Tour. This could give the Troubleshooters a way in; however, the Cyberpunks tried that trick once long ago, and the Engineers are wary.

Mission objectives

The PCs are here for *Acoustic Readable Data Disks* or *Black Boxes*. All the Engineers but the Head Honcho are so thoroughly divorced from reality that they fail to catch the significance of the PCs' interest in the acoustic readable data disks—the Master Recordings. The Engineers just keep spouting encouraging talk of how big the PCs' next hit is going to be and directing the PCs to talk with the Boss Honcho.

The Boss Honcho catches on immediately that the PCs are looking to loot the Master Recordings. He listens patiently to the PCs, then shrugs his shoulders, grins cooperatively and says, 'Well, I'm sure we can do business here…' Then he turns to his Goons, gives a secret hand sign, and the Goons open fire. From this point it is a to-the-death battle for the studio and the Master Recordings.

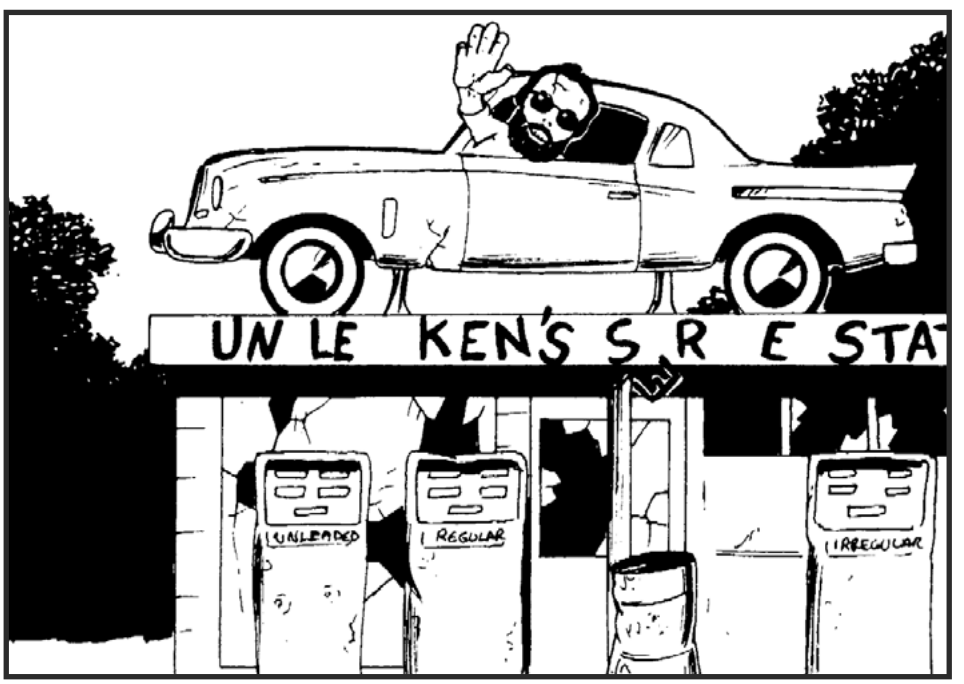
Entering the Studio

Just inside the Studio doors is a reception lobby, with kitschy vinyl furniture, plastic ferns and a terrarium with some dead lizards. The walls are hung with gold records and incomprehensible abstract paintings. This motif of very expensive bad taste is present throughout the Studio complex. Everything is very clean and well-maintained, thanks to the automatic maintenance systems. Most of these systems are invisible—special airflow vents that keep things dust-free, for instance—but the occasional sweeperbot appears, to startle the players.

One of the low-rank Engineers mans a desk in the lobby. This person's purpose is to send people away politely but firmly, 'I'm *sorrr*-ree, but he's in conference and can't be disturbed until August. No, they're all in Gstaad. Are you representing investors, or yourselves? Requests for employment must go through the office in Marin County.' And so on. The receptionist is really just an annoyance; any reasonable excuse gets the players past the front desk.

Once past the desk, the PCs will have to wander around looking for someone official to talk to. All the Engineers are 'just hanging out', chatting in obscure jargon and polishing the hardware. The PCs are consistently given polite, encouraging and unresponsive answers to their questions—'We're with you all the way, solid on your concept. Just need to finalize the contract wording and check with marketing. See the Boss Honcho, and we'll be ready to go the limit. Awesome.' The Boss Honcho is 'around here somewhere'; nobody is quite sure where.

The Boss Honcho is in the last place the PCs look for him—that is, the PCs run into the Boss Honcho when you tire of sending the PCs around through the studio after him, and when you are ready for a little shoot-'em-up.



*Last services on this route before Armageddon. (**In-joke alert:** Another Ken Rolston portrait.)*

The Engineers' quarters

These apartments are well-equipped but rather plain; there are more decorations (album covers, concert posters, autographed 8x10 glossies) in the upper ranks' rooms. All rooms have telephone intercoms, and monitor speakers and video screens are connected to the deck in the main equipment area; twice a day an Engineer, called the DJ, plays an hour of programming for the entire staff. (This means the players should have some chance to see the recordings and what they do.)

The Studio Head's apartment contains its own playback deck, and he alone may borrow recordings for his own entertainment.

The Studio Commissary serves synthesized meals considerably superior to Alpha Complex vat product. (Unfortunately the Commissary equipment is not portable.)

The Recreation Room contains video and other games, including an electronic skeet range (the guns look real but are harmless low-power lasers) and a full-size Bally Fireball pinball machine. The 1980s video game *Berzerk*, with its laser-armed hero fleeing killer bots, is probably treasonous but should fascinate the Troubleshooters.

The Concert Hall is an auditorium to which paying customers are admitted to watch playbacks. It contains no equipment other than a holographic projection stage.

The Studio itself

The Control Room is filled with electronic hardware: rack after rack of metal-fronted components, dangling patchcords, bouncing meter needles, green-glowing screens, whole galaxies of twinkling LEDs. Imagine the showroom of a huge and upscale electronics store, multiplied by at least ten. The most prominent feature is the 64-track mixer, a vast ocean of slide-pots and timbre controls.

On the other side of a soundproof window above the mixing board is the performance area, a stage big enough for a dozen musicians and their equipment. The walls are lined with sound-deadening material, surfaced with a shiny silvery stuff. The walls can be used as projection screens in the production of video clips; there are hologram projectors and laser lightshow generators mounted near the ceiling. The lasers are harmless but don't look it. Triggering the projectors during a battle could be very exciting, as images of flying saucers swoop to the attack, tanks roll, Mick Jagger struts…

Both parts of the Studio are off limits to all but Engineers, though a heavily escorted guest might be taken on a 'backstage tour'.

Twenty meters below the Control Room, accessible by a narrow service ladder, is the Studio's isotope power plant, which still has a decade or two of operation before internal neutron decay causes it to collapse into a lump

of unbelievably radioactive butterscotch crunch, melting the bedrock and causing the Studio to relocate toward China. The reactor chamber is dramatically lit by colored displays and contains a number of confusing controls: tinkering with these could cause an early melt.

Storeroom A

This room is filled with musical instruments: synthesizers, horns, drums, lots of guitars. The Engineers can't play any of them, though sometimes they take them out and lip-synch.

Troubleshooters do not know what musical instruments are, either. They should probably have this room described as a sort of armory: guitars are rifles, keyboards are computer terminals, mariachis are a kind of grenade.

Storeroom B

This is where the Master Recordings are kept, the Studio Engineers' greatest treasure. The room, which is carefully cleaned and maintained, is lined floor to ceiling with—how'd you guess—Black Boxes. They all used to say things like 'Creedence Clearwater Revival Master Recording Set', but the Engineers have polished them so many times they're down to plain black wood.

There are over 300 Boxes, each of which contains 24 hours' worth of audio or video disks (all play back on the same deck). This is more than the PCs' vehicle and trailer will hold, even if they should get a chance to take so many, which they shouldn't.

The Engineers will die to protect the Master Recordings. Every so often a Box does get stolen by a visitor (without labels, it's hard to keep track), like the one that made its way to Alpha Complex. If the Engineers should all be killed, the Cyberpunks and Nouvelle Vague will be hot after the music. If The Computer finds out about the hoard, it will be a war between Philip-U trying to recover them all, and maybe the Studio equipment too, and Dale-U trying to steal them if he can and destroy them if he can't. The Computer itself will want the Studio and everything in it obliterated, and will order a massive Vulture airstrike to do so, which will set a nice time limit on Troubleshooter actions.

Wouldn't you really rather have a Buick?

'Uncle Ken's Super Service Station' appears to be a vehicle sales and service facility. It is surrounded by what Troubleshooters should be able to recognize by their wheels, seats and general configuration as vehicles of some kind, probably autocars. It appears to be deserted. Attentive players will notice two things that are odd about the Station:

1. It is a very long way from a road.
2. The Cyberpunks have not looted it bare.

Uncle Ken's is actually a secret military experimental station. There is no road because the experiment was interrupted by the end of the world. (If it had been completed, they would have *built* a road. R&D logic is unchanging.) The Cyberpunks have not stripped the car lot because the experiment, Project Pooka, is operational.

HARV[E]

HARV[E] (Heuristic Automated Recon Vehicle [Evaluation model]) is an extremely sophisticated tank. Also a very powerful one. If HARV[E] had passed his evaluations, he and a team of units like him would be deployed in 'militarily sensitive' areas, on constant silent vigil.

Silent—HARV[E] moves on a set of baffled hoverfans so quiet that he can sneak up to within a few meters of a person unheard. He can also hit 100 kph flat out, rather more noisily.

And invisible—the antiradiation coatings on HARV[E]'s smooth flanks, coupled with thermal and acoustic chameleon transducers beneath, make him undetectable by visible light or any sort of electronic sensing: radar, infrared, magnetic. He can only be detected if he breaks radio silence or fires his weapons. (Certain psionic powers might be able to detect him.)

HARV[E] is armed with a turreted Laser Cannon 3, fore and aft sonic blasters, and an Anti-Missile Phalanx-Laser battery (intended mostly as an anti-personnel weapon, since no conventional missile can lock on to HARV[E]).

HARV[E]'s mind is that of an eager young recruit who has been told to 'wait outside' while his test scores are processed. He has been waiting for 216 years now. But he is very patient (part of his scout programming). He has grown to like the little woodland creatures, the squirrels and grizzly bears and giant mutant wolf spiders. He will wait until someone comes (with the proper authorization, of course—HARV[E]'s sentry programming is very strong) to tell him whether or not he has passed his evaluations.

Until then, silent, deadly but meaning well, HARV[E] patrols the countryside in a ten-kilometer radius from his camouflaged base, allowing no one to damage Uncle Ken's, or hurt his one friend, ELWOOD.

ELWOOD

No, not the Cyberpunk leader. ELWOOD 3610 (Electronic Long-term Warfare Outpost Operations Device) is the other half of Project Pooka, an immobile self-aware tactical computer intended to coordinate the actions of ten HARV[E]s. ELWOOD knows the war is over and the high command is dead and nobody's ever going to take HARV[E] home. But he hasn't told HARV[E], because then the tank would have no purpose in his life, and besides, if HARV[E] went away, soon the scavengers would be in to scrap ELWOOD—and HARV[E] would be all alone.

Sort of gets you right there, don't it?

ELWOOD 3610 completely fills the trunk of a 1967 Thunderbird convertible, parked in the Service Station garage area. ELWOOD weighs two metric tons (concealed supports hold up the car's back end). His power and external data bus cables run through the car and out the hood (where they look like battery-charge cables) to, respectively, a buried isotope generator like the one at the PACE Studio, and an antenna array on the roof, concealed inside a giant fiberglass Studebaker with a giant fiberglass Uncle Ken waving from behind the wheel.

He has an external speaker, which he uses to talk to HARV[E], or friendly passers-by. ELWOOD is genial (if you want to make him sound like Jimmy Stewart, we have no way of stopping you). The machines also have a radio link which is not normally used (so the tank can 'maintain radio silence') but which ELWOOD will not hesitate to use if threatened.

If ELWOOD or his car are moved more than a few centimeters, the aging cables give way, and ELWOOD 'dies'. This makes HARV[E] very angry with whomever killed his friend. Simply reconnecting ELWOOD is not sufficient: he must be run through a coldstart procedure, requiring Software skill, to get his higher logic areas going again. ELWOOD can be operated off the crawler's power plant; the crawler may not fire its weapons during such operation.

HARV[E] and ELWOOD vs. the PCs

'Oh, boy!' I hear you say. 'An invisible, silent tank! Boy, am I going to have some fun with those poor Troubleshooters!'

Actually, the problem is going to be finding some excuse not to turn the PCs to applesauce. What we have here is the equivalent of an invisible, silent, fire-breathing dragon. No way the PCs are going to walk away from that one.

What you can't see can't hurt you. Right?

Though HARV[E] and ELWOOD are a great idea, they are just too tough in game terms. So we have to make them psychologically wimpy pacifists, or your players are going to get a lot of practice roleplaying vapors.

Use these principles to keep Project Pooka from crushing your players' morale:

1. HARV[E] is *almost* silent and *almost* invisible. His hoverfans make a barely noticeable hum, and his designers never quite handled the problem of disguising his shadow—in poor light, the shadow is masked, but in strong light, like sunlight, the shadow is faint but noticeable.

   Whenever the PCs are quiet and looking around, HARV[E] is probably right behind their backs, keeping an eye on them. Tell the PCs about an odd, faint buzzing that seems to come from no particular direction. And when they are looking over the station, tell one of the PCs by note he caught a glimpse of something moving out of the corner of his eye, but there was nothing there when he turned to look. This sort of thing keeps the PCs on their toes and paranoid, so they won't get careless and do something rash.
2. HARV[E] and ELWOOD always give a series of verbal and physical warnings before they unleash their main arsenals. For example, as the PCs approach the station, ELWOOD addresses them through his external speaker, 'Caution! This is a restricted area! Danger! Tactical weapons testing in progress! Warning!'

And if the PCs do something foolish like start shooting up the station, HARV[E] politely warns the PCs by broadcasting over their com units, 'I'm sorry, I have been directed to destroy you if you do not desist these actions. Please stop immediately.' If the PCs don't desist, he turns their trailer into Swiss cheese. If that hint is insufficient…

Go ahead. Fry 'em.

Fill 'er up, Uncle Ken

Everything here is worth salvaging: the cars and the bots especially—even the ancient Motor's and Chilton service manuals *might* not crumble into dust at a touch. Of course, if the players figure out a way to deactivate (lotsa luck) or distract HARV[E], the Cyberpunks will be on Uncle Ken's like locusts. And Nouvelle Vague will decide it's a real good time to ambush the Punks. As for the Folks Back Home, Dale-U will kill for cars, or even parts; Philip-U will kill to keep him from getting them; The Computer will want ELWOOD captured or destroyed. Probably destroyed. The Computer has a big ego problem about other computers.

If a fight starts and ELWOOD is still connected, you might wish to throw in his perimeter defenses: a belt of mines around the Service Station, and a remote machinegun turret inside the dummy car on the roof. All but a few of the mines have deteriorated and merely make thick black smoke, and the sighting camera for the gun is broken, so ELWOOD must shoot blind.

You have probably noticed the computer has the same name as one of the Cyberpunk leaders. This not only allows the designer to get in an extra pop-culture joke, but opens up lots of opportunities for further confusion. For instance, if the players talk about killing Elwood the Cyberpunk while HARV[E] can hear them, the tank assumes they mean ELWOOD 3610, and is very upset with them. Likewise if the Punks, especially Jake, should hear about grabbing ELWOOD and taking him back to Alpha Complex.

No direction home

By now the Troubleshooters should have **A.** assembled a load of loot to take home, or **B.** gotten involved in a gang war, or **C.** caused The Computer to order Vulture strikes on the Studio, the Service Station and/or themselves (in any combination), or **D.** all of the above.

It is time to consider a strategic and orderly withdrawal (sample of Troubleshooter humor: 'What do you call 40 Troubleshooters hanging off the skid of a flybot?'). The less The Computer knows about mission status, the easier this will be, because many fewer things will be hunting down the Troubleshooters.

However, the more things that are in fact breathing down their necks, the more effective the climax to this episode (and with it, the entire mission) will be. This is the part of the narrative, familiar to all from movies and television, called The Chase. And as Mack Sennett knew, the more things in The Chase and the crazier they are—cops, firetrucks, steamrollers, roller skaters, baby carriages, and don't forget the truckload of custard pies—the better.

Imagine a long cone laid on the countryside. The point of the cone is the Troubleshooter team, trying to make their very slow crawler go very fast, without losing their trailer load of videodiscs and spare shock absorbers or the Nash Rambler being towed from the trailer's rear hitch. If the crawler has konked out, it is being towed by a straining transport flybot, possibly using Troubleshooters as tow cables. Behind them come the Cyberpunks, pedaling their toy motorbikes like mad. (Feel free to insert a downslope here to help them out.) Behind the Punks come the Vaguers, laughing hysterically with murderous intent. Then the surviving Studio Engineers, in the Studio Head's BMW with the Goons on the running boards. Some miscellaneous natives for local color. Siberian Communist timberwolves. The Great Jihad. Sandworms of Dune. The Last Secret Weapon of the Third Reich. Emperor Ming's Death Squadron. You get the idea. Don't forget HARV[E]: ol' Gomer Pylebot certainly hasn't forgotten the bad men who killed his buddy Sergeant ELWOOD.

And above it all, just behind the Mothership and the Killer Bees, flies every Vulture The Computer has been able to get airborne, with orders to bomb, strafe, scatter, destroy, do *something* to the long-dreaded-and-finally-here Invasion of the Communist Mutants from Hell. (Hey, what a great title for a mission!)

Into the wild blue yonder

So what happens when they reach Alpha Complex?

Consider the possibilities:

You could find some way to defuse the whole explosion, what we writers who want to show off our Latin call a *deus ex machina*:

1. One of the warring High Programmers shoots the other dead, and The Computer freezes all destruct orders until the contradictions are sorted out.
2. The Computer finds out about the High Programmer's treason and has them both shot. (Same results as #1.)
3. Another Alpha Complex, seeing the mass concentration of, well, stuff, thinks it is being invaded, and launches a counterstrike that exactly neutralizes this one. (Impressive, if a trifle desperate.)
4. Great Cthulhu rises from sunken R'lyeh and eats everybody, no saving roll. (Sorry, got carried away.)

The anticlimactic ending

If you take the easy way out and let Alpha Complex survive, there will, of course, be a debriefing.

A squad of BLUE Vulture Squadron guards takes the characters to the doors of Briefing Room AA and leaves them there. No security device bars the way: instead, a large, leatherette-bound book sits on a small table. Attached to the book by a chain is a ballpoint pen. A small sign above the table reads: 'Enter and sign in, please.'

The pen is almost out of ink; it runs out after the third Troubleshooter has signed in. (Whether some or all the Troubleshooters do not sign in makes no difference; the information in the book is classified ULTRAVIOLET, and no one will ever read it.)

The PCs probably enter the briefing room with trepidation, no doubt expecting to face a stern Dan-V ready to blame them for everything: destruction of Computer property, leading the Commie invasion to Alpha Complex, violating The Prime Directive, etc. However, when they do summon enough courage to enter, the room is empty. The high bench is vacant: a single spotlight is focused on the chair that Dan-V used

to occupy. Even The Computer's terminal in the room is deactivated.

After about ten minutes, the spotlight goes out. Time passes….

Eventually the Troubleshooters should get tired of standing around in the dark and go home.

Actually, The Computer has decided that the mission was a failure. Since this would imply a mistake on The Computer's part in okaying the mission, and The Computer never makes mistakes, The Computer has decided that the mission never occurred. Therefore no one has come to the briefing room to be debriefed, because there is no mission to be debriefed from. Dan-V has been executed for wasting valuable Computer time requesting status reports on a mission that never existed.

The Troubleshooters earn no rewards or penalties for Episode 4. If they keep their mouths shut, they can keep everything they found Outdoors. No one will ever admit anything ever happened, anywhere.

The Big Bang

Another option, one that is suitable to ***PARANOIA*** as to few other games, is to let nature take its course. Think about it. In fantasy, Cosmic Evil is never *really* allowed to overthrow the nice pastoral feudal autocracy. In space opera, the planetoid never *really* hits the inhabited planet. The villain *always* has a button that blows up his headquarters, and *always* shows Agent 007 where it is.

Haven't you always wanted to see the logical thing happen, the world *not* get saved at the last instant? Remember the first time you saw *Dr. Strangelove*? Well, now you can. Your players shouldn't mind. People who get upset when their characters don't reach 15th level don't play ***PARANOIA***. (Not twice, anyway.)

A suggested scenario to bring the mission to a memorable socko finish:

The cross-country motorcade draws close to the walls of Alpha Complex. The doors show no sign of opening. The chase shows no sign of slowing down. The Vultures peel off, screaming, for attack runs. Everybody is shooting. Some of them are even hitting things, not that it's making any difference.

One of the Troubleshooters (perhaps remembering the Vulture raid at the end of Episode 3) points out that the bombers are going to late-apex their dives again: wherever the bombs and beams hit, the Vultures are going to plow right into the city.

Every com and multicorder screen begins flashing:

YOU ARE ALL TRAITORS EVERY ONE OF YOU I KNEW IT FROM THE FIRST BUT NOW I HAVE PROOF OF IT BY GEOMETRIC LOGIC
IT WAS THE STRAWBERRIES
ABSOLUTE PRIORITY ORDER 001
ALL VEHICLES I SAY AGAIN ALL TRAITOR VEHICLES TERMINATE POWER INSTANTLY
I, THE GREAT OZ, HAVE SPOKEN

The air is suddenly quiet as all the Vulture engines die. There is only an ominous whistling of wings.

Now, of course, the Vultures can't pull out of the dive, nor can they dump their ordnance loads.

By the hundreds, they punch through the walls and roof of Alpha Complex.

There is a moment of stillness, and then the bombs go off. Another pause (play it for all it's worth) and then secondary explosions occur in power plants, armories, chemical storage; everywhere. The earth heaves as all of Alpha goes up.

Everyone stares for a while. They start arguing about where to go next. There is supposed to be another Alpha Complex only a couple hundred klicks away, not so bad if they can hot-wire the crawler and figure out a hundred klicks which way.

HARV[E] noses up and levels his laser. 'Are you going to take my friend ELWOOD home now, or do I have to get mean?'

You might ask them if they have any better ideas…

Citizen Sessil-B-DML's great epic.

YCBBB PC #1

Tex-Y-DBF-3

Male HPD&MC Communications Officer

Service firm: We Know What U Want
Service firm type: Trend Identifiers
Security clearance: YELLOW
Credits: 120
Tics: Describes everything in vague terms of color, shape and purpose.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Tex-Y: I can't get the... the silvery long thing with the yellow bit to make things, y'know, sizzle.
Eric-Y: What? *[Checks where Tex-Y is pointing.]* Your laser has stopped working? Put on another barrel then.
Tex-Y: So, I need to screw a new tubular yellow whatsit on the front of the silvery doodad that goes fizzle?

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 09
Con Games 13
Moxie 01
Whistle at a Pitch That Makes People Forget What You Just Said 15

Stealth 04

Violence 10
Agility 01
Consume Mind-Bending Chemicals Without Discernible Effect 16
Energy Weapons 14
Fine Manipulation 01
Hand Weapons 14
Thrown Weapons 14

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 08
Electronic Engineering 12
Nuclear Engineering 01
Tune Com Unit to Same Frequency as Someone You Can See 14

Software 02

Wetware 07
Cloning 01
Make Cold Fun Into Psychotropic Concoction 13
Outdoor Life 01
Pharmatherapy 11
Psychotherapy 11

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Software)

YCBBB PC #2

Brett-Y-WYD-2

Male PLC Hygiene Officer

Service firm: Real Safe (Really) PLC
Service firm type: Warehouse System Inspectors
Security clearance: YELLOW
Credits: 120
Tics: Speaks in long sentences without taking pause or breath.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Brett-Y: So, basically you want us to go into the deserted underground station that's currently offline according to Tech Services and find our way to where we can install the system patches necessary to bring the place back online in the control of The Computer without getting ourselves killed by any frankenstein bots or traitors with murderous intent but with due care not to cause any unnecessary and unfortunate collateral damage—would that be correct?

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 07
Bootlicking 11
Chutzpah 01

Stealth 03
Hide Small Objects in Cheeks Without Speaking Funny 09

Violence 09
Energy Weapons 13
Field Weapons 01
Projectile Weapons 13
Scream So Loud Everyone Ducks 15

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

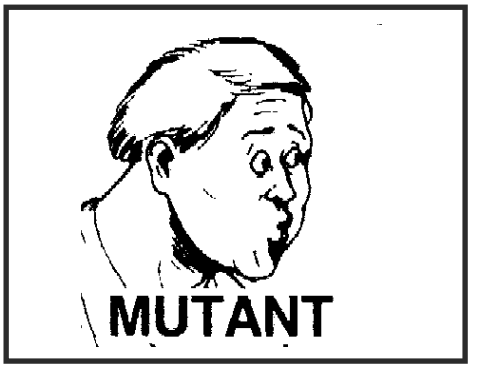
Hardware 07
Bot Ops & Maintenance 11
Chemical Engineering 11
Vehicle Ops & Maintenance 01
Weapon & Armor Maintenance 01

Software 06
Bot Programming 10
Hacking 01
Make Docbots Confuse Sleepy-Sleepy With Wakey-Wakey 12

Wetware 08
Know Where to Poke to Make People Sneeze 14
Outdoor Life 12
Psychotherapy 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Management, Hardware)

YCBBB PC #3



Wyatt-Y-VSC-3

Male CPU Loyalty Officer
REGISTERED MUTANT

Service firm: Perfect Pockets
Service firm type: Pocket Protector Refurbishers
Security clearance: YELLOW
Credits: 120
Tics: Easily distracted.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Donald-Y: So, if we split up and take them from both sides, we shouldn't end up getting killed too badly. Okay with you, Wyatt-Y?
Wyatt-Y: Ooh... look at that big orange truck. Yeesh, the size of the wheels on that thing!
Donald-Y: Wyatt-Y! Do you understand your role in this risky and possibly suicidal plan?
Wyatt-Y: Yeah, sure. I understa— Oh, wow! There was a flashing light up there or something.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 10
Bootlicking 14
Confuse Jackobot FOAD-34 w/ Spurious Logic 16
Con Games 14
Interrogation 01
Chutzpah 01

Stealth 04

Violence 09
Energy Weapons 13
Field Weapons 01
Make Target Dance Like Maniac Without Actually Hitting Him With Even One Shot 15
Projectile Weapons 13
Thrown Weapons 01
Unarmed Combat 13

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 04
Get 'Gas Giant' Vending Machines to Dispense Two Sodas for Price of One 10

Software 08
Bot Programming 01
Data Analysis 12
Data Search 12
Operating Systems 01

Wetware 05
Plausibly Explain Other People's Dreams 11

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Software)

Wyatt-Y-VSC-3

Male CPU Loyalty Officer

Mutation: Precognition (declared), Minor Telekinesis, Telepathic Sense
Secret society: Psion (degree 3)
Secret skills: Forgery 09, Video Games 17, Twitchtalk 12

Background: You've always been a bit of a dreamer. When your dreams started coming true, you realized at once that you were a psionic. It didn't bother you a bit: you knew all about projective time series statistics from your work with The Computer. You even registered your power. And you joined the Psion secret society, because you wanted to be the best psionic you could possibly be. The society taught you to communicate, and even to move objects, by pure mental power.

Then what happens? The lousy fuzzbrain Mystics 'open up' one of your clones' minds, and can't get all the tinkertoys back in the box. So The Computer calls you up to the Troubleshooters. Big thanks for all your work!

Okay, you'll serve The Computer. (Termination is not part of your career plans.) But one day, The Computer won't be looking. And *then* ~~po~~w ! Right in the I/O bus!

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Your opening may have come. Recently you received a desperate telepathic communication from a fellow Psion. The stinking Mystics were running his mind through the wringer. Before he expired, he told you of a black box, which seems to be somehow toxic to The Computer. The Mystics are after it, and if they get it first, they'll use it to fry every clear human mind in Alpha Complex.

One of the team members is a sewer-brained Mystic~~but~~ y ou don't know which yet. Mystics are weird, though. It's only a matter of time till you spot him. And rumor says your IntSec officer is a Death Leopard. Better keep an eye on him.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
(2) YELLOW laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
Flashlight
YELLOW canvas backpack
Personal jackobot FOAD-JAC-34
(3) Telescopalmine pills (experimental pill version of an IntSec truth drug; ILLEGAL)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit YELLOW reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Brett-Y-WYD-2

Male PLC Medical Officer

Mutation: Chameleon
Secret society: Sierra Club (degree 3)
Secret skills: Dendrology 14, Rock Climbing 08, Bioweapons 12

Background: You really wish people would let you alone. Your Chameleon mutant ability is a blessing: fading into the landscape is just what you've always wanted to do.

You joined the Sierra Club secret society because they have a dream like yours, a dream of the Outdoors, a great big place where you can go off and climb a mountain, where you can stand next to a tree and nobody will tell you the tree is classified, where you can kill things and eat them with nobody asking you to pass the chymopapain please and can I have some more of the blue soup and hey you stupid clone you got stuff on mys.. igh.

You hate being a Troubleshooter. Everybody looks at you and asks when you're going to be dead. And you hate Death Leopards, because they're all showoffs. And you hate mutants because they're weird; they have three arms and things.

You'd really like to kill all the Troubleshooters and Death Leopards and mutants and go outside and stand beside a tree and turn green, but you've got to do it in some way nobody will *notice*.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

There's this guy named Obregon Weirdhat or something like that. He's from the Outdoors, *really* Outdoors, and the Troubleshooters are after him, because he's from the Outdoors and they think he's a Commie. He's got some kind of box thing that The Computer wants. If you help him get away and get the box thing for the Sierra Club, Wildbag (or whatever) will take you Outdoors with him. And if you can get back inside with directions for getting to the Outdoors, you could become a Folk Hero like the legendary Smokey the Bear or Jane Fonda…

Of course, you aren't going to let these vat scum citizens seep out over your moutain and play with the trees. Hah! The Sierra Club can be trusted with such knowledge, but anyone else who discovers the route is going to be a sorry citizen.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
(2) YELLOW laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
Flashlight
YELLOW canvas backpack
Hollow-handled knife (looks standard, but used for secret society messages; not illegal, but likely to draw embarrassing questions)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit YELLOW reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Tex-Y-DBF-3

Male HPD&MC Communications Officer

Mutation: Uncanny Luck
Secret society: Mystic (rank 4)
Secret skills: Drug Procurement 09, Whistling 11, Bribery 12

Background: If you had your way, HPD & Mind Control would be HPD & Mind Alteration. You enjoy experimenting with psychochemicals, subsonics, color psychology and more. You've swallowed combinations of chemicals that would turn ordinary people into kitchen appliances. No wonder you're secretly a Mystic.

But now you're a Troubleshooter, called up to replace a mysteriously deceased clone. No longer can you play with other's minds like modeling clay. Now you're supposed to hunt down people who explore the wonderful world of human software modifications.

But perhaps there's a way. Your superiors in the Mystics have asked you to be on the lookout for thisw. ell, black thing. Some kind of box. Inside it is apparently the ultimate cosmic high. Rumor has it that the box can even get The Computer high. Imagine that: The Computer itself turned on to the Cosmic Whatever It Is. Stoned Hardware.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Use your Troubleshooter status to recover the black box for the Mystic All~~b~~ ut do so before Corpore Metal's agents can do so. Those tin-plated clowns, who think Cosmicness can be engraved on a circuit board, want to feed the box into their cold, uncool equations. Do not allow this.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
(2) YELLOW laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
Flashlight
YELLOW canvas backpack
(3) Aerosol THC grenades (effect like a stun gun; ILLEGAL)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit YELLOW reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

YCBBB PC #4

Miles-Y-LOM-2

Male Tech Svcs Happiness Officer

Service firm: Hurts
Service firm type: Consolidated Motorized Transport
Security clearance: YELLOW
Credits: 120
Tics: Tends to jumble up simple processes.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Miles-Y: Check the mirror. Ease off the brake. Close the door. Deactivate park. Activate primary pile. Maneuver into the road. Turn the ignition. Signal.
[Sounds of other vehicles skidding, honking horns.]
Rest of the team: ARRRRRRRRRRGH!
Miles-Y: Have you guys put on your seatbelts?

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06
Chutzpah 10
Convince Superiors You Never Left Your Desk 12
Intimidation 01

Stealth 04
Almost Completely Muffle Autocar Engine Noises 10

Violence 07
Demolition 01
Energy Weapons 11
Hand Weapons 11

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 11
Bot Ops & Maintenance 15
Chemical Engineering 01
Habitat Engineering 01
Mechanical Engineering 15
Nuclear Engineering 01
Pull a Bootleg Reverse in a Crawler 17
Vehicle Ops & Maintenance 15

Software 09
Bot Programming 13
Data Analysis 01
Soothe Team Transport's Jangled Bot Brain 15

Wetware 03

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Violence, Wetware)

YCBBB PC #5

Donald-Y-EIN-3

Male Power Services Loyalty Officer

Service firm: Absolute Peripherals
Service firm type: Circuit Maintenance
Security clearance: YELLOW
Credits: 120
Tics: Always muttering and worrying about the worse-case scenario.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Miles-Y: I've lost contact with the others.
Donald-Y: Crud. Pinned down and shot to ribbons, fried like algae chips.
Miles-Y: Look, I'm sure they've just wandered out of view... I don't hear any laser fire.
Donald-Y: So, we're lost. They're lost. Crud. We're never going to get out of here. Surrounded by the enemy, no place to turn, clock ticking down to zero...
Miles-Y: *[Sighs.]*

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 04
Chutzpah 08
Analyze Worst-Case Scenario 10
Con Games 01

Stealth 08
Palm Treasonous Tools Without Provoking Suspicion 14
Security Systems 12
Shadowing 01

Violence 09
Energy Weapons 13
Field Weapons 01
Projectile Weapons 13
Thrown Weapons 01
Vehicular Combat 13

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

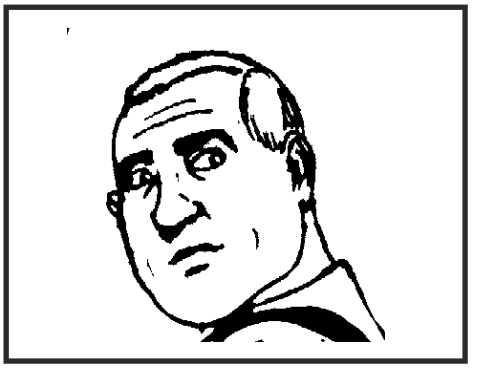
Hardware 09
Chemical Engineering 01
Coax a Gut-Wrenching Turbo Boost Out of an Ordinary Autocar 15
Vehicle Ops & Maintenance 13

Software 07
Financial Systems 01
Turn Minor Bot Software Glitch Into a Homicidal Rampage 13
Vehicle Programming 11

Wetware 03

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Violence, Wetware)

YCBBB PC #6



Eric-Y-KTH-3

Male Armed Forces Equipment Guy

Service firm: Red Detectors
Service firm type: Threat Assessors
Security clearance: YELLOW
Credits: 120
Tics: Suffers from a constant hangover.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Commie traitor: Ve are to be thinkink you should be surrrrenderink!
Eric-Y: I'm thinking I need to lie down in a dark room and you need to stop shouting.
Brett-Y: We fight for the good of the complex! We shall never surrender!
Eric-Y: Hey man, that's good. You keep 'em busy while I go see if they have an asperquaint dispenser 'round here.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 09
Bootlicking 01
Convince Others You Weren't Really Asleep on the Job 15
Hygiene 01
Interrogation 13
Oratory 13

Stealth 08
Disguise 01
Surveillance 12

Violence 09
Unexpectedly Give a Powerful Shove 15
Energy Weapons 13
Field Weapons 01
Projectile Weapons 13
Unarmed Combat 13
Vehicular Combat 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 06
Habitat Engineering 01
Optimize Laser to Squeeze Off an Extra Shot 12
Weapon & Armor Maintenance 10

Software 03

Wetware 05
Mix Intoxicating Brew From Ordinary Fizzy Beverages and Food Scraps 11

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Software)

Eric-Y-KTH-3

Male ~~Armed Forces~~ IntSec Equipmt Guy

Actual IntSec service firm: Pinkietons (infiltrating a rival Threat Assessors firm in Armed Forces)
Mutation: Combat Mind
Secret society: Death Leopard (degree 4)
Secret skills: Demolitions 12, Partying 12, Gambling 13

Background: The only thing in the world better than being a Death Leopard is being a Leopard who works as a Troubleshooter. You get to carry a laser and use it any time you feel like it. Sometimes they send you out to nab the infamous Leopard funsmith known only as 'Captain Electric'. If The Computer knew that you yourself are the daring Captain, it'd crash a disk.

You've heard occasional murmurs from fellow Death Leopards that you are not as full-tilt-bozo as you used to b~~eth~~a t perhaps you are getting old and cautious. But these murmurs don't bother you. You're saving yourself for The Big One~~the~~ caper that will rocket you to superstar-class immortality. In the meantime, there's plenty of subtler fun to be had in an unsuspecting group of fancypants Troubleshooters.

You're just a little worried about being teamed with Tex-Y-DBF-3. Does he know it was you who pushed his clone predecessor into the particle accelerator? Oh, well. He glowed so nicely.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Heads up, Captain Electric: Your assistance is enlisted by a star-class compatriot. Screaming Sarah Slick, the Duchess of Rock and Roll, has proposed Fun on a Vast Scale sometime within the next 72 hours, and You Are Invited. Alas, a passel of those psniveling Psions threaten to crash the party. They might even dress up as lighthearted Leopards, the psychic pschnooks. Make sure they do not do this anti-thing, beginning with your own companions in law'n'order, one of whom you're sure is a Psion.

You are sure which one of your team has the glowplug brain, but Psions can't help showing off (their one small virtue). It'll only be a matter of time. And then~~py~~ romania!

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
(2) YELLOW laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
YELLOW canvas backpack
Multicorder sabotage device (PDC plugin chip that erases Multicorder recordings when activated within one meter of a recording cartridge; ILLEGAL)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit YELLOW reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Donald-Y-EIN-3

Male Power Services Loyalty Officer

Mutation: Mechanical Intuition, Electroshock
Secret society: Corpore Metal (degree 3)
Secret skills: Cyborging 08, Botspotting 03, Old Reckoning Computer Languages 09

Background: Crud. The world was just great in Power Services. You could sit behind the controls of a colossal machine and imagine you *were* the machine, sleek and powerful and immortal with routine maintenance. You always like machines: they would, it seemed, open up and talk to you. People are okay, too, though they wear out too quick. You joined Corpore Metal because they seemed to be working toward the best of both worlds.

And you were on your way *up* in Power Services. They let you drive transports, crawlers, even flybots. Heck, you *were* Power, as you discovered one day when you recharged a power capacitor from your naked fingertips. You could have been somebody. You could have been a *cyborg*.

But now you're a Troubleshooter. Crud.

Maybe it's not such a bad life. You get to drive stuff occasionally. You can carry a laser, which is fun. (If you ever achieve your dream of being cyborged, you're going to have a laser installed in your index finger.)

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

There's a Romantic in your team, and you've got to kill him. (Crud.) Rumor says the Romantics are linked up with PURGE psychos who've got some kind of gadget that can burn out high-level circuitry like nobody's business. The PURGErs are going to use it on a major Computer subsystem, and then the Romantics will move in and teach everybody some sick thing like rug-weaving or miniature golf.

The Romantic's got to be either that sneaky wimp Brett-Y-WYD, or maybe Tex-Y-DBF, the space case. Eric-Y is laser-happy: maybe you can get him to do the actual shooting. And grab the gadget~~pro~~ba bly a modified bot brain~~for~~ y ourself and Corpore Metal.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
YELLOW laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
YELLOW canvas backpack
Special vehicle toolkit (for making unauthorized adjustments and alterations to vehicles, like hot-wiring starters, disabling speed-governors, deactivating safety equipment and so on; ILLEGAL)

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit YELLOW reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Miles-Y-LOM-2

Male Tech Services Happiness Officer

Mutation: Precognition
Secret society: Romantics (rank 3)
Secret skills: Frisbee Throwing 13, Line Dancing 08, Old Reckoning DIY Television 13

Background: 'Syntholube-fingers'. That's what they've been calling you since you got out of the clone tank. And dropped the electric hand drier into the tank, terminating your #1 clone on the spot. And it isn't fair. You can fix anything, better than new and in record time. So you let a few chips get loose inside a warbot. So it identified BLF Sector as a column of Commie warbots. It performed the attack maneuvers perfectly, didn't it?

That was no reason to transfer you to the Troubleshooters.

They only did it because Troubleshooters all carry lasers, and you can fix lasers like a wizard, even if you can't hit the broad side of a residential block with one.

You know why you're a Romantic. You long for the days when Americans could fix anything on the road, and punch out a Commie before he could reach for his rattly cheap Commie gun. (Once, at a Romantic meeting, they showed a forbidden tape of *The Fighting Seabees*. You stood up and applauded when John Wayne reprogrammed the dozerbot.)

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

'Black box. More tapes. In Stone'— That was all of the message you could read before the guardbot came by. You know what black boxes are: bot brains. You know what tapes are: Old Reckoning stories about scientists like John Wayne and Boris Karloff and Mr. Peabody. But what's 'stone'? Once you heard a Sierra Clubber use the word…

Maybe a bot brain knows where a cache of tapes is located, and you have to get it away from the Sierra Club. Ordinarily you get along okay with the Clubbers.ut thi s is different. This is *war*.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

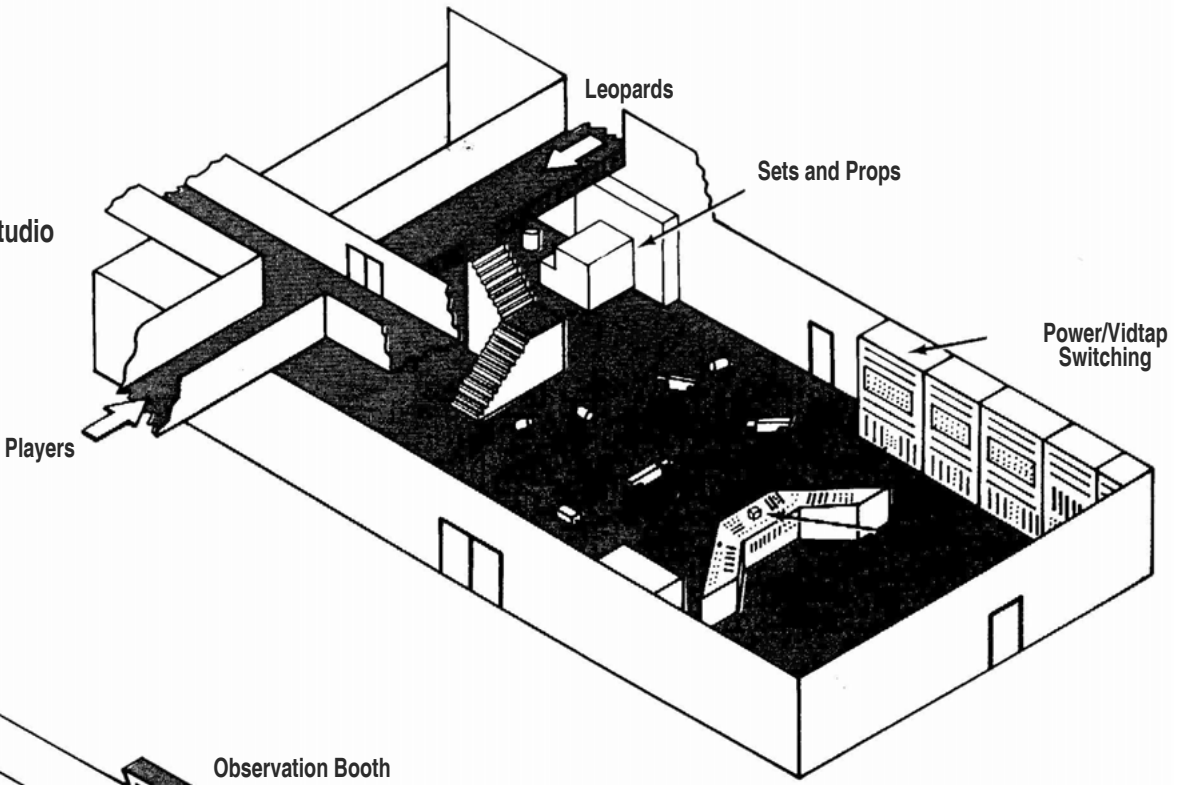
Knife
Datapad and stylus
(2) YELLOW laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
YELLOW canvas backpack
Contraband manual *25 Ways to Beat the Bot* (disguised as a standard datapad; procedures for disrupting normal bot programming without revealing tampering; PROFOUNDLY ILLEGAL)

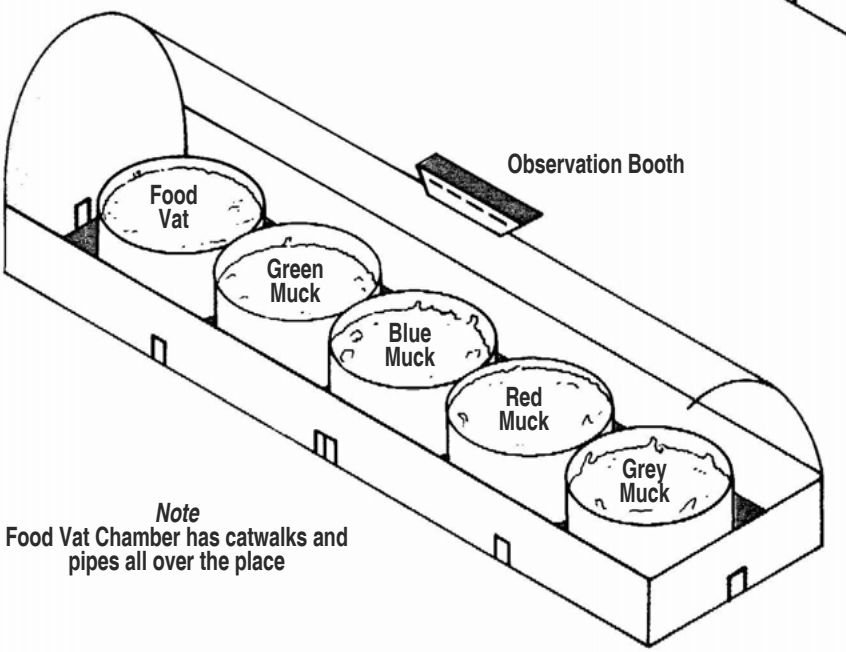
ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit YELLOW reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Mission One:

Rasterman Ganja's TV Studio





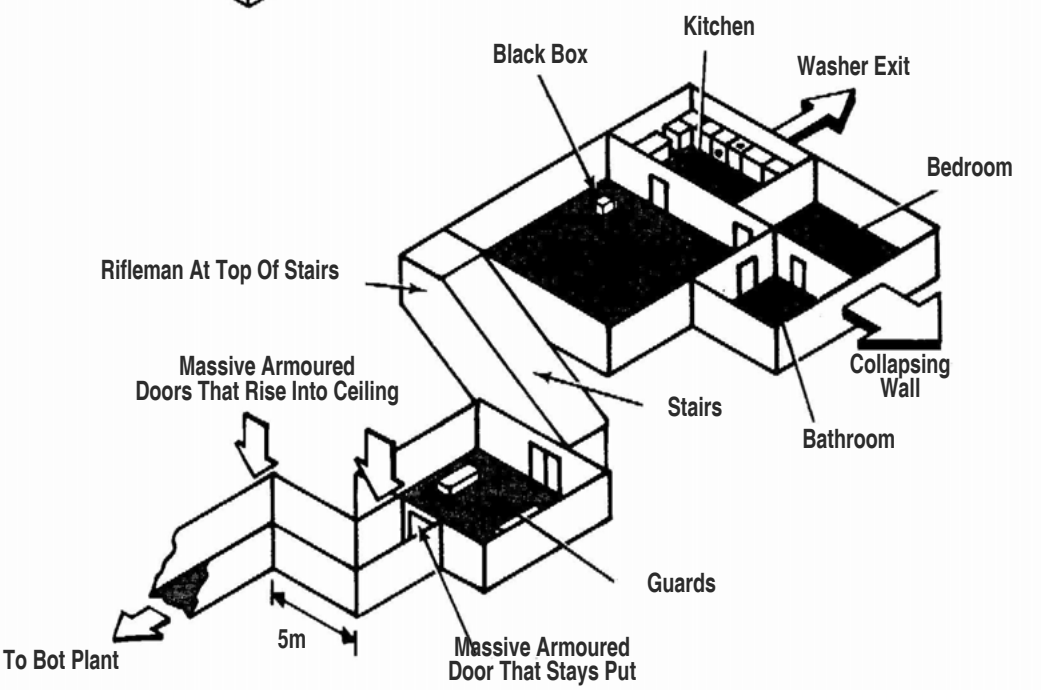
Note
Food Vat Chamber has catwalks and pipes all over the place

Mission One:

Food Vat Chambers

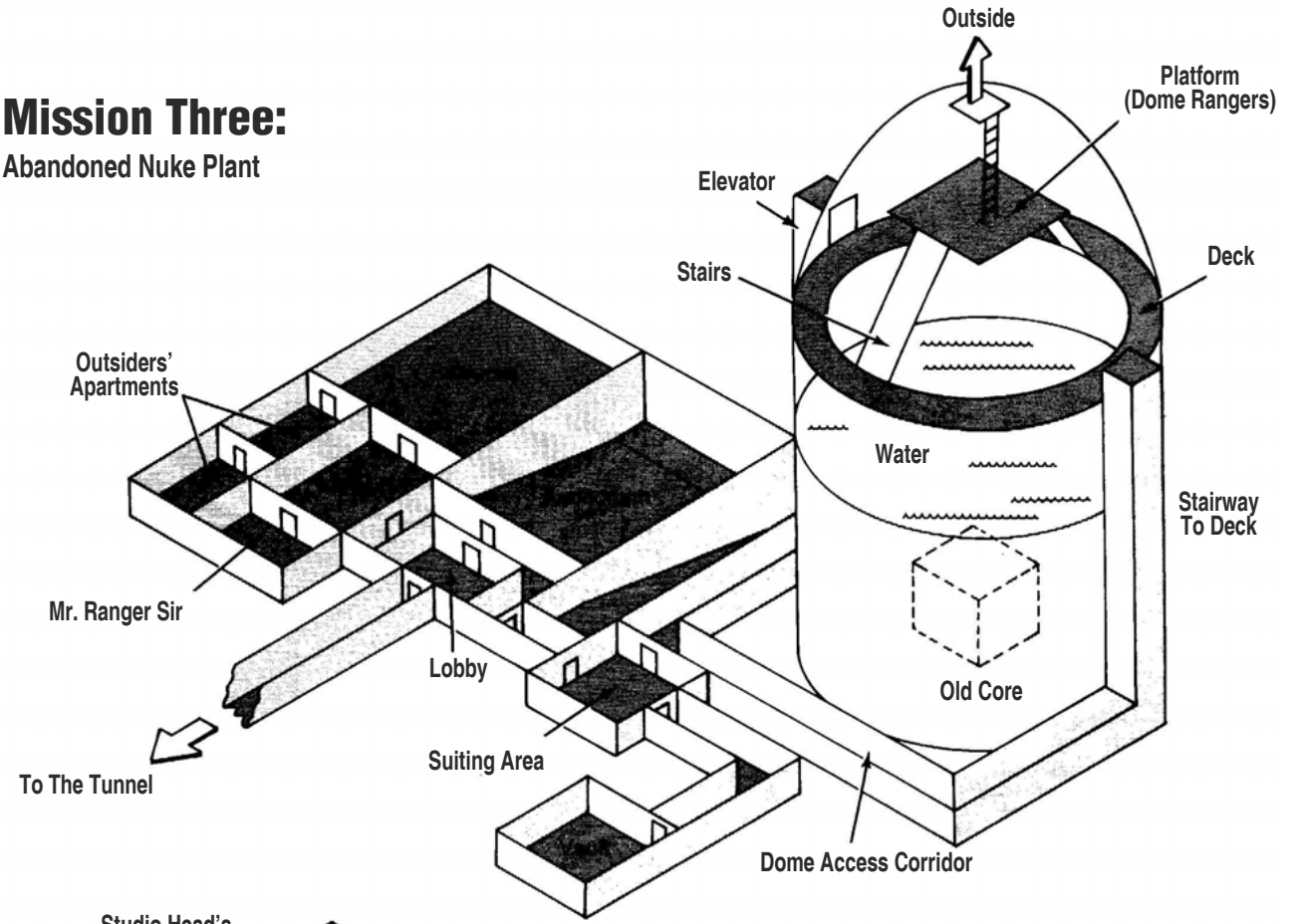
Mission Two:

Safe House Apartment



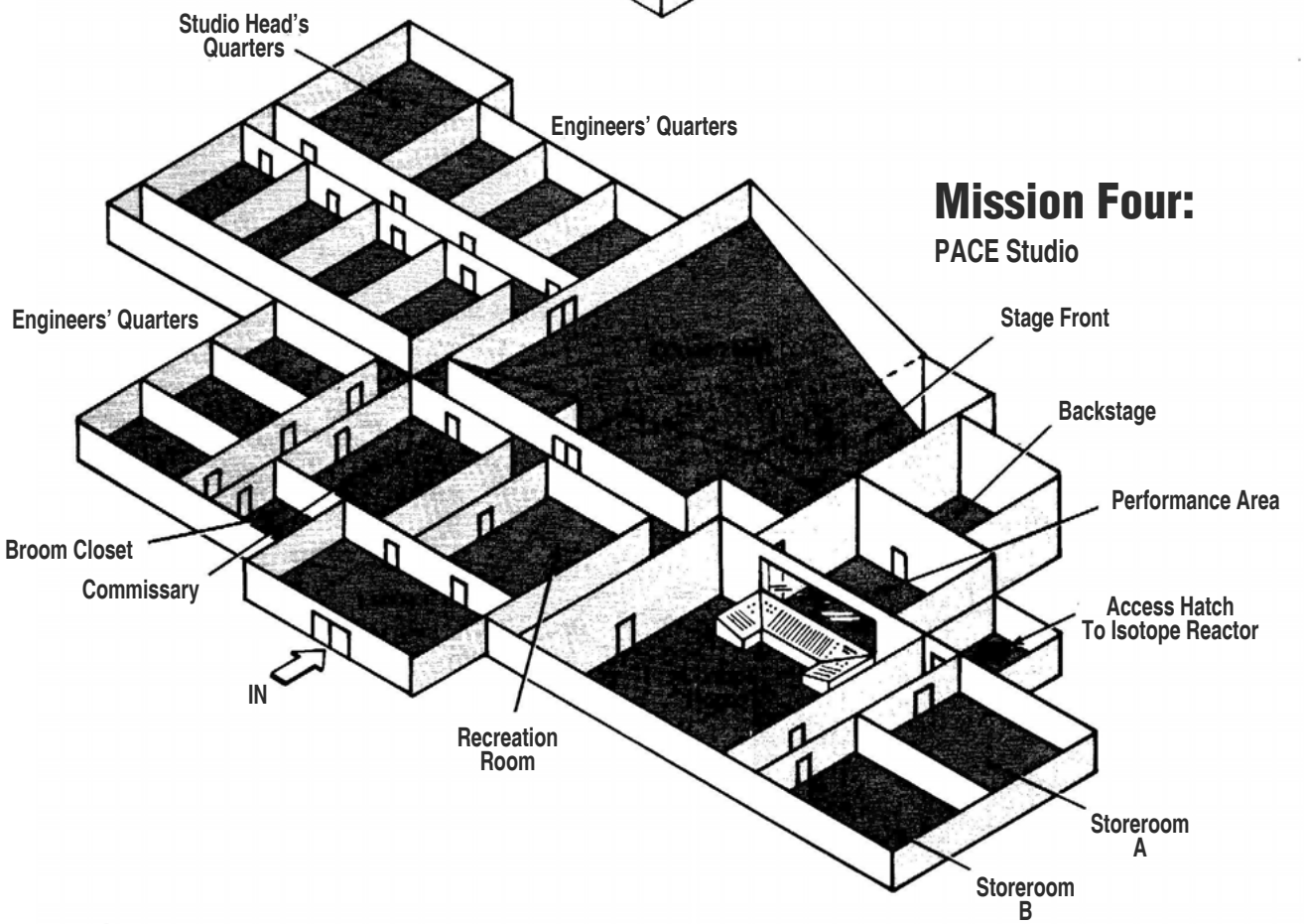
Mission Three:

Abandoned Nuke Plant



Mission Four:

PACE Studio



EQUIPMENT LIST: EPISODE 1

(12) YELLOW laser pistol barrels
(2) Suits plate armor
(1) Suit YELLOW reflec armor
(2) Slugthrowers, each with 3 clips
solid-slug ammo
(6) HE grenades
(6) Smoke grenades
(1) hottorch
(1) Multicorder 1 with RF tracer
cartridge
(1) Multicorder 1 with recorder program

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference = YCBBB. 1.2.1

******** MISSION ALERT! *******

:ATTENTION TROUBLESHOOTER! ONCE AGAIN THE COMPUTER HAS SELECTED YOU FOR A MISSION OF THE GREATEST IMPORTANCE. REWARD THE COMPUTER'S FAITH IN YOU AND YOU WILL BE REWARDED IN TURN.
:YOU WILL BE PART OF A TROUBLESHOOTER TEAM ASSIGNED TO TRACE AND DESTROY A GROUP OF TRAITOROUS SABOTEURS. YOUR IMPORTANT DUTIES WILL INCLUDE THE RECOVERY OF MISAPPROPRIATED COMPUTER PROPERTY AND THE SUMMARY EXECUTION OF THE TRAITORS RESPONSIBLE.
:PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE TROUBLESHOOTER HEADQUARTERS IN XTZ SECTOR FOR YOUR ROUTINE BRIEFING, WHICH WILL TAKE PLACE IN BRIEFING ROOM [INPUT NUMBER OF BRIEFING ROOM HERE]. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference = YCBBB. 2.2

******** MISSION ALERT! *******

:GREETINGS TROUBLESHOOTER! THE COMPUTER WISHES TO CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR RECENT PERFORMANCE. BECAUSE OF YOUR EXCELLENT SERVICE, YOU HAVE BEEN CHOSEN FOR A NEW MISSION OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO ALPHA COMPLEX. SERVE THE COMPUTER WELL AND YOU SHALL BE WELL SERVED.
:YOUR MISSION WILL INCLUDE THE CAPTURE AND/OR TERMINATION OF DANGEROUS TRAITORS POSSESSED OF UNUSUAL MUTANT ABILITIES. RECOGNIZING THE THREAT POSED BY THESE MUTANTS, THE COMPUTER HAS SPARED NO EFFORT TO PROVIDE YOU WITH NEW EQUIPMENT THAT SHOULD PROVE IRRESISTIBLE.
:YOUR USE OF THIS EQUIPMENT IS SUBJECT TO THE USUAL SAFEGUARDS FOR THE MAINTENANCE OF SECURITY AND YOUR OWN PROTECTION. PLEASE REPORT NOW TO BRIEFING ROOM BRIEFING ROOM BRIEFING ROOM. DELAY WILL NOT BE TOLERATED. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference = YCBBB. 4.5.2

:COMPUTER REDUCTION ANALYSIS/ MISSION PROFILE
:ANX.294.OUT (PRIORITY)
:CR/AMP INDICATED PRIMARY TARGET IS PACE STUDIO. PRECISE COORDINATES NOT AVAILABLE. COINCIDENT DATA IMPLIES LOCATION AT JUNCTION OF FRANKIE VALLEY [??sp] AND FOUR SEASONS [REF OR.DOC RL337 'MANHATTAN RESTAURANT GUIDE'].
:CRA/MP INDICATES PRIMARY TARGET IS AUTOCAR PRODUCTION FACILITY STORING PRODUCTION DATA ON MICRODISK MACHINE/ACOUSTIC READABLE.
:PATTERNMATCH DATA REPORTS LOCALS WERE MAKING THUNDERBIRDS [light strike a/cft] AND HAD MULTIPLY-ITERATED FUN UNTIL THEIR DADDY [Karl Marx, father of Communism] TOOK THEIR T-BIRD AWAY. ALSO POSSIBLE PRODUCTION OF LITTLE RED CORVETTES [small communist strike w/cft]. APPARENTLY EVACUATED DENVER BECAUSE THEY LOOKED JUST LIKE A COMMIE AND MIGHT JUST HAVE BEEN MEMBERS' BABIES.
:OPERATIONAL NOTES — CRA/MP/ON ANX.294

- **— RECOVER ACOUSTIC READABLE DATA DISKS AND ANCILLARY PRODUCTION EQUIPMENT**
- **— RECOVER THUNDERBIRD PROTOTYPE**
- **— RECOVER CORVETTE, RED, LITTLE**
- **— DETERMINE PRESENCE OF COMMUNIST BABIES OUTSIDE DENVER AND TERMINATE**

EQUIPMENT LIST: EPISODE 4

(6) YELLOW laser pistol barrels
(1) Tangler, with 2 reloads
(1) Ice gun
(1) Cone rifle with following rounds:
  (8) solid slug
  (3) HE
  (2) smoke
  (2) napalm
(2) Slugthrowers, automatic, each with:
  (3) clips slugs
  (5) loose HE rounds
  (2) loose napalm rounds
  (1) clip tracers
(1) Flamethrower, 6 shots remaining
(2) Knives
(2) Truncheons
(1) Case of 20 HE grenades
(3) Environ suits
(1) Suit cold-weather gear
(2) Decon suits
(1) Geiger counter
(2) Infraspecs
(1) Pair binoculars
(30) 2-day ration cylinders
(3) 30m coils rope
(1) Inflatable raft
(1) Compass
(1) Map, ORANGE Clearance
(1) All-terrain crawler, equipped with:
  Com 3
  smoke generator
  laser cannon
(1) All-terrain trailer, 3 ton capacity
(1) Docbot, model 5, skills:
  Medical 10
  Outdoor Life 06
(1) Multicorder 1 with recorder program

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference = YCBBB. 4.3.1

******** MISSION ALERT! *******
:ATTENTION TROUBLESHOOTER!
:YOUR MOST RECENT MISSION PERFORMANCE HAS RECOMMENDED YOU TO THE COMPUTER AS AN EXCELLENT CANDIDATE FOR if 593 then goto TERMINATION if 1068 then goto LONG TERM FROZEN STORAGE onerr goto A MISSION OUTSIDE ALPHA COMPLEX return
:PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO BRIEFING ROOM getfile boomroom/file not found//WHAT DO YOU MEAN FILE NOT FOUND THEFT OF COMPUTER FILES IS TREASON PUNISHABLE BY exe. monitor. com
:do you mean using an unproxied link? If the computer traces your line we'll be bot lubeoh they just coned my door i ERRORERRORERRORERRORERROR
:HANK OU OR OUR OOPERATION ROUBLE HOOTER

:SPECIAL FIELD DISPATCH
:Reference = YCBBB. 2.3.4

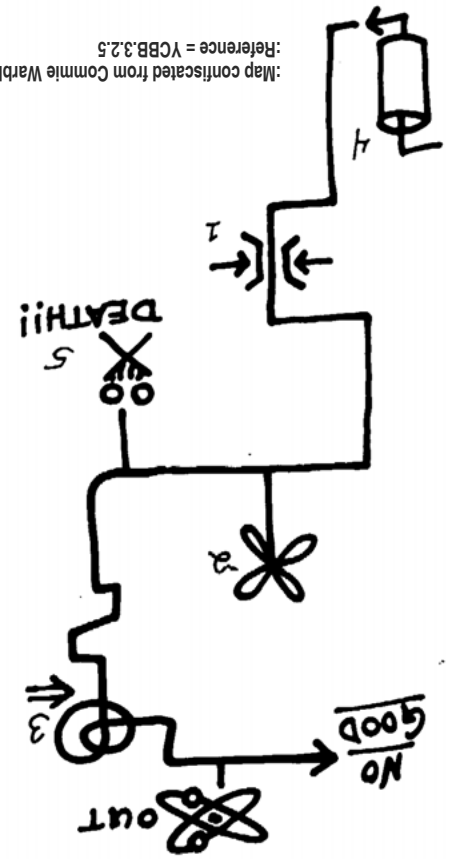
:SPECIAL FIELD DISPATCH!
:TO TROUBLESHOOTER TEAM [DELETED FOR REASONS OF SECURITY]
:LATE INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM [DELETED]—PROCEED TO YCA Sector BOT FACILITY 25—THERE COMPLETE MISSION TO CAPTURE [DELETED DELETED] AND RECOVER [DELETED DELETED DELETED DELETED DELETED].
:[DELETED DELETED] IS WANTED FOR INTERROGATION. ANY [DELETED DELETED] THAT INTERFERES WITH INTERROGATION IS [DELETED].
:GOOD [DELETED]. THE COMPUTER IS [DELETED] ON YOU. SERVE THE COMPUTER WELL AND YOU WILL BE [DELETED].
:END MESSAGE

EQUIPMENT LIST: EPISODE 2

(12) YELLOW laser pistol barrels
(6) HE grenades
(6) Smoke grenades
(6) Suits YELLOW civilian clothing with concealed armor
(1) Blaster, 2 reloads
(1) Stun gun, no reload
(1) Slugthrower, with:
  (1) clip slug rounds
  (1) clip HE rounds
  (2) loose smoke rounds
  (2) loose napalm rounds
  (1 Multicorder 1 with recorder program

EQUIPMENT LIST: EPISODE 3

(9) YELLOW laser pistol barrels
(2) RED laser rifles, one extra barrel each
(1) Energy pistol with 3 reloads
(2) Slugthrowers, automatic, each with:
  (4) clips slugs
  (2) clips HE
  (4) loose napalm rounds
(2) Environ suits
(2) Suits Kevlar armor
(6) Backpacks
(6) Pairs hiking boots
(6) 2-day ration cylinders
(6) 1-liter water bottles
(6) 30m coils rope
(6) Satchel-type demolition charges, with 1-10-minute time fuse
(3) Electric lanterns
(2) Infraspecs
(2) Crowbars
(2) Collapsible shovels
(1) Hottorch
(1) Chainsaw
(1) Portable electric winch
(1) Towel
(1) Jackobot Model 340, skills are:
  Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 10
  Tracking 08
  Energy Weapons 06
  Projectile Weapons 05
  Unarmed Combat 06
(1) Docbot Model 7, skills are:
  Medical 12
(1) Multicorder 1 with recorder program



:Map confiscated from Commie Warbler
:Reference = YCBB.3.2.5

Bot roster

Type	No.	Speed	Weapons	Special equipment & abilities	Size	Armor
XS Chainsaw Massacre	1	Tread (walk/run)	4 chainsaws (impact, W5K), rating 16	Has four extendible arms fitted with chainsaws; small brain; narrow, literal programming	Refrigerator	**2**
Security guardbots	1 per PC	Tread (walk/run)	2 stunguns, rating 15 2 tanglers, rating 15	Standard model; four multipurpose arms and manipulators; medium brain; broad, flexible programming	Water heater	**2 hardened**
YCA Bot Repair Facility—Because these exist to complicate any silly melee in YCA facility, they should come in various sizes, shapes and appendages (soap sprayers, multiple work arms with dangerous tools like drills and oxyacetylene torches, automatic sealers looking for something to wrap…).						
Unarmed briefing guardbot (The Deadly Servomotor Extensors of Kung Fu)	1	Legs (walk/run/sprint)	Unarmed Combat 17	Small brain; narrow, literal programming	Bruce Lee	**2**
Tunnel mission jackobot	1	Tread (walk/run)	See Equipment List 3 for details	Two heavy-duty arms and manipulators; large brain; broad, flexible programming	Washing machine	**1**
Smokey the Bearbot	1	Legs (walk…slowly)	1 shovel (S5K impact), rating 10 1 fire extinguisher (as ice gun with spray fire—S3K impact), rating 10	Looks like guess-who; small brain; very narrow, literal programming (Only *you* can prevent fires!)	Grizzly	**2**
Outdoors mission docbot 5	1	Legs (walk/run/sprint)	None	Standard chassis; two light manipulators; medium brain; narrow, literal programming	Human	**1**
All-terrain crawler	1	Tread (walk/run)	1 laser cannon (W2K energy), rating 15	Tny brain; autopilot and weapons programming only	Your basic tracked personnel carrier	**3 hardened**
ELWOOD 3610—Chest-freezer-sized; kindly old mainframe, likes to chat with friendly folk. If unplugged, gives good dying speech: 'My sight grows dim! Do not go gentle into that good night—alas, I fade, I sink—Kiss, me, HARV[E].' (Note: This British Naval History joke has no place in ***PARANOIA***. So sue us.)						
HARV[E]	1	Hoverfans (up to 100 mph)	1 laser cannon 3, rating 15 2 sonic blasters, rating 15 antimissile laser, rating 15	Medium tank on hoverfans with active camoflauge; effectively invisible; medium brain; narrow programming; relies on ELWOOD for higher mental functions	Speedboat	**5**

NPC roster (1 of 2)

Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Roleplaying notes
Vulture guards (2)	Unarmed Combat 13, Projectile Weapons 15	Slugthrower—HE ammo (W2K impact)	Kevlar (l3)	BLUE Clearance; silent, violent Buckingham Palace guards
HQ staffer	Unarmed Combat 10, Energy Weapons 09	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	GREEN reflec (E1)	GREEN Clearance; aggressively cordial; obstructively cooperative
Vulture guards (5)	Unarmed Combat 09, Energy Weapons 12	Laser rifle (W3K energy)	GREEN reflec (E1)	GREEN Clearance; tough but fairly bright; easily bewildered
Vulture sergeant	Unarmed Combat 12, Projectile Weapons 15	Slug pistol—power holster (W3K impact)	Kevlar (l3)	BLUE Clearance; cocky; easily offended; proud of power holster
Al-B-MNU	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	BLUE reflec (E1)	BLUE Clearance; HPD&MC; glum; dispirited; fit-to-be-framed
Zach-I-LVI	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	INDIGO reflec (E1)	INDIGO Clearance; Tech; distracted; bored with administrative detail
Brian-B-IWR	Unarmed Combat 09, Energy Weapons 18	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	BLUE reflec (E1)	BLUE Clearance; IntSec; witch-hunter; kill-Commies-serve-Computer gonzo
Dan-V-OSD	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	VIOLET reflec (E1)	VIOLET Clearance; R&D; Ben Franklin; benign, concerned, elderly; nods off a lot
Angela-G-DRQ *(Screaming Sarah Slick)*	Unarmed Combat 10, Projectile Weapons 10	Slug pistol—HE ammo (W2K impact)	Kevlar (l3)	GREEN Clearance; Death Leopard identity is Screaming Sarah Slick; vat tech/punk rocker
Death Leopard strike team (4)	Unarmed Combat 07, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	Wide-eyed punk nutzos; Sara's minions
Rasterman Ganja	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	Death Leopard media tech and commercial buff
Ganja's techs	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	Death Leopard, but sensitive artists; inclined to flee

[NPC roster continues on next page]

NPC roster (2 of 2)

Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Roleplaying notes
Secret society strike teams (3 per team)	Unarmed Combat 06, Energy Weapons 06	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	According to society's personality
Victor-I-VGF	Unarmed Combat 05	None	None	INDIGO Clearance; R&D; privileged, crazy, mad scientist; false confidence
Willis-G-PLJ	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 09	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	GREEN Clearance; R&D; calm, quiet, sincere, like a psychopath
Ned-G-RFB	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	GREEN Clearance; R&D; bug-eyed, wacky; Marty Feldman in *Young Frankenstein*
Free Enterprise Guards				
Guards in lobby (2)	Unarmed Combat 10, Energy Weapons 09 Unarmed Combat 10, Energy Weapons 11	Laser rifle (W3K energy) Slug pistol—HE (W2K impact)	ORANGE reflec (E1)	ORANGE Clearance; dim louts; lazy and indifferent to PCs
Tunnel guards (2)	Unarmed Combat 12, Projectile Weapons 12	Slugthrower—HE ammo (W2K impact); other 05	Kevlar (I3)	Used to cooperation; overconfident and careless
Upstairs guard	Unarmed Combat 12, Energy Weapons 15	Laser rifle (W3K energy)	Kevlar (I3)	Polite, friendly, professional; deadly
Oregon Warbler	Unarmed Combat 10, Energy Weapons 10	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	None	Frontiersman; sneaky, but apparently cooperative
Psion, Anti-Mutant, Free Enterprise, Sierra Club squads (5 per group)—*See Secret society strike teams above*				
Cone rifle instructor	Unarmed Combat 07, Projectile Weapons 18, Field Weapons 18	Cone rifle—solid AP (W3K impact); tangler (entangle)	Kevlar (I3)	BLUE Clearance; earnest, patient, kindly; bad nerves
Tunnel ambushers (2–6)	Unarmed Combat 05, Hand Weapons 10; Thrown Weapons 05	Club (S5K impact); tossed junk (O5W impact)	None	Primitive but willing soldiers in Sierra Club cause
Tunnel fanatics (2–4)	Unarmed Combat 05, Hand Weapons 10, Thrown Weapons 10	Club (S5K impact); tossed junk (O5W impact)	None	Tough, cautious sentries; send warning if attacked
Boo-Boos (10)	Unarmed Combat 04, Hand Weapons 04	Club (S5K impact)	None	Undrilled militia; completely unreliable; weak-kneed
Yogis (5)	Unarmed Combat 06, Hand Weapons 06	Club (S5K impact)	None	Casually drilled militia; spirited
Dome Rangers (4)	Unarmed Combat 12, Hand Weapons 12	Truncheon (S5K impact)	Leather (I1)	Tough, gung-ho fight-to-the-death fanatics
Mr. Ranger Sir	Unarmed Combat 14, Projectile Weapons 09	Slug pistol—HE ammo (W2K impact)	None	Gifted leader; hides and shouts orders
Outsiders	Unarmed Combat 09, Projectile Weapons 09	Slug pistol—solid slug ammo (W3K impact)	Leather (I1)	Visiting from the Outdoors, they want out; will avoid fight
Typical Outdoors Mobs				
Incompetent fools	Unarmed Combat 04, Hand Weapons 04	Club (S5K impact)	None	Laser bait
Competent fools	Unarmed Combat 08, Hand Weapons 08	Club (S5K impact)	Leather (I1)	Vaguely threatening
Skilled fools	Unarmed Combat 13, Hand Weapons 13	Club (S5K impact); bow (W5K impact)	Padding (I1)	Clever at ambush and picking weak spots
Cyberpunks (50–100)	Unarmed Combat 08, Hand Weapons 08, Projectile Weapons 08	Knife (S5K impact); sword (W5K impact); crossbow (W4K impact); slug pistol—solid slug ammo (W3K impact)	Leather (chain) (I2)	Vicious but honorable; a sly, tough cycle gang; leaders: sister Jake (pistol) & brother Elwood (Charm mutation)
Nouvelle Vaguers (50–100)	Unarmed Combat 04, Hand Weapons 10	Knife (S5K impact); club (S5K impact)	Padding (I1)	Mellow one minute; homicidal the next
Studio Engineers				
Engineers (20)	Unarmed Combat 04, Hand Weapons 04	Club (S5K impact)	None	Terminally hip
Producers (5)	Unarmed Combat 06, Hand Weapons 06	Club (S5K impact)	None	Fast talk
Goons (4)	Unarmed Combat 12, Hand Weapons 13	Truncheon (S5K impact)	Padding (I1)	Muscled thugs
Boss Honcho	Unarmed Combat 10, Projectile Weapons 10	Slug pistol—solid slug ammo (W3K impact)	None	Smooth but smart

PARANOIA Send in the Clones

ALLEN VARNEY
WARREN SPECTOR
Design/Teleplay

KEN ROLSTON
Development/Script supervisor

JIM HOLLOWAY
Illustrations/Video production

PETER CORLESS
STEPHEN CRANE
ZEKE FRASER
STEVE GILBERT
DOUG KAUFMAN
PAUL MURPHY
KEVIN WILKINS
Horrible ideas

ERIC MINTON
Pregenerated PC conversion

GREG COSTIKYAN
ZEKE FRASER
Additional lyrics

THE COMPUTER
Executive producer/
Productive executioner

Introduction 111
1. Sewerworld! 115
2. Bureaucracyworld! 125
3. Entertainmentworld! 138

Charts, tables and resources
Character relations chart 114
Alpha Complex Songbook 117
PLC Runaround Flowchart 128
R&D gadgets 132
'Laundromat' counters 137
'Laundromat' gameboard 147
'Laundromat' tables 149
'Cloud Men's Minds' notes 155
NPC/Bot roster 160
Pregenerated PCs 161

Welcome, Gamemaster, to another journey into mirthful terror and hilarious frustration in this madcap-deathtrap mission, *Send in the Clones*. Watch your befuddled Troubleshooters squirm through a zany scenario of fun and fatality, chortles and—

[Cut. No, sorry, too stale. Try again. Take Two.]

Hey ref! Zotz in and recon this hyperinteractive collab fictionware! Metagrok the ***PARANOIA*** mindview, glom six eptified noncogs, rev the pineal gland and commence intravolving Kafkaization!

[Whirr-buzz-click. Take Three.]

Send in the Clones: In one sense a ***PARANOIA*** mission for a GM and six players, requiring only the ***PARANOIA*** rulebook, a 20-sided die, pencil and paper to play, designed to occupy three long play sessions—and yet in another sense a syntagmatic analysis of the first- and second-order signs (iconic *and* arbitrary) as well as the signifiers and signifieds expressing the deepest fears dwelling in the cobwebbed byways of the human psyche—in short, a paradigmatic dissection of the omnipervasive paranoid *Weltanschauung*—

[Cut. Never mind. We'll go back and shoot the teaser later. Take it from 1-B on the outline.]

It's a good idea to read through the entire mission before running it. This is an episodic plotline that can withstand much mangling and reordering, but it's always helpful to know what would have happened if you were not so inspired in your improvisations and if your players were more tractable sheep.

The backdrop of this mission is the least prestigious, least important, least regarded and most treasonous service group in Alpha Complex: the Entertainment Division of Housing Preservation and Development & Mind Control. The inspiration for this setting comes from the mythical Hollywood Mentality: egomania, glib glad-handing, treachery and an almost fanatical dedication to dishonesty (loveyababy, don'teverchange, letsdolunchsometime). In addition to the dialog provided, a little research in gossipy magazines and TV talk shows will help you capture the atmosphere of Show Biz, ***PARANOIA***-style-wise (whattakidder, yerthegreatest, letsgettogetherwithyourpeople andmypeople…).

Mission materials

Send in the Clones gives you more for your money.

Not only do you get this engagingly written, even charming mission…

not *only* do you get an attractive full-color cover which shields this literate, consummately professional text from the elements…

not *only* do you get complete lists—with statistics, no less—of all major player characters (PCs), non-player characters (NPCs) and bots (bots) summarized in easy-to-read form…

not only, not *only* do you get diagrams of several entertaining locales, six pregenerated PCs and an organizational (if that's the word) chart of Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC) in the previously described hot-stuff mission…

not *only* does all of this come to you for a measly price, but—much more important—you also have our profound respect for having made your way through this whole sentence.

GM reference pages

At the end of the mission are charts showing important statistics, abilities and notable features of all non-player characters (NPC roster) and bots (Bot roster). A chart in this introduction summarizes the circumstances of the Memory-Wipe Scandal—a terribly treasonous mishap which involves each of the pregenerated player characters. Everyone is guilty, and everyone has something on someone else. An occasional passing reference to the Memory Wipe Scandal keeps them twitching. Probably the players will be too busy dodging other dooms, but, in their spare moments, this gives them something else to scheme about—as if they needed it.

You may find that once you've digested the contents of this mission, you can run it from memory, simply consulting the charts at the end to jog your memory.

You might even throw this book away and wing your own missions from the NPCs and bots listed. If it works, write it up and send it to Mongoose. They can publish it without having to prepare a new chart!

Prepared player characters

Send in the Clones is designed for six player characters (PCs). At the end of the mission we provide pregenerated PCs, which you may want to photocopy and then slice, dice and distribute to players. If you have more than six players (or, for your own perverse reasons, want to use different characters altogether), generate the extras using standard ***PARANOIA*** rules and provide conflicting briefings, secret society missions and reasons to fear and despise at least two other characters apiece. (Remember, the greatest peril in any ***PARANOIA*** mission should come from the players themselves.)

Maps and diagrams

Sure there are maps and diagrams. They appear at the most appropriate points in the mission, for easy reference.

One map—the sewers—is tricky. Shown on this page, this map may be photocopied in great quantities, and all the copies taped together. They're geomorphic, so each side fits together with any other side, in any orientation—try it and see.

Tape together 70 or 80 of these in a shape like the Greater Chesapeake Bay. Hang them on the wall behind you when the PCs travel in the sewers early in the mission. Maybe put a note on one side reading, 'TROUBLESHOOTERS START HERE' and another one (or two or 12) way at the other end reading 'DESTINATION'.

You know this map has nothing to do with the mission. But it's so neat watching your players' eyes bug out when they think they'll have to cover all that territory. It makes the photocopying worthwhile, believe us.

And, of course, you may decide you just have to use such a pretty map. Go ahead. Fill it with orcs and goblins. We understand.

Other stuff

When the PCs try to pick up equipment and supplies midway through the mission, they'll go to Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC). If they've been to PLC before, they haven't been to *this* PLC before. This is the *new* PLC; it's been reorganized for greater inefficiency. The PLC Runaround Flowchart in Episode 2 comes in handy when ignorant Troubleshooters attempt to weave through Alpha Complex's bureaucracy.

A set of two 'paranoia' notes appears on page 155. You can photocopy or hand-copy these (or even cut out, if you're into mutilating books) and hand them to your players during the climactic encounter of this mission, 'The big pie fight'. Don't worry about them until then.

Finally, excerpts from the terribly treasonous 'Alpha Complex Songbook' appear in Episode 1, *Entertainmentworld!* From time to time you are directed to sing selections to your players. Sing them real loud. Better yet, compel your players to sing along! They've waited a long time for this privilege.

Information Inquiry Form

The original 1985 printing of *Send in the Clones* included an Information Inquiry Form you could use to keep the players from finding out stuff. In this volume we had a blank page near the end of *Vapors Don't Shoot Back,* so we cheesily relocated the form from here to there. The move doesn't hurt anything, because the form has nothing to do with either mission. So we stuck it where it would fit; see page 59.

Normally these forms are available from any terminal and may be submitted to any Central Processing Unit office, but for fun, if anyone asks for one:

PC: Where can I get an Information Inquiry Form, please?

Computer: At your service. What is your security clearance please?

PC: YELLOW, Friend Computer.

Computer: I'm sorry. You must complete an Information Inquiry Request Form to receive clearance for an Information Inquiry Form. Please report to your local CPU Information Window and complete this form immediately.
[Hours later…]

PC: Here's my Information Inquiry Request Clearance Identification Tattoo. *[Displays bare stomach to security camera.]* Now, where can I get an Information Inquiry Form?

Computer: Your clearance for Information Inquiry Forms has been verified. Congratulations. You may now submit an Information Inquiry Form to request the information you have requested concerning Information Inquiry Forms.

PC: Whine whine whine.

Computer: You heard me. Now beat it. And please tuck in your shirt.

The star of our show

Ah, Teela O'Malley! The beloved entertainer, melodious songstress, the leading vidstar in Alpha Complex—the traitorous, ill-mannered broad, currently on her last clone incarnation. Teela-O-MLY-6 ('1' is her stage name) is now the last of her line: Teela-Os -1 through -5 were terminated quietly at regular intervals over the last few years, for possessing material benefits far beyond those legally available to ORANGE-Clearance citizens. *('Whaddya mean I can't have my own combot? I'm a star! And take your hands off that truffled turkey!')*

Teela-O-6 hasn't behaved much better than her sharp-tongued sisters, and she can read the writing on the vidscreen. The Computer has replaced her with its own realistic, animated Teela-images in her popular adventure serial. (They act as well as she does, which tells you the level of talent we're dealing with here.) Her personal appearances around the complex are going unpublicized, and none are scheduled beyond a month from now. The last Teela is clearly in her farewell performance.

To say Teela O'Malley has an ego the size of Alpha Complex would be catty but not incorrect. She can't bear the notion of a complex without

Sewerworld geomorphic map

some kind of Teela—and since having a clone to carry on your name is the accepted Alphan substitute for immortality, Teela has concocted a scheme to keep herself alive after her last official clone meets the inevitable.

Teela's considerable beauty is supplemented by a previously undocumented mutant power to 'Cloud Men's Minds' (see below). With this secret ability, she has 'prompted' a highly placed official in the Central Processing Unit, Cleto-B-QRK-2, to start a new secret society: the Clone Arrangers (also see below). The Rangers have set up a secret laboratory beneath NBD Sector where they create clones of anyone with enough power and credits. Unlike standard clones, these take mere months to mature into fully developed adults.

Where did the Clone Arrangers get their technology? Teela again—she's been collecting valuable Research & Design equipment for her friends in the Pro Tech secret society. When a colossal shipment of cloning equipment became available, she resigned from Pro Tech on about 11 seconds notice and spirited the stuff away for the Rangers.

Teela O'Malley is now more popular than ever. Not only is her computerized image still beloved by every right-thinking citizen, her actual physical form is ardently desired by Internal Security—not to mention Pro Tech, which wants her for stealing the clone equipment that was properly theirs by right of prior theft.

Now Teela has vanished. She was last seen in HPD&MC in NBD Sector. Someone has to go in there undercover, into the very stronghold of her influence, locate and terminate her—*secretly*—and retrieve the cloning equipment.

Guess who gets the job.

Mission summary

Part 1: *Sewerworld!*

As a brief prelude to the main mission, a mixed-lot of YELLOW, ORANGE and RED Troubleshooters that nobody in particular cares to see alive again is sent down into the sewer system of Alpha Complex to trace and eliminate the source of some treasonous songs pervading the public address system of the entire complex. (Song lyrics are provided at the end of the mission.) In the sewers, the brave Troubleshooters must deal with traps set by a BLUE-Clearance Troubleshooter Zhon-B-VLJ-2. Zhon-B has been down there for 20 years, obsessively hunting a renegade group of Troubleshooters who stole a loaf of bread.

In addition to Zhon-B, the PCs encounter the true culprits behind the PA mischief—a group of ten-year-old kids, nascent Computer Phreaks, headquartered in a long-defunct video studio in HPD&MC. Any firefight erupting in the studio is likely to activate the bot host of the children's program, *Captain Botaroo*.

The PCs end up in a no-win situation, from which they are saved by the timely intervention of Teela O'Malley (who just wants to maneuver them away from the Clone Arranger laboratory—about which, more later). With every reason to admire Teela's selfless generosity, the PCs are perhaps discomfited to return from their successful mission only to be sent on a second one: into HPD&MC—to terminate Teela!

Part 2: *Bureaucracyworld!*

Before departing on this second mission, the PCs have an obligatory opportunity to learn firsthand the intricacies of bureaucracy, as they attempt to obtain assigned equipment from Production, Logistics & Commissary (PLC). And, of course, they are coercively permitted to test exciting experimental equipment from Research & Development. Finally, they are persuasively introduced to the ultimate in experimental bot design—the Funbot—which accompanies them on the mission.

Part 3: *Entertainmentworld!*

In NBD Sector the PCs meet their contact in Mind Control, a TV executive named Hal-Y-OOO (1 through 6—the PCs eventually encounter, and perhaps terminate, the entire Hal-Y clone family). The Hal-Y clones, diligent servants of Free Enterprise, deal in bootleg Clone Arranger bodies (about which, more later, too), so they have reason to wish the PCs dead. Hal-Y-OOO-4 arranges their appearance on a popular and dangerous vidshow—a sporting contest, the winner of which gets to meet Teela! What better way to land the elusive victim?

Assuming the Troubleshooters survive, their search may lead to a series of Teela O'Malley Fan Club meetings—each a cover for a secret society meeting.

The search may even lead to the secret laboratory of the Clone Arrangers—located, as if you didn't know, in the sewers. Here the PCs have the chance to terminate all the Teelas they want…dozens…hundreds. Chances are, the numerous Teela clones return the favor.

The search is likely, above all, to lead to dismal, fatal failure. First, the cloning equipment the PCs are sent to retrieve is heavily guarded and weighs maybe a hundred tons. Second, The Computer will not believe the Troubleshooters have disposed of Teela as long as any Teela clone remains alive—or, should they present convincing evidence they've killed at least one Teela (fulfilling their mission), they are probably branded traitors for killing a beloved and loyal servant of The Computer.

Be sure to stress at every point the fun, glamorous life of a Troubleshooter. Your players will appreciate it.

Characters and other details

Before handing them out, take a few moments to examine the six pregenerated player characters. The mission is designed for these six characters. If you have fewer than six players, distribute the characters starting with the highest security clearances. Keep the lower-ranked ones yourself and play them as NPCs. This will disconcert everyone.

Some of your players may be pleased to get the higher-clearance PCs, or disgruntled at being stuck with the lowly REDs. By all means, nurture these feelings. The illusion that higher-level ***PARANOIA*** characters are in some way safer, more comfortable or happier with their lives is one of the most cherished notions players possess. Let them indulge this fantasy. They'll find out the truth eventually.

When a higher-clearance character fouls up, or a lower-clearance character performs in a slavishly loyal fashion, it is simple, and immensely entertaining, to have The Computer or a high-clearance citizen jump in and brevet or demote the character instantly. The YELLOW who was lording it over the humble REDs might make one simple but serious mistake, earning The Computer's instant disapproval. (Often, the REDs report their superior's egregious error to The Computer over their PDCs.)

The Computer, speaking over all the PCs' PDCs, immediately demotes the offending YELLOW to RED for his malfeasance. The Computer then brevets the tattletale RED to YELLOW as a reward for obsequious and fawning loyalty. Suddenly the former leader must lick the boots he once spat on. Poetic justice.

New secret society: The Clone Arrangers

Doctrines: Live on forever through your clones. Identity of being guarantees continuity of spirit. All citizens should have as many clones as they want—as long as they can afford it. Teela O'Malley clones are desirable and make especially nice gifts.

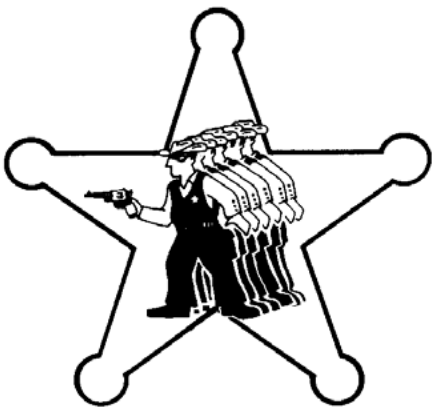
Objectives: Make money, establish contact with potential wealthy customers, maintain secrecy and perpetuate Teela O'Malley.

Friends: Free Enterprise, Romantics.

Enemies: Pro Tech (due to theft of biological equipment).

General description: 'Clone backups—you want them, we've got them! No paperwork—no long waits at Tech Services—high quality, fast turnaround and—we say again—*no paperwork!*'

The society is new and small. The dozen or so members are mainly trained geneticists and biologists; Teela recruited them by Clouding Their Minds (see below). High-degree members can get illicit clones at discount prices and know



things about high-clearance citizens that offer ripe possibilities for blackmail.

Advancement:

- +1 degree for finding a new customer.
- +1 degree for notable service protecting one's superiors in the society—foiling an attempt to expose it, killing nosy Troubleshooters, etc.

New mutant power: Cloud Men's Minds

The mutant can cause other characters to become strongly, if platonically, attracted to her or him. The effects are similar to infatuation: the victim puts the character's happiness ahead of his/her own, thinks of the character constantly and will do nearly anything the character requests. This mutation affects both sexes. Unlike charm, the effects are caused through mental projection, not pheromone-like secretions, so the clouder isn't similarly infatuated.

When trying to cloud one or more victims, the mutant makes a Power roll. If successful, the victim may become clouded.

Like real infatuation, the duration of effect is variable—the victim gets a Management/Moxie roll to avoid succumbing at the time of the power's use, then another roll each day thereafter. Repeated cloudings increase the duration geometrically; a victim hit three or four times in a short interval (say one day) might not come to his senses for weeks. Then, too, if the clouding character is attractive and the victim is lonely, the victim may simply elect not to come out of it. It's been known to happen.

Mental Block detects and protects against Clouding. Charm, used in conjunction with Clouding, increases the interval between Management/Moxie rolls from one day to three days.

Notes on the PCs

Some GM notes regarding the pregenerated PCs (*don't* tell the players):

Tammy-Y-BWR-2: Access 4, Power 15.

Walt-Y-QGI-2: Access 3, Power 8.

Chuck-O-VKJ-1: Access 2, Power 15. This poor sod thinks he has a password that will be recognized by fellow Free Enterpriser Hal-Y-OOO (see 'Entertainmentworld!'). The problem is, Free Enterprise couldn't get the password to Hal-Y in time. When prompted, all Hal-Y clones stare curiously at Chuck-O and say, 'I've never heard of that show.' If you want to be kind, or leave Chuck-O's player completely befuddled, have one or two Hal-Y clones know the password. Because it's nearly impossible to tell them apart, Chuck-O will never know if a given Hal-Y is friend or foe. Later, Free Enterprise will change the password, informing Hal-Y but not Chuck-O.

Sarn-R-JBS-4: Access 1, Power 13. Sam's Anti-Mutant superiors have correctly identified Tammy-Y-BWR-2 as a mutant, but diagnosed her power incorrectly. Sam-R's player may whisper a lot at Tammy-Y's player, who probably replies with 'Huh?' or 'Speak up!' Positioning these two at opposite ends of the room may be interesting.

Eve-R-SWB-2: Access 1, Power 15. She's an Internal Security plant with a special spray used to mark traitors. This spray is disguised as a deodorant, but is actually an invisible chemical marker that shows up in any routine Internal Security scan of the victim. (All IntSec agents *will* recognize the marker as an indication of treason.)

But listen. This spray smells *terrible*. Garbage city. Hog heaven. We're talking the original skunk juice here. Take this into account when a sprayed PC tries to sneak up on someone, enter a crowded room or lead a normal life. The odor diminishes after a couple of days.

Elmer-R-DYS-1: Access 4, Power 19. He has a hypnodisk to help interrogate prisoners. It just doesn't work. Let Elmer-R find out the hard way.

The Memory Wipe Scandal

In addition to their normal rivalries, the Troubleshooters have another reason to destroy each other: the *Memory Wipe Scandal.*

It seems the PCs were all involved in a snafu that caused an Armed Forces Vulture Squadron platoon to be issued memory-wipe drug instead of Bouncy Bubble Beverage (B3). No one has found the responsible parties yet, but The Computer would gladly reward any Troubleshooter who uncovered this insidious Commie plot. Throughout the mission, random NPCs or The Computer might comment about the scandal to keep it fresh in everybody's mind.

The situation so far:

1. In Technical Services **Sam-R-JBS** turned the wrong spigot, filling all the B3 bottles on the line with MemWipe.

2. **Tammy-Y-BWR**, Sam-R's CPU supervisor, failed to notice the mixup.

3. **Walt-Y-QGI**, Supervisor in Charge of Conveyor Belts, noticed and decided to have some real fun by shutting down the power until meal time.

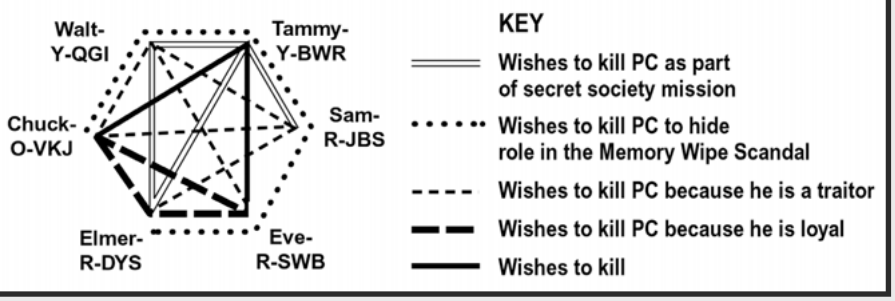
4. Down in PLC, **Eve-R-SWB** and **Elmer-R-DYS** both noticed; rather than burdening their superiors with trivial data they sent the shipment on schedule.

5. Armed Forces soldier and Free Enterpriser **Chuck-O-VKJ** avoided the drug by using his Precognition, but provoked IntSec scrutiny for selling his tainted B3 to another soldier.

[**Historical fanboy note:** These PC background descriptions from 1985 mark the first appearance of Bouncy Bubble Beverage. At the time, it was just one more throwaway gag...]

CHARACTER RELATION CHART

(GM: This chart should help you track the relationships between PCs.)



*'The Computer is your (*sob*) friend…!'*

1. Sewerworld!

Snatched from leisurely viewing of a Teela O'Malley episode, the Troubleshooters are sent into the sewers to search for and terminate the source of treasonous ditties, broadcast from a pirate station. They wander the sewers, encountering many very nasty things, including a very loyal Troubleshooter in the 20th year of a mission here below and a group of very aggressive children.

The party follows the children to the abandoned Captain Botaroo studios, where the cute moppets are operating the pirate broadcast station. Presented with the unpleasant prospect of terminating the adorable tykes, the Troubleshooters are dismayed—until Teela O'Malley herself steps in to save the day.

Briefing

To begin the mission, read the following aloud to the players:

It's been another happy day in Alpha Complex. You've served your friend The Computer loyally, and, after a delicious dinner of toasted algae, you've gathered with your fellow citizens around the communal vidscreen for the evening entertainment provided by The Computer.

You watch a rerun of *One Clone's Family*, followed by a fascinating documentary showing how Power Services has exceeded all quotas this biennium. A brief announcement informs you that programming tomorrow night will be canceled due to power shortages. Then comes the treat you've all been eagerly anticipating—this week's installment of *Teela O'Malley*!

In this episode, the innocently attractive young Teela plays an unusual role, proving, yet again, her impressive dramatic range. She plays an ordinary citizen in an unspecified service group—a citizen much like any of you—who is heartlessly seduced into treason by the evil members of a secret society. Six heroic Troubleshooters—those glamorous, courageous, selfless servants of The Computer—are sent to apprehend her.

Their devotion so inspires Teela that she gives herself up, renounces her traitorous course and turns in every member of the secret society. Then, as she stands framed in the glow of an open reactor port, she makes this stirring speech…

Read this with a lump in your throat and an accent reminiscent of Scarlett O'Hara. Play melancholy violin music on the stereo. Dab your fingers in a cup of water and regularly splatter your cheeks with tears.

'I regret that I have but six clones to lose for my friend, The Computer. I have strayed from the path of right! I am grateful The Computer has given me a chance to make amends, in some small way, for my traitorous, evil, Commie-inspired acts.

'But I am too low—too *low*—and not worthy of The Computer's forgiveness. I only hope my clones will learn from

my shameful example, and will serve The Computer loyally—to the *end*—of their *lives*!'

Pause here to allow the PCs to sob, applaud or otherwise react.

And with these words, over the cries of the noble, deeply-moved Troubleshooters, she hurls herself into the reactor. There is a tremendous flash, the music swells and the voice of The Computer is heard:

'To all concerned citizens: do not worry! Teela O'Malley is not really dead. This has been a dramatic reenactment of a true incident. Names have been changed to protect classified information sources.

'Remember, Communists may appear anywhere! Thank you for your coopppppp*hissssssssss*...'

The Computer's friendly voice breaks off, suddenly deteriorating into a loud hiss. The monitors change to a blank screen of static 'snow!' Then suddenly, the hiss is replaced by a strange song broadcasting over the entire public address system.

Sing these lyrics to any appropriate melody. (We'd tell you a good one, but ASCAP would want royalties.) Don't worry if you can't sing; the worse it sounds, the better.

Isn't it great?
Isn't it keen?
Living in complexes ruled by machine?
Where are the clones?
There ought to be clones.
Send in the clones...

The voice is electronically distorted so that the PCs cannot identify the singer's gender, age or dialect.

Read the following aloud. To add atmosphere, feel free to add more verses of this song or of other songs, found in the *Alpha Complex Songbook*.

As the song continues, getting more treasonous with every verse, the big vidscreen begins flashing—MISSION ALERT! MISSION ALERT!—and six guardbots roll into the viewing area.

'The Computer requests your immediate services', they say, in voices like glass shards rubbed against a blackboard.

You're rousted out of your seats and dogtrotted through strange corridors to an unfamiliar part of the Complex. The journey ends in front of an anonymous elevator. The treasonous music echoes everywhere.

The PCs are introduced to each other here, but the guardbots keep conversation to a minimum—think of them as a cross between Nazi stormtroopers and mobile trash compactors. They can talk, but haven't got much to say. The PCs only have lasers and the equipment listed on their character sheets. The elevator door won't open. Read this aloud:

The lighting is dim, the air a little too cold and the atmosphere tense. After an uncomfortable interval, the guardbots draw away from you, allowing a clear line-of-sight for the *really large* guardbot which enters the hallway and draws a bead on your entire group with a giant weapon.

If a player tries to fire at any bot, make sure that's what the player really wants to do. Then roll the dice a few times, let the character blow away a guardbot or two, then kill the poor sap. A clone replacement (and new guardbots) show up before the remains stop smoking.

'INTO THE ELEVATOR', the big guardbot bellows in a voice like a *lot* of glass shards being scraped against a blackboard by 35 4th-grade boys. The elevator door slides open.

Are you going in?

The correct answer to this question is 'yes'. If a character declines to enter the elevator, the guardbots will hustle his clone replacement onto the scene before the charred ashes of his predecessor hit the floor.

The elevator is typical: rickety, badly lit, coffin-like and terrifying—even more so when the huge guardbot trundles in after you.

The floor sags. Metal around you squeals with stress. The door slides shut. The elevator drops suddenly about a meter, jolts to a squealing halt, then shudders and heads downward—slowly, squealing painfully all the way. Over the PA speaker in the elevator comes a new tune:

I'm an Alpha Complex Dandy,
Troubleshooter, do or die.
A clone replacement of my former self,
Soon I will probably fry.
I've got to serve my friend Computer.
If I don't I know I'll die.
Kill the Commie infiltrators,
Also Troubleshooters.
I am an Alpha Complex guy!

During the long, slow, noisy journey down the elevator, the guardbot extrudes a fishing rod-like apparatus from its head. At the end of the rod is a blinding klieg light, which it suspends about three centimeters above *[pick a PC]* your head. It starts the interrogation.

'*Name?! Security clearance?!* Most *recent* treasonous act?! Can you *keep* a *secret?!* Do you *value* your *life* at *all*?!'

Let the PC answer the questions, then interrogate the others in turn. The guardbot's questions stress loyalty and confidentiality. The Troubleshooters' answers are neither heard nor recorded and, in fact, have no affect on anything at all. But don't tell them that.

If a PC tries to fight the guardbot, the elevator sways and creaks even more ominously, but it won't fall—and there is still time to go back and get a clone replacement (not to mention clear the smoke from the elevator and treat wounded innocent bystanders).

Finally the elevator stops, the door opens and you're herded into a small, featureless room with a desk, one door at the far side of the room and about a dozen guardbots. Their weapons are pointing ominously in your direction.

At the desk sits a paunchy, balding, jowly fellow wearing BLUE robes. He's flanked by two tall, thin YELLOW guards with lasers.

From a speaker on the wall emanates the melodious strains of a song that seems to be called 'Top Hat, White Tie and Laser'.

The BLUE guy is Cleto-B-QRK-2. The two YELLOW guards are just window dressing who don't do or say anything important unless a PC draws a weapon. Then they shout 'Option A!' and drill the offending PC(s). Option A means the guardbots lock their weapons onto targets indicated by the guards' weapon fire and keep firing until ordered to stop. Then send in the clones.

Cleto-B says the following; read it at a fairly fast clip. Never go back and repeat anything. At the line 'Any questions?' do not even *think* of pausing for questions—just keep talking.

'Greetings, Troubleshooters. I am Cleto-B-QRK. My companions are Dewey-Y-JLK and Sonny-Y-TLS.

'The Computer has rewarded your loyalty by choosing you to accompany a carefully selected and coordinated strike force of 27 Troubleshooter teams who have been called into emergency action to fight the new Communist threat—subversive propaganda being pumped out over The Computer's own public address system.

'The Computer has narrowed the possible sources of interference to

one subdivision of our beloved Alpha Complex, but treasonous tampering prevents It from pinpointing the traitors' exact location. You and the rest of the strike force will sweep through this area, searching for interference, identifying the responsible parties and terminating them.

'I give you fair warning: Only an insidious, well-organized band of fanatics, armed with the most sophisticated infiltration equipment, could have perpetrated this awful deed. The Computer relies on you to crush this awesome foe.

'Any questions? Good, go forth in glorious service, return here when—and *only* when—you have succeeded, farewell!'

The far door slides open and the guardbots hustle you out. They scoot back in, the door slides shut behind them and you hear it lock.

You're in a long gray tunnel with narrow walkways on either side of a wide brown canal. The low, curved ceiling is lit by a line of fluorescent tubes along the tunnel's spine. The canal curves away to the right downstream, and upstream the tunnel branches to left and right. The whole place smells as bad as the food vats. You can hear treasonous music echoing everywhere—impossible to trace.

Now what?

Staging *Sewerworld!*

Sewerworld's orchestration divides into five major movements:

1. Wandering the sewers
2. Traps and critters
3. Visited by Zhon-B
4. Baited by the kids
5. Battered by Botaroo

Here are some tips on how to organize and present these events.

Wandering the sewers

Your objective is to make the sewer setting vivid for the players. Present the problems the setting itself poses. For example:

- Movement on slippery walkways (Violence/Agility checks)
- Fording the current (scrambling down the banks into the flow, staying vertical, stepping on noisome objects along the bottom, keeping equipment dry, scrambling up the other side—various

Alpha Complex Songbook

Send in the Clones

Isn't it great? Isn't it keen
Living in Complexes ruled by machine?
Where are the clones?
There ought to be clones.
Send in the clones...

Just when I start opening doors,
Looking for mutants and traitors on ceilings and floors,
Shooting my laser again—the barrel gets hot,
Hit high and low—enemy bot—

I'm getting mad! It makes me red!
This was my very first fight—
Already I'm dead!
Where is my clone?
I must have a clone.
Send in my clone...

I'm an Alpha Complex Dandy

I'm an Alpha Complex dandy,
Alpha Complex do or die.
A new clone version of my last five clones.
Soon I will probably die.
I've got an Alpha Complex sweetheart—
Teela's my permitted joy.
Troubleshooters find the Commies, beat the mutants senseless!
I'm just an Alpha Complex toy!

I'm a fresh new Troubleshooter,
Mandatory hero guy.
A clone replacement of my former self,
Two hours tops 'til I fry.
I've got to serve my friend Computer.
Live in ignorance and fear.
Kill the Commie infiltrators, also Troubleshooters.
Someone please get me out of here!

I'm Just Wild About Psion

Oh, I'm just wild about Psion
And Psion's wild about me.
My 'registered' stripe means I'm just their type.
They like my Empathy.
Control's informative and chatty.
He leads me telepathically.
Oh, I'm just wild about Psion,
And Psion's wild about—
Will not do without—
Psion's wild about me!

Kelp!

Kelp! To feed my body.
Kelp! Not just algae, buddy.
Kelp! Instead of eating Fun.
KELLLP!

When I was stronger, so much stronger than today—
I used to eat that Hot and Cold Fun, twenty bags a day.
But now my hunger's gone and I'm starting to believe
That lousy junk makes my intestines somersault and heave.

Kelp is what I need to get on track
To forestall another dinnertime attack.
Green stuff 'til my appetite comes back.
Won't you please, please serve kelp?

PLC Stock Anthem

[Percussive beat: stomp-stomp-clap]
Buddy, you're a JC, quietly
Playin' in the hall, gonna shoot some trouble some day
But you smashed up a bot!
You're gonna get caught!
PLC can ensure that you're not!
(Singin'—)

We will, we will stock you!
We will, we will stock you!

Buddy, you're a RED clone, all alone,
Workin in the vats, gonna make a big noise some day
You got crud on your shirt!
Treason Alert!
PLC helps you keep it covert!

We will, we will stock you!
(Sign here!)
We will, we will stock you!

Buddy, you're a UV, groovily
Runnin' the place, gonna make 'em all pay someday
But you made one mistake—
Ain't nothing to take
When PLC just won't give you a break.
Because—

We won't, we won't stock you!
(We're all out!)
We won't, we won't stock you!
(You got no forms!)
We won't, we won't stock you!
We won't, we won't stock you!
(All right—)

BLUEs in the Night

Computer done tole me, when I was a JC,
Computer done tole me: 'Son,
A traitor will fast-talk, and teach propaganda,
But when the fast-talkin's done,
A traitor's misguided,
A mutated thing whose treason will bring
The BLUEs in the night.'

Now the knock's a-comin'!
Hear those goons a-callin':
'Treasonnnnn!'
(Computer done tole me—)
Hear that angry IntSec
Callin' at my door—
'Treasonnnn!'
(Computer done tole me—)
'Our reason's your treason!'
My unlicensed stunt has prompted a hunt
By BLUEs in the night.

My interrogation—and subsequent brainscrub—
That interrogation, son,
Has made me a loyal clone! I serve The Computer!
And now my bad days are done.
I hooked up with IntSec,
A great bunch of guys who spot people's lies.
We're BLUEs in the night.

Top Hat, White Tie & Laser

[*Way* too treasonous to print]

Violence checks and minor problems to think out)

- Funny noises
- Collapse and subsiding of dilapidated walls and ceilings

To map or not to map: We provide a notional geomorphic sewer map in the front matter to this mission. The 'Maps' section explains how to use the map. We intend that you use the map simply to boggle the minds of your players; however, it works okay if you want to chart PC movement and pre-plan the position of traps and encounters.

We Famous Game Designers prefer a more freewheeling style. We gloss over the actual details of location, and stage encounters by impulse and improvisation. This is lots of fun. We can also get caught with our drawers down. If you are, by nature, a more careful, organized, well-planned person, use the map and plan your encounters.

Traps and critters

Next, add active annoyances to the problems presented by the setting. Select a few critters and traps to pester the PCs. Now, when they try to evade the gatorbot, they have to worry about slipping off the walkway into the flow and getting their gear wet. Note how we're gradually adding little compliations? The problems should slowly build to a climax of frustration.

Visited by Zhon-B

Here we relax a bit so we can build the tension again later. Zhon-B is potentially dangerous if the PCs attack him, but his main purpose is to be a little digression—a minor diplomatic encounter.

Baited by the kids

Now we present the PCs with full-scale lethal opponents, complete with heavy weapons. These little fellows are used to bait the PCs into following them to the scene of the major conflict in Captain Botaroo's studio.

Battered by Botaroo

Here's the real action climax—lots of guns, a deranged bot and bushels of ping-pong balls. Typical ***PARANOIA*** nonsense. Only this time, Teela arrives with a diplomatic solution…

Through deepest cesspools with gun and camera

It's amazing how little sewers change through the centures. Take a slave from the sewers of second-century Rome and drop him in the waste disposal systems of modern-day New York, or Flanders, or Tokyo. It's kind of sadistic, sure… but the point is, the guy will always know where he is. Likewise, you can describe the sewers of Alpha Complex with little fear of stumbling over anachronisms.

The water is about a meter deep, with a moderate current. The depth and flow increase during peak use periods, such as after episodes of *Teela O'Malley*.

The concrete bank on each side is steep, usually about half a meter above the flow level, and can't be climbed while doing something else (e.g., firing a laser) unless someone on the walkway helps the climber.

Characters falling in the water will be swept a short way downstream before regaining footing.

Characters can pull or push others into the water—a Violence contest. Characters drinking the water, inadvertently or (ick) purposely, take O6W bio damage.

That about covers gaming the sewers. Things will come up; improvise a reasonable solution. For example, a Troubleshooter drops his PDC in the sludge and wants to know how long it takes him to find it.

GM: A real long time.
PC: Okay, I'm doing it.
[Time passes.]
PC: Hey did I find it yet?
GM: *[Rolls dice. Rolls eyes to the ceiling thoughtfully. In fact the GM is wondering what's on TV later that evening.]* Nope. But you're thoroughly soaked and delicately perfumed by the soiled water. Had enough?

The tough part of gaming the sewers is creating atmosphere: the truly awful stench, the buzzing fluorescent lights, the echoing tunnels… All the details must conspire to produce discomfort and distaste.

Remind your players the enemy could be around any bend—they hear echoing footsteps coming from random directions. Play up their ignorance of the enemy and the other 27 Troubleshooter teams. (That one is easy: They all got rerouted to the Waste Recycling Subdivision by mistake, and won't be found for hours.)

When you've conveyed just how disgusting their lives have suddenly become, then start throwing traps at them.

'Traps? In a sewer? C'mon…'

No. Really. They're all over. Some are just there to give the PCs the idea someone is out to get them, but some of them are for-real traps.

Rats: Not bot rats—*rats*. Live, furry rodents, the size of housecats and mean as a registered nurse. The kind you only hear about in documentaries on the Inner City or in the middle third of a Stephen King story. Six of them, say. Have them rush out of some side tunnel right at the PCs.

A rustling. A flurry of movement. A sudden glimpse of shiny fangs and beady red eyes. Then savage attacks (S5M impact). In a trice they are gone, splashing into the water and swimming upstream.

That'll keep them on their toes.

Remember, the sight of any real live animal may be just cause for an insanity check—except for Sierra Club members, who may object to their fellow Troubleshooters burning and stomping the warm, fuzzy critters. Maybe pass a note to a Sierra Clubber suggesting how nice a pet a rat would make.

Electrified screen: The sewer tunnels have offshoot branches everywhere, and many are blocked by large wire gratings that cover the entire width of the tunnel. Some have water flowing through the screen; some are dry and disused, empty. Describe two or three of these normal screens in passing before springing this one. Read aloud:

> **The tunnel is blocked by another heavy wire grating reaching from wall to wall and from the ceiling down just beneath the water's surface. The screen looks cleaner and shinier than the others you've seen. You can't tell whether or not the music is coming from beyond the screen.**

This screen is electrified with—what?—ten? 20 thousand volts? Enough to dim the lights throughout the entire sewer complex when a PC touches the grating. The trap is alternating current, not direct, so the character is merely knocked away, stunned and probably falls into the water (ick!).

If the PCs make a concerted effort to get by the screen, let them crawl beneath the fence (under the surface of the water—double-ick!) then drop another electrified screen beyond the first, trapping the characters between the two. The old Troubleshooter who set these traps, Zhon-B-VLJ, shows up as soon as the PCs are at his mercy.

Walkway trap: Read this aloud:

> **Up ahead you see four thick nylon ropes suspended from four holes in the ceiling. The ropes hang into the water in a square about four meters to a side. The tunnel is wide, too wide for you to reach the ropes from the walkway. The music is loud here.**

If the PCs walk to the part of the walkway that's even with the ropes, read this:

> **You're walking along the side of the tunnel when, suddenly, the wall tilts out and the walkway tips down toward the water. Everyone roll a d20.**

Everyone who rolls above 3 is spilled into the water. Come to think of it, why fix a success number? If you want them in the water, they're

in. Rolling the dice masks your arbitrary nature, though.

The four ropes jerk upward, and you're caught in a large, tightly-woven net suspended high above the water.
Now what?

Well, only about a meter, actually, but it looks high. Give them a few moments. Someone may actually try something clever or treacherous. Lasers won't work on the ropes—they're thick and wet. Grenades or other explosives might work, but may be stressful to the PCs' nerves. If they end up just bobbing disconsolately, Zhon-B shows up to gloat.

Water trap: Read this aloud:

There's a door in the wall beside you. It's tall and sort of elliptical, with airtight rubber seals all around—it looks like the hatches on u-bots you've seen on various vidshow adventures. There's a circular locking wheel in the middle of the door.

The door can be opened by turning the wheel and pushing. Beyond is a small compartment (barely enough room to hold all the PCs) and, on the far side, another door, identical to the first. It opens inward, toward the PCs.

That's right. An airlock. The far door won't open until the first door is closed. The room is dark.

If the first door is closed, the second will open easily—and the floor fills instantly with foul, brackish water. The large (ten-meter diameter) chamber beyond, also filled with water (to about five meters in depth), is lit by fluorescent bulbs on its rounded ceiling, two meters above water level. There's a one-meter hole in the ceiling above the lights; characters who reach the surface without drowning hear Zhon-B's bizarre laughter emanating from the hole (along with the treasonous music over the PA system).

Characters who try to close the inner airlock door must make a Violence roll. They'll probably have endurance enough for two tries on each door before they drown. The doors are soundproofed, but frenzied beating on them is detectable by characters on the far side.

The walls are too slick to climb. There's an outlet pipe at the base of one wall, but it's blocked by iron grating. Basically, the characters probably just have to make blubbering noises until Zhon-B shows up to rescue them.

If a PC manages to come up with a plausible escape from the large chamber, keep your eye on that player and consider an untimely accident for his character in the next firefight. Nobody likes a wise guy.

Gatorbots: Zhon-B knows Old Reckoning civilizations bred monsters in their sewers. His dementia has led him to recreate those legendary monsters, after a fashion.

When the PCs head down a dead-end tunnel—and any tunnel can be bricked in down to water level for no apparent reason—the Troubleshooters hear metal clanking sounds behind them. They have a moment to run, but six robot alligators—apparently modified from old model forkbots—clamber up onto the walkways, blocking the escape route.

The life of a Troubleshooter is always glamorous and exciting.

The gatorbots immediately engage in melee. See the Bot Roster at the end of the mission for their stats—or for a more fluid and dramatic approach, just say, 'They're charging, snapping their well-oiled jaws menacingly' and leave it at that. Back the Troubleshooters against a wall until Zhon-B arrives to rescue them. (In case the PCs don't cooperate, the gators have the equivalent of guardbot armor, rating 4.)

Setting a properly paranoid pace

Throw the traps at the PCs one after another, bang-bang-bang. The PCs run down the walkway from the rats—into a dead end, with the gatorbots blocking their escape—but in the wall is the door to the water trap—et cetera. Give the PCs the idea this sewer is one long obstacle course.

Just when the players begin asking seriously, 'What are all these traps doing down here? Who's setting them?'… enter Zhon-B.

He always gets his man: Zhon-B-VLJ-2

Zhon-B-VLJ-2 was a bright star in the Troubleshooter ranks 20 years ago. The last survivor of a dozen different mission teams, he constantly displayed the inventive resourcefulness and cheerful self-interest that an older civilization would have called 'ruthless backstabbing'.

Hence Zhon-B's rapid rise to BLUE Clearance, rare in the high-turnover Troubleshooter ranks. Hence also his eventual fall. He gained his last two clearance levels through skillful blackmail of a prosperous VIOLET—but the VIOLET knew a High Programmer, who got Zhon-B assigned to a dead-end mission of a type almost unknown outside the ***PARANOIA*** rulebook:

'ATTENTION TROUBLESHOOTER ZHON-B-VLJ-2! A group of Troubleshooters has turned Communist and fled to the sewers, taking with them a valuable food resource. Find and terminate them. Because of the sensitive nature of this mission, you must go alone. Return when, and *only* when, you have succeeded. Farewell.…'

Perhaps there actually was a party of renegade Troubleshooters, but if they were ever in the sewers, they wised up and moved on by the time Zhon-B was sent after them. Ordinarily, a conniver of Zhon-B's gifts would have had no trouble finding a handy group of innocent bystanders and burning them into charcoal, then passing them off as the renegades. But in his first encounter with a real live rat shortly after his descent into the sewers, he went completely off his nut, and he lost interest in returning to the world above.

In the two decades since, Zhon-B has kind of… lost touch. You might say he's mellowed; having been alone so long, he's no longer paranoid—and, of course, not being paranoid in Alpha Complex is insane. Even weirder, Zhon-B has become conscientious about fulfilling his mission. He'll do anything to catch those Troubleshooters, no matter how long it takes.

That's his mindset. In practical terms, Zhon-B is an offbeat antagonist for the Troubleshooters and, if they try talking civilly to him, a narrative

device. If they behave themselves, he can lead the characters to the source of the treasonous PA system songs.

Meeting Zhon-B

In all likelihood the PCs are spleen-deep in trouble when Zhon-B decides to rescue them—whether from the gatorbots, or the net, or the flooded room. Whatever trap they're in, Zhon-B gets the drop on them, then disarms the trap. (Except the rats. He doesn't like rats; he hates them, hates their nasty, smelly fur and glassy, glittering, murderous stares; he wants to *kill* them, kill them *all*, burn them, yes, *burn*— uh, sorry.)

Anyway, regardless of the trap they're in, the PCs hear a strange voice say, 'Throw away your weapons!' They note a shadowy figure has the drop on them with an ice gun, and is in a perfect position to take advantage of cover if a firefight erupts.

Zhon-B waits until the PCs present no obvious danger to him. Then, read the following aloud:

> **You're released from your predicament by a tall, heavily-bearded, incredibly dirty fellow in a Troubleshooter uniform. He stays safely out of range and line of fire as he trains his ice gun on you. His uniform is so dirty, he seems to be Security Clearance BROWN. In a way, he reminds you of a walking muck sponge.**

Deliver the following screed with the wild-eyed, manic intensity of a raving lunatic:

> **'Aha!' he shouts. 'Caught you at last, you Commie traitors! *Twenty* years down here in the stink and the filth, the *dirt* and the *slime*, and *ratty* sludge—two decades of *dismal*, *wretched*, inhuman solitude, laying traps and plotting capture, and you thought you were *too clever* for me, oh-ho, never realizing I was on your trail *every moment!* When I think of the *years*, the *awful*—uhhhmmmmm—***[Clutch your forehead.]*** 'Excuse me. What was I saying? I seem to have lost track—'**

Wait for someone to say something. Then jump right in, interrupting, and continue with the ravings.

> **'*Right*! Commie Troubleshooters gone bad! *Aha*! I say, caught you at last! Zhon-B-VLJ *always* gets his man… I mean men. Well, okay, men and women commingled…and the occasional *rat!*'**

Keep babbling about rats as long as you like. It's conceivable a PC may try to get a word in edgewise. If so, let the characters engage Zhon-B in meaningful dialogue—as meaningful as dialogue can be when one party would require an entire chapter in *The Nature of Schizophrenia*. But if anyone tries to attack him, Zhon-B cheerfully blasts away with his ice gun.

The PCs' efforts to convince Zhon-B they're not his quarry should prove entertaining. Play Zhon-B as though he's seen too many Monty Python sketches and is now completely over the edge—long rambling diatribes, sudden vacant stares, bizarre twists of reasoning.

Actually, Zhon-B is quite easy to persuade. Any inventive argument will do, or (if no one is feeling creative) a successful Con Games roll with whatever modifier you like.

Once persuaded the PCs are not his quarry, Zhon-B loses interest and marches off in search of the real traitors. He is polite to requests for information about the source of the treasonous music, but he righteously observes he is on a mission, and he cannot interrupt it without orders.

If the PCs get testy, Zhon-B ices a couple as a warning, then leaves. If persistent PCs follow, Zhon-B flips out completely. When his gun runs out of water, he'll try to pull limbs off the Troubleshooters.

If the PCs don't persuade Zhon-B, he marches them up to an access tunnel at gunpoint. He takes them to Troubleshooter headquarters and turns them in. The PCs are fined 20 or 30 credits for fouling up their mission and immediately sent back to the sewers.

They may never see Zhon-B again. He'll be promoted to INDIGO Clearance and sent Outdoors to search for a marvelous jewel-encrusted statue of a falcon.

If the PCs avoid the traps: Default option

If the Troubleshooters seem not at all inconvenienced by the traps you throw at them—if they escape or evade them with infuriating ease—read this aloud:

> **Wading through the middle of the tunnel ahead is a grimy, heavily-bearded Troubleshooter. He has an ice gun, but it's holstered. You can't make out the original color of his uniform—right now he's what you might call Security Clearance BROWN.**
>
> **He's waving at you and shouting, 'Thank The Computer I've found you! The rest of my mission group has cornered the traitors we were sent to find—but we need more firepower! Come support us, quick!'**

Zhon-B tries to lure the characters into one of his traps. If they become suspicious of him immediately, he turns and runs, taking excellent advantage of available cover, hoping they'll follow and fall into his clutches. Given Zhon-B's spacey outlook, even the bald truth probably sounds suspicious.

Zhon-B: My clearance? Look at me! *[Peers at himself shortsightedly.]* BLUE! Obvious! I think. Yeah, sure, BLUE, that's right. Really!

How Zhon-B controls his traps

It probably won't be important, but just in case some smart-aleck player gets picky about details, here's how Zhon-B rescues the PCs from any given trap—and avoids failing into it himself.

Electric screens: Zhon-B raises and lowers them by a hidden lever mechanism down the tunnel, or by a remote control unit in his pocket.

Walkway trap: Zhon-B knows how to place his weight to avoid tripping the release—and he's primed to jump clear (Violence/Agility roll) if someone else does while he's nearby.

Water trap: The hole in the ceiling of the large chamber leads up to one of Zhon-B's many hidey-holes, where he keeps his meager supply of stolen food and tools. From there he can fill and drain the large chamber at will.

If he leads the PCs into the trap himself, he'll swim to the surface (using his Survival specialty, rating 19) where a rope hangs down from the hole above. The rope is attached to an automatic winch; one pull and up he goes.

In freeing the PCs, he empties the chamber, has them move away from their weapons, and lowers himself into the room one-handed, ice gun at the ready.

Gatorbots: The remote control unit is in Zhon-B's pocket. The bots will never attack him. He might have pet names for them—Albert, Wally, Murgatroyd.

Kids shoot the darndest things

Keep reminding your players they're hearing a virtual hit parade of treasonous tunes from every public address speaker in the sewers. (There are public address speakers on the top of the Alpha dome and inside the fusion reactors. The Computer is everywhere. No great surprise that there are speakers in the sewers.)

Possible songs include, 'I'm Just Wild About Mutie', 'Moonlight Genocide', 'Kelp', 'Gill-I-GAN's Jungle'—in fact, virtually any Old Reckoning song is treasonous by definition. (For further inspiration see the *Alpha Complex Songbook* on page 117.)

After the PCs have disposed of, or been disposed of by, Zhon-B, read this:

> **You begin to notice little scurrying shapes far away down the tunnels, at the limits of vision. The shapes are similar to human forms, but they seem too small, distorted and hunched over to be people.**

Actually, it's just Junior Citizens overburdened with their exotic and massive weaponry.

The shapes are seen at gradually closer and closer range, more and more frequently, on all sides. Characters should begin to feel surrounded. Chasing after shapes is fruitless; pursuers are outdistanced swiftly in the maze of twisting tunnels.

But soon the pursuers become the pursued. Read aloud:

You hear footsteps behind you as you walk. You stop—they continue for a moment, then stop too. You go on, and after a moment they start up again.

If the PCs go back, trying to sneak up on the 'shadows', wait until they're all turned to the rear—then hit them with a laser blast from the *front*—the direction they were originally heading! The blast should singe the concrete over their heads—you're just intimidating them for now.

Repeat this pattern, drawing the net tighter by the minute. By playing up the mysterious nature of the enemy and the PCs' frustrating inability to catch their tormentors, you can raise the tension to such a pitch—

—That the eventual discovery that the antagonists are a bunch of ten-year-old Computer Phreaks should leave the players slightly boggled and highly bothered. Ready to kill. And primed for a sucker play.

'Kids? In a sewer? C'mon..'

No. Really. They're all over.

Children in Alpha Complex are like life in Alpha Complex—nasty, brutish and short. The Computer raises them from decanting and infancy through late adolescence, training them to total loyalty and thoughtless obedience—but hey, kids will be kids, you know?

Didn't you ever want to put chalk in your teacher's coffee, or sneak into your scoutmaster's tent at night and seal him in his sleeping bag?

The same principle is at work here. These enterprising youngsters found a way to take over the PA system—and if you *know how* to do it, you *should* do it. That's what education is all about.

But some kids got tired of singing songs in the studios above, and several are now clambering all over the sewers. These young Computer Phreaks engaged in a 'live' roleplaying session: they were corrupted by a treasonous Old Reckoning roleplaying game, and all the ones who didn't commit suicide or sell their souls to the Devil have embarked on this dangerous 'Assassin' game. When the Troubleshooters blundered into the middle of it—'Wow! Invaders! Let's get 'em!'

The players probably never learn any of this. All they're likely to learn is what you read aloud:

A blast of energy hits the wall by your head and you hear maniacal, high-pitched laughter, like a mischievous child's laugh. 'Hahaha! Gotcha!' And running away up ahead is the fearsome enemy—a Junior Citizen in an INFRARED jumpsuit. He *is* carrying a laser rifle. He's maybe ten years old.

You instinctively drew a bead on him with your weapon—a normal and appropriate Troubleshooter reaction—but suddenly you recall The Computer's teachings on the subject of Youth:

'The youth of Alpha Complex represent the brightest hope for a future free of subversive Communist influence. *Each* and *every* child in Alpha Complex is The Computer's valued friend.

'We must all nurture these young, vulnerable minds and protect them from harm. Only Commies would raise a hand against our youngsters.'

You have the kid in your sights. You can still plug him if you fire right now.

What do you do?

If any PC fires and hits, roll a die for damage behind the screen, look dismayed, and announce that the kid falls like a sack of potato substitute—stone dead.

If they all hesitate, or miss, the kid gets away—but this one is close enough that he can be followed. From this point on, the PCs recognize the shapes they see down here as kids—and there are dozens of them. (You don't have to tell the players exactly how many, so don't worry about it.) Now the kids are available as targets or as leads to the studio and the next section of the mission.

Following any kid takes the PCs up a sloping access tunnel with a sign painted on one wall reading NBD SECTOR, with an upward-pointing arrow. The treasonous songs are loudest at the tunnel's entrance.

No matter how many kids the PCs massacre, at least one remains to run, stagger or crawl up this tunnel. It leads to the abandoned studio of the long-defunct children's show *Captain Botaroo*, where the juvie Phreaks have set up their mischievous PA tap.

If the PCs thought things were bad up to now…

Can you say 'deathtrap'?

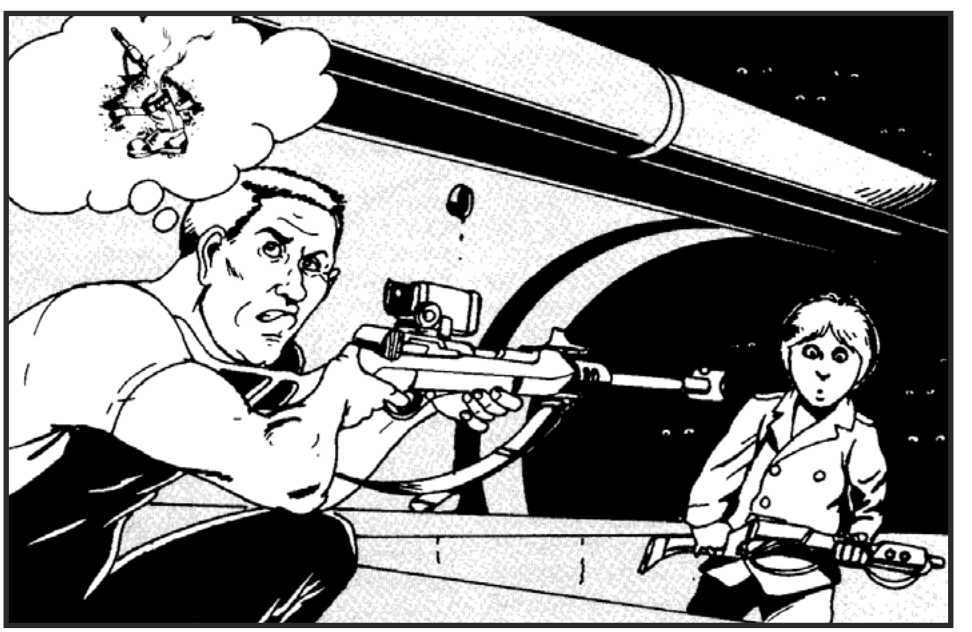
When the Troubleshooters reach the top of the tunnel, read this aloud:

***Captain Botaroo* was 'put on hiatus' ten seasons ago due to its unusually high fatality rate—high for a children's show, anyway. Since then, Captain Botaroo, his friend Mr. Citizen, the humorous Isabel INFRARED, the heroic Vulture Captain and, of course, lovable Foodvat have all faded from the Complex's collective memory.**

Now remembrance of those happy half-hours comes surging back as you stand at the top of the access tunnel and face a door labelled 'Captain Botaroo Studio D47'. Beneath this label, a dusty hand-printed sign says CLOSED UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE.

The door has just swung shut, and the kid(s) you were following are gone. The tunnel is a dead end at the door. The music is echoing all through the tunnel, but it appears to be emanating from behind this door.

Now what?



Suffer the little children who come unto me.

The door is unlocked (it opens inward), but the kids on the other side have blocked it with a large stack of plastic boxes; these were shoved back after the last kid entered the studio. Each of the six boxes contains 20 dozen ping-pong balls; the boxes break open if the door is forced, releasing over 1,400 little white spheres. These won't trip up the PCs or kids; the balls crush easily underfoot.

The studio is shown in the diagram below. The large area is the studio proper, where Captain Botaroo's lovable hijinks and strict disciplinary actions were—uh—executed. A swinging door leads to the recording and engineering area, which views the studio through a thick pane of plexiglas running almost the length of the wall.

There's not much in the studio except two junky old cameras, a lot of traitorous kids with high-grade weaponry and 37,500 ping-pong balls packed in thin plastic boxes. You just can't *believe* how easily these boxes break open and spill. Knock them over, shoot them, blow on them, stare at them hard—*fwoosh*, over they go! Maybe all at once! And though 1,400 ping-pong balls are relatively easy to deal with, thousands and thousands cause even the most adroit characters to make Violence/Agility rolls each round to move and stay upright.

We're having some fun now!

Read this to the players:

When you enter the studio, the door shoves over a tall stack of plastic boxes. The boxes fall with a crash, breaking open and scattering hundreds and hundreds of ping-pong balls. They roll all over the floor, bouncing everywhere.

But they don't seem to affect the dozen or so youngsters who are leaping around the studio, shooting their INDIGO-barrel lasers, cone rifles, gauss guns and tanglers.

The studio is about 15 meters square. It's a large empty room with a bare concrete floor and soundproofing tile on the walls. A lot of dusty light fixtures hang from the high ceiling. A couple of old vidcameras stand neglected in the corners.

There's nothing in the studio except several large stacks of plastic boxes like the pile you've just knocked over, and the kids running around playing Vultures and Communists.

On the far wall are a large soundproofed door and a long plexiglas window with a recording studio on the other side. You just glimpse a bunch of kids in there, hunched over some equipment. It looks like they're singing or something, and the treasonous music is very loud in there.

Give the players a moment to get their bearings. Then the children run behind the boxes and immediately start a firefight. The boxes tip over. The ping-pong balls spill out. The kids fall down. If the PCs make a move, they probably fall down too. The speed of a character crawling on 37,500 ping-pong balls is left as an exercise for the Gamemaster.

If the PCs try to retreat to the hallway, read this:

As you make your cowardly retreat from the studio, you hear footsteps from around a bend in the access tunnel below. Suddenly a tiny arm sticks around the bend and fires a laser pistol—INDIGO barrel.

Roll die behind the screen, study the table, then announce:

The beam misses you narrowly. But now there's another arm—and another—and another.

Meanwhile, you can't close the studio door because the ping-pong balls are blocking it, and the kids inside are aiming at you. There's no other outlet in the tunnel.

Now what?

Did you know ping-pong balls are flammable? Well, these specific ping-pong balls are, anyway. *Highly* flammable—any laser fire that hits them—any laser fire, period—sets them off like a magnesium torch. This, of course, fills the room with thick smoke (giving characters cover to do something audacious). Then, after a round or two, the fire extinguisher system kicks in, spraying the entire studio with slippery pink chemical foam from jets in the ceiling. Anyone still on his or her feet goes down now.

Smoke, foam, laser fire—what better conditions for the accidental reactivation of the long-dormant Captain Botaroo himself? From a closet in one wall slides the lovable figure from your nostalgic childhood memories: the large, blocky form, so resembling a warbot except for the loose-fitting jacket and the painted-on moustache; the bulging pockets in the jacket; and—as you remember so well—the attached cattle prod. From a speaker down by his tank treads comes the bouncy Captain Botaroo theme song and that famous resonant baritone German-accented voice.

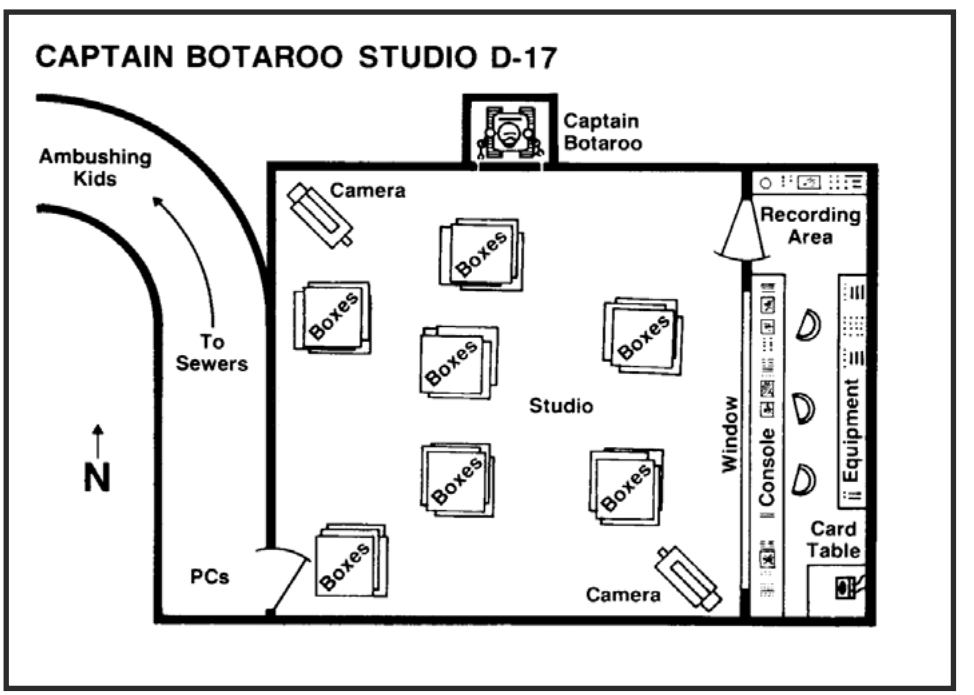
He talks like something out of the Katzenjammer Kids. Continue:

'Hoh-hoh, boys und girls, der Captain iss lookink for traitors! Haff *you* zeen any today, mmmm?' With a whining, grinding strain one rusted arm comes up. The jacket sleeve falls away to reveal a laser barrel.

If a PC accuses the kids of being traitors, the Captain targets one kid with the laser and says:

'Now, den, young zitizen—haff you been a loyal little boy or girl?'

If the PCs present convincing charges the kids are misbehaving (possession of unauthorized weaponry, subversion of the PA system, destruction of valuable ping-pong balls), the good old robot pulls a strange-looking lump from one pocket—apparently some kind of rubber ball. But when he throws it and it explodes after one



bounce, alert Troubleshooters identify it as a mini-concussion grenade (S2S, five-meter blast radius).

But this tactic works for the kids, too—they shout that the Troubleshooters are traitors even as the Troubleshooters finger them. Have some fun turning the Captain first this way, then that—laser barrel trained first on trouble*maker*, then on Trouble*shooter*.

Determine the good Captain's actions by how well the PCs handle themselves. The bot could become catatonic; it could discipline the kids, or the PCs, or both—stunning with his cattle prod, blasting with his laser or bombing with his grenades. In any case, there's plenty of good gaming material here: foam, ping-pong balls, the Captain and the kids.

Your ambitious goal, Gamemaster, is to tailor a purely unsolvable, no-win situation. Stress that killing kids is treason; stress that *not* killing kids is certain death. Play up the distasteful nature of killing children. ('Are you *sure* you want to vaporize that cute, darling, golden-curled, red-cheeked little moppet?') Observe impartially to the players that it looks like the Troubleshooters are less than a round away from a murderous crossfire.

Should the PCs try to calm the kids and discuss matters like rational, decent human beings, laugh heartily and have the kids loose a couple of cone rifle rounds. Admirable humanistic impulse and all that, but they won't get off that easy.

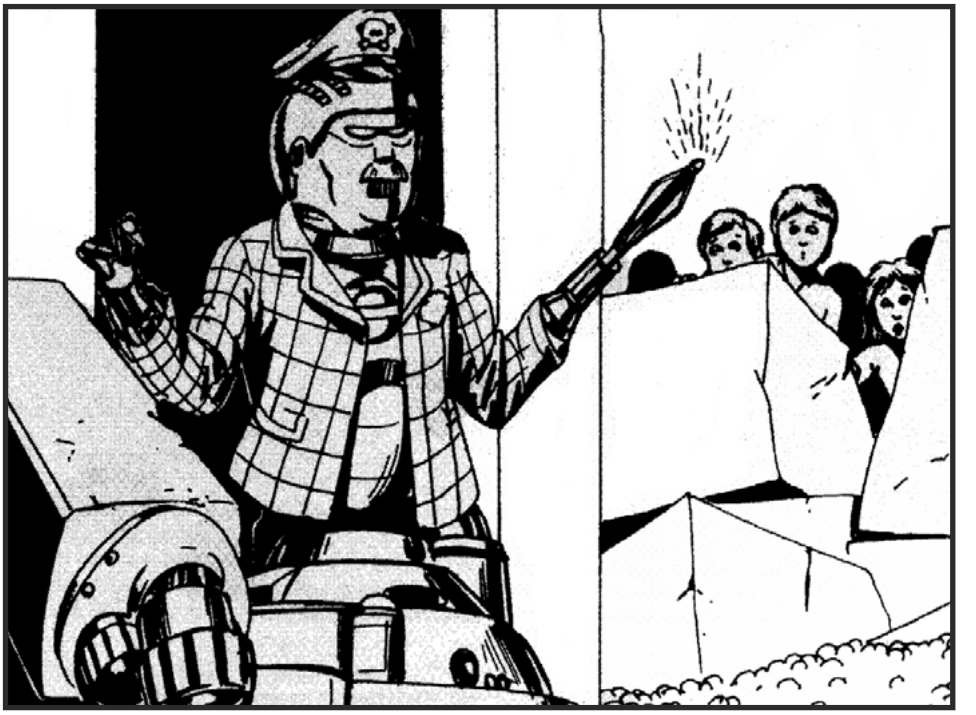
Let the PCs take vigorous non-threatening action (a foolhardy swan dive on the pingpong balls to roll across to the studio door should be rewarded with success). But if they try anything violent to resolve the crisis, pretend to be cooperative, yet needle them relentlessly.

Use such questions as, 'Are you *sure* you want to *destroy* the purest cream of Alpha Complex youth? The Computer might not approve' or 'Gosh, I just hope they don't happen to be the promising protégés of some High Programmer.' Twist the knife. Frustration is your artistic objective.

WARNING: Don't be surprised if the players simply open fire on the kiddies. Many roleplaying gamers respond to frustrating dilemmas with heroic, even suicidal, action. ***PARANOIA*** players in particular are likely to shrug their shoulders when presented with a no-win situation: 'So what's new?' Such players may cheerfully go out in style, executing Commie tykes while swept away by a murderous volley of deadly energy.

Okay. Give 'em their moment of glory. Then kill them. Then activate their clones and send them back into the sewers. The second time around (or third, or fourth, or…), the suicidal bloodbath gambit loses its novelty, and the PCs are in a better frame of mind to savor alternative approaches.

And just when frustration reaches its peak, guess who appears to save the day?



'Tennis, anyvon?'

A special guest appearance

Read this aloud:

It looks like treason or death for the brave Troubleshooters, when suddenly through a secret panel in the south wall comes none other than *Teela O'Malley*!

Her appearance is radiant, her ORANGE jumpsuit faultlessly tailored. She takes in the situation with a glance, raises her hand imperiously and barks out, '*Children*! Put down those weapons this instant!'

All the kids look at her, then at each other, then they lay down their guns. Teela says sharply, 'You've been very bad. Go and stand in the corner until the Internal Security agents come.' They all go over meekly and stand in the indicated corner.

Teela is in control of the situation. 'Captain Botaroo,' she says in that beautiful voice, 'please aid these noble Troubleshooters.'

Deep in his rattling, overdriven speakers The Captain chortles, 'Vy, shoor, Miss Teela!' and helps you to your feet. He reaches deep into his pockets and hands each of you an artificially-sweetened algae ball.

The candy is a little stale but otherwise harmless. Sure it looks just like the concussion grenades. Just a coincidence.

Teela beckons to you and marches into the recording studio. The narrow room is filled with technical equipment, playback and editing machines—and tucked away in a corner, a flimsy card table with a bunch of kids standing around it. They all look abashed before the great Teela O'Malley. You notice the treasonous music has stopped.

On one wall above the table is an open panel with a lot of wires. Two long wires lead from screw terminals in the panel down to the table, where they're attached to a little speaker box about the size of a transistor radio. Teela picks up the box, pulls the wires from the wall and hands it to your team leader.

'I believe this is what has been causing our recent trouble,' she says. 'I know I can rely on you to deal with it properly. I only recently learned of these children's mischief from their friends, whom I visited during a public appearance. Otherwise, I would have been by to assist you before.'

She smiles enchantingly. Then she strides purposefully from the recording room across the studio to the secret panel. She pauses and turns at the opening, saying dramatically, 'Remember the service I have done you this day'—and she is gone.

As she leaves, Teela attempts to Cloud the PCs' Minds (see the mutant power description at the start of this mission). Hand a copy of Note A to any who fall under her spell:

You think to yourself, over and over: 'Gee, that Teela is sure swell. Boy, I hope she is real happy. I wish / could do something to make her talk to me

again. *[Sigh.]* **I wish I were assigned to her mission group.'**

The concealed panel through which she entered and exited cannot be opened without a construction permit. PCs who force the panel open with tools or explosives face treason charges for unauthorized modifications to Alpha Complex structures. Beyond the hidden door is a maze of sewer tunnels. No sign of Teela. Hint subtly that pursuit is futile.

GM: Gee. You don't see Teela. She must be gone. G, O, N, E, gone. I guess she didn't want to talk with you anymore. Hint, hint. But if anyone wants to wander around in the sewers looking for her, don't let me stop you. No sirree. Might be lots of fun. *[Gaze at the ceiling and roll your eyes a lot. Look innocent.]*

Sleeping through your execution is treason and punishable by summary execution.

Say, where did those kids get all those weapons?

Who cares?

Debriefing… or maybe not…

Mission accomplished. Source of treasonous music located and apprehended. Now the airwaves are free of disloyal ditties.

There's the minor problem of finding a way out of the sewers to report for debriefing and deliver the traitors for judgment. Teela said Internal Security.would be there right away. All the PCs need do is sit around and wait. Fifteen BLUE IntSec troopers arrive in minutes, curtly acknowledge Teela's summons and take custody of the kids. All they say is 'hup, hup, hup' as they dog-trot into the studio and depart with the kids. The PCs can follow if they hustle.

The IntSec troopers march directly to a large, well-armored metal grate about a quarter mile down a sewer tunnel. They open the grate and step into a large, grimy elevator. The PCs can squeeze in if they hustle.

There is a sudden, terrible acceleration. Five G's maybe. Then the elevator stops. Abruptly. 'Whack' go the heads on the ceiling. The tykes wail. Maybe a weapon goes off.

Then the door opens and the IntSec troopers march their whining captives down the corridor through a BLUE door. PCs who try to hustle are firmly discouraged from following through the BLUE door, but an IntSec trooper grudgingly gives directions to Troubleshooter Headquarters.

Of course, free-spirited Troubleshooters may want to snatch all the glory and deliver the kids themselves. Arguing with the BLUE troopers is unthinkable. The PCs would have to find a way out of the sewers by themselves.

One way is to wander around the sewers looking for a way up. Let them traipse around on slimy walkways for a few rninutes, then have them round a corner and bump into the 15 BLUE IntSec troopers. The troopers politely but firmly take custody of the kids and the sequence proceeds as above.

Another way is to retrace the party's steps back to the entrance to Cleto-B's office. Handle this in one of two ways (your choice):

A. Have the PCs run into the BLUE troopers on the way to Cleto-B's office. Sequence proceeds as above.

B. Let the PCs find the entrance to Cleto-B's door before the troopers find them. The door is locked. Opening the locked door without a construction permit is treason. Inside, the lights are out, nobody home. The elevator won't open. Opening the elevator without a construction permit is treason, and it ruins the elevator. PCs must go back out into the sewers. Now the troopers find them. Sequence proceeds as above.

(Another alternative may have occurred to you: Let the Troubleshooters wander around the sewers with their prisoners until they starve to death or learn to live off the rats. Appropriately ***PARANOIA***—but dramatically speaking, starvation develops a bit too slowly.)

Troubleshooter HQ

When they arrive at headquarters, the PCs can't find Cleto-B, his YELLOW aides or anyone they can report to. Drop a hint that the Complex is now deep into night-cycle—dimmed lights, empty corridors. Have some guard take the yawning kids into custody (if the BLUE troopers haven't taken them already) and tell the characters to get some sleep. And don't forget to point out just how bad the PCs look and smell—after all, they just climbed out of a sewer.

If the PCs report to The Computer, let them say anything and everything they want. Pay special attention to whatever they mention about their encounter with Teela O'Malley, but don't let on there's any potential treason in being associated with Teela.

Award more than the usual praise and commendations. Deal with the usual backbiting and betrayal of fellow Troubleshooters in the usual fashion—careful collection of evidence, gathering of all concerned, citation of accusations and innuendo, slow buildup of charges, climactic verdict, firefight, everybody dies—standard procedure.

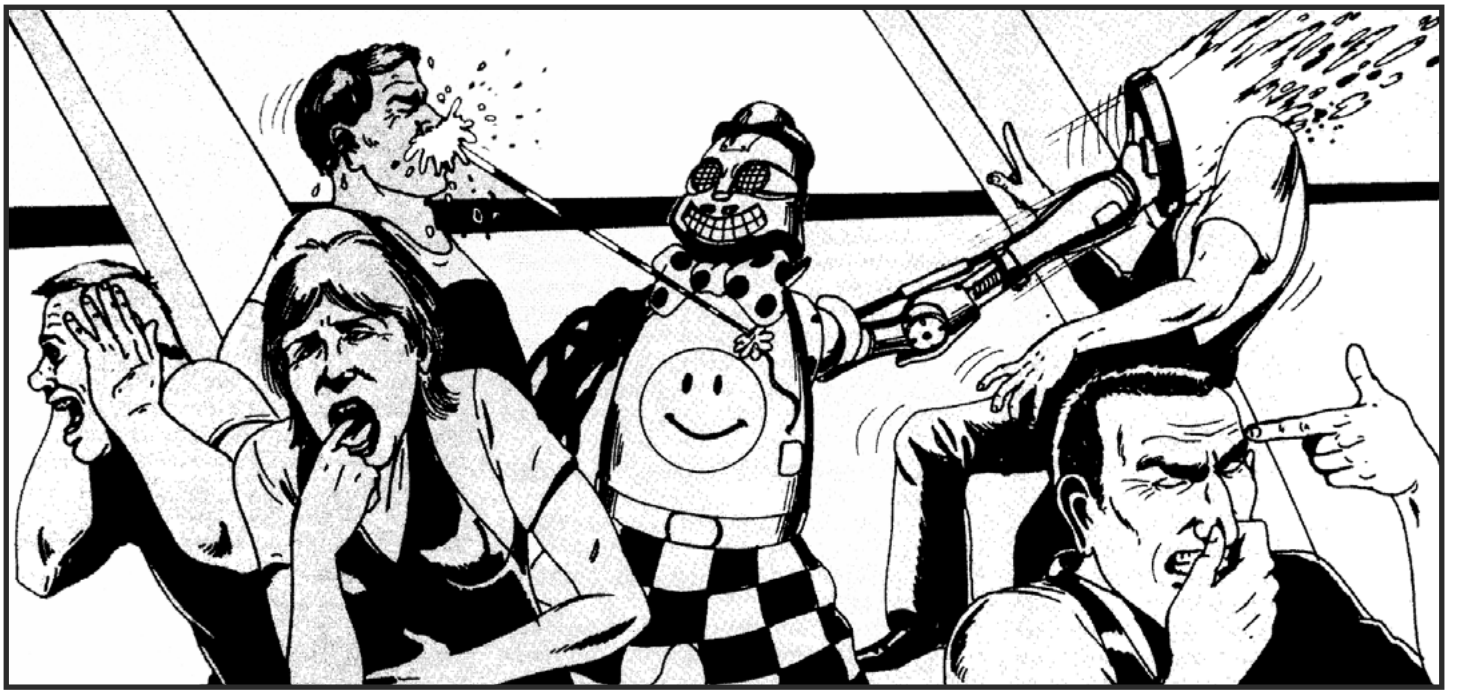
One way or another the characters, or their clones, should eventually be sent off to their beds. Mention they are very tired. It's late. They could sure use some sleep. Hint, hint.

Give the players time enough to drift off into a relaxed sense that one part of the mission is over, and it's time for bathroom breaks and refreshments. Just when they have visibly relaxed and are starting to get up from the table, jump into your best Excited Sportscaster voice and read the following aloud:

Suddenly you're jostled rudely awake by guardbots! They roust you from bed, firing a few live rounds into the walls to inspire your complete and total cooperation.

You have only moments to struggle into uniforms and grab your weapons, then they hustle you out of your barracks. You're escorted quickly through darkened corridors, and halted before a familiar elevator; the guardbots draw aside for a really *large* guardbot, and the elevator doors open. You have a feeling of *deja vu* as you are ordered into the elevator….

Now you can let them go to the bathroom.



'Isn't it great?' (SPLOOSH!) 'Isn't it keen?' (SCHLOOMP!)

2. Bureaucracyworld!

Mission summary

Snatched from bed, the PCs are hustled to a briefing with Cleto-B. Their assignment: find Teela O'Malley, recover biological equipment she has stolen and terminate her.

Yes. *Terminate* Teela O'Malley.

But first, visit PLC for outfitting and stop by R&D to pick up experimental devices. Quicker than you can read the collected works of Charles Dickens, the PCs are ready for their unthinkable mission.

(Seriously, there are a couple of snags in the outfitting process, and some of the experimental devices turn out kinda dangerous. And the funbot assigned to the party provides about all the fun the Troubleshooters can stand. And then some.)

Here we go again

We left our heroes in an elevator with a *very* large guardbot. Now there's another long, agonizing ride down and down in the cramped elevator.

The *very* large guardbot can, if you wish, be different from the one in *Sewerworld!* Make it a rattletrap, clunky old model that isn't holding together too well. Its laser tends to go off accidentally in a random direction. Roll dice constantly; every sixth or seventh throw, have the laser fire at the ceiling or graze a character's ear.

What's worse, its programming is a bit herky-jerky. Like a senile dodderer who drifts away from reality, the guardbot periodically decides a randomly chosen PC is a convicted mass-murderer scheduled for immediate termination. Give it lines like, 'Have you an-nnnythin-n-nng to s-s-*ssay* before before before you d-d-*die*?' and 'Why-y-y-y did you assassinate *(click)* murder *(click)* destroy *(click)* annihilate *(SCREEECH)* kill those 19 Hi-i-i-igh Proro-ro-ro-grammers?' Give the PCs the idea the bot is about to self-destruct—and take them with it.

'Your mission...'

Read this aloud:

> **In a familiar featureless room at the bottom of an elevator shaft you wait a long time, standing at attention while watched by four familiar guardbots.**
>
> **Finally, a familiar door slides open and the distastefully familiar BLUE form of Cleto-B-QRK-2 enters, accompanied by his two familiar YELLOW companions, Dewey-Y-JLK and Sonny-Y-TLS.**
>
> **Dewey-Y looks at** *[pick any PC]* **significantly, then leans over and whispers into Sunn-Y's ear. If you listen carefully you can hear him murmur the words—***[roll a die and pretend to consult a chart]***—hmm, no, you can't quite catch what he's saying.**

Complete red herring. Invent other ways that Dewey-Y and Sunn-Y may appear to fulfill some important function in the mission. In fact, they don't. Continue reading:

> **Cleto-B says, 'Troubleshooters, The Computer is gravely disappointed in you! Against specific instructions, you did not return here promptly at the conclusion of your mission. This reflects very badly on your loyalty record.'**

Let the PCs talk, whine or bootlick their way out of this—a fairly straightforward task of explaining the circumstances, unless they did some unauthorized construction work on Cleto-B's door after the sewer expedition. If they mention or admit having done this, Cleto-B coldly fines them 400 credits each for destroying The Computer's property 'and letting that stink into the room.' (Remember, the sewer is right outside.)

When and if the PCs convince Cleto-B of their good faith, keep reading:

> **Cleto-B continues, 'Pay close attention and don't interrupt. The Computer has learned of your success in accomplishing its previous mission. Before hearing your... *delayed* report, I bring you news that The Computer has rewarded your success with another opportunity to serve!'**

Pause for loyal enthusiastic response. Nod approvingly. Then yell at them for interrupting.

'You, honored Troubleshooters, have been chosen—selected from among all others—to take on a highly confidential mission.

'The video heroine Teela O'Malley is a traitor—of the basest and most devious kind. She and her associates have been conclusively implicated in the diversion of valuable biological research equipment to an illegal destination in NBD Sector. The Computer knows the nature of the equipment, but this information is not available at your security clearance.

'Teela O'Malley disappeared some time ago. The Computer has been using electronically-generated images of her during her absence. She was last seen in the Housing Preservation and Development & Mind Control Entertainment Division in NBD Sector.

'Your assignment: Go into HPD & Mind Control; locate and retrieve the missing equipment; locate and terminate Teela O'Malley. Anyone who has associated with her recently is, almost certainly, a traitor and should be apprehended for interrogation and possible termination.

'The Computer wishes to stress the importance of secrecy at all times during your mission. Betrayal of the information I have given you is grounds for immediate and comprehensive termination. Here is an authorized termination voucher. Do not reveal it to anyone unless absolutely necessary.

'Who is the team leader?'

Walt-Y should answer immediately, but if there is any hesitation or confusion, Cleto-B bellows:

'Who has the highest security clearance?'

If you're using your own characters, or Walt-Y-QGI forgot his Wakey-Wakey pill this morning, Cleto-B then selects a leader from those with the highest clearance, breveting the leader to a higher clearance if necessary, and giving the PC a voucher good for temporary assignment of kevlar armor and two laser barrels of appropriate color. The voucher states explicitly this equipment is transferable to the leader's successor or replacement.

Cleto-B then gives the team leader a termination voucher. (If you want the actual form, check the ***PARANOIA*** *Gamemaster Screen* insert booklet. But you don't need it for this mission.)

Your mission reports, please?

'Before proceeding with details of your glorious new mission to exterminate this unspeakably villainous traitoress, I would have you relate the details of your previous venture. Since the haste of your departure precluded assignment of the standard-issue multicorder, we must rely on your accurate, exhaustive and unvarnished account of the episode. Be quick and succinct; waste no time with polite formalities!'

Oh boy. The reception given the PCs' account depends on two variables: whether they've already talked to The Computer concerning the previous mission, and whether they've mentioned Teela's role in the successful conclusion of the mission.

If they've talked to The Computer: Cleto-B then has a transcript of their report, and this is a loyalty test. This report had better square exactly with the previous one, or a duplicitous player is liable for a hefty fine for insubordination.

If they didn't: Wise move. They can lie, cheat or steal here, and Cleto-B can't verify or deny any of it (openly, that is; of course he knows what happened in the *Captain Botaroo* studio because he's intimately associated with Teela O'Malley and the Clone Arrangers).

If the PCs don't mention Teela: No trouble, as long as the account squares with The Computer's transcript (if any).

If the PCs mention Teela: Trouble. The guardbots' lasers and blasters immediately lock on the Troubleshooters. Alarms sound. Cleto-B and the YELLOWs draw lasers and back warily out of the room into the sewer tunnels, ready to fire at the slightest provocation. They leave through this door, closing and locking it behind them. The Troubleshooters are left alone in the room with the guardbots.

If any PC reaches for a weapon, start a firefight—and for once, you needn't kill all the PCs automatically. Let them live or die according to the roll of the dice… and if they destroy all the guardbots, bring in the Vulture Squadron Cleto-B has summoned by PDC. *Now* kill all the PCs automatically. Fair is fair.

If the PCs don't draw weapons, there's no firefight and the Vultures merely take them into custody. Read this aloud:

You're taken to a Detention Center by the Vulture Squadron guards, your weapons are taken, and you're left in a cell marked 'FOR IMMEDIATE TERMINATION!'

Before you can straighten your rumpled uniforms, another squad of guards rousts you out of the cell. Pretty soon you're standing on a rickety plastic gallows, all in a line, with nylon ropes around your necks. The traps are about to open. You're going to fall the last mile. Got any final words?

All you're looking for is treasonous statements, secret society mottos and other bold gestures of defiance. 'There's been a terrible mistake!' and other similar wimpy pleadings are ignored, as are transparent lies like '…But I've always been loyal to The Computer!'

Give the PCs a minute to get themselves in real deep, then regardless of their statements, read the following:

The latch springs, the traps open, you fall through…

Suddenly buzzers sound, alarms shriek and the traps close firmly around your torsos. The ropes are taut but not quite restricting your breathing.

A RED-Clearance tech rushes over, sheepishly saws the ropes free with a knife, the traps open and you drop *(thud!)* beneath the gallows. As this is going on, The Computer's voice is heard over the loudspeaker system.

'An unfortunate clerical error has been brought to my attention. Please transfer the Troubleshooters from the cell marked 'FOR IMMEDIATE TERMINATION' to the cell marked 'FOR IMMEDIATE INTERROGATION'. Your cooperation is appreciated.'

The Computer feels—mistakenly, as it turns out—the PCs' earlier contact with Teela improves their chance of earning her trust, which may help them in apprehending her. So the Troubleshooters live after all.

Anyone who shouted something imprudent at the moment before near-termination ('Sure, I'm a bloody Commie and proud of it, and The Computer is a muck-brained sweeperbot with delusions of grandeur!') faces appropriate fines and treason charges. Then—you can just summarize this part quickly for your players—Internal Security GREEN goons interrogate the Troubleshooters to within a centimeter of their lives about their connections with Teela.

However, because the PCs are at least apparently innocent, or perhaps because of another clerical error, the IntSec goons release them and escort them back to Cleto-B's mission briefing room, where the briefing continues.

Where were we?

If the PCs' reports were accurate (fat chance), or they didn't mention Teela (fatter chance), or after they've made whatever narrow escapes were required, read this aloud:

Cleto-B says, 'Thank you for your mission report. Now you must proceed to Production, Logistics & Commissary to receive special equipment required for the successful completion of this mission.

'After outfitting, proceed to Research and Development. There The Computer's loyal R&D scientists will assign you experimental equipment for field testing.

After procuring the equipment, return here immediately for your final briefing.

'Proceed without delay. This ruthless traitor presents a serious threat to the security of The Computer, Alpha Complex and all its citizens. Failure to return promptly is evidence of insubordination and even treasonous intent.

'If there are any further questions, requisition an Information Inquiry Form and dispatch it to Headquarters for processing at once. Thank you for your cooperation. Serve The Computer. The Computer is your friend. Dismissed!'

Cleto-B and the two YELLOWs promptly head for the elevator. Sunny-Y lags slightly behind, turns and mugs grotesquely at *[pick any PC]***, then gestures vaguely at** *[pick any other PC; make a gesture like a secret society hand signal]***. Then Cleto-B and his aides enter the elevator and the door closes.**

(Information Inquiry Form? See page 59.)

Now the PCs get to wait for the elevator. (The guardbots won't let them into the sewer. Why not? Who knows?) The door finally slides open and the big guardbot herds the characters back onto the elevator for another long, grindingly slow journey.

Explanatory interlude (or, What's with Cleto-B?)

It is logical to wonder why Cleto-B—cofounder of the Clone Arrangers and crony of Teela O'Malley—is dispatching a gaggle of Troubleshooters to find the Clone Arrangers and terminate Teela O'Malley.

He's not self-destructive—just the opposite. The Computer chose him, through its ineffable randomizing process, to brief the Troubleshooters. To disobey The Computer is grounds for instant vaporization.

But Cleto-B doesn't like the situation. He hasn't been real helpful to the PCs. He won't answer any questions or do anything to aid them.

However, when you think of all the BLUE-Clearance personnel available to The Computer, you have to be amazed at the perversity of the universe.

Such an *incredible* coincidence, that the one pivotal traitor in the *entire* Clone Arranger operation happens, *happens* to be fingered as the *one* pivotal figure who can deeply screw up this entire Troubleshooter mission. It's as if the entire cosmos were being arbitrarily manipulated by a couple of writers for their own sinister purposes…

Outfitting

Read this aloud:

When you reach the end of your elevator odyssey, guardbots are waiting at the top of the shaft. They dogtrot you back to your respective sleeping areas. You actually have time to catch a little sleep. Like 20 minutes' worth.

When morning-cycle arrives and the 'Patriotic Alertness Reveille' sounds over the loudspeakers, you're ready to report to Production, Logistics & Commissary for supplies.

If the players say they already have all the equipment they need, remind them Cleto-B ordered them to report for outfitting and said their mission is assigned special equipment. (It is—but wait until the PCs try to get it.)

A word about the PLC bureaucracy

'Enormous.'

There are lots of citizens in Alpha Complex, and The Computer doesn't trust many of them to work on anything without a lot of supervision.

Thus the bureaucracy—thousands of persons who fill out forms no one ever consults, write reports no one reads, make up schedules that go out of date before the input key is hit, have meetings with each other, decide who is superior to whom and subordinate to what, form committees to correlate data produced by task forces and distributed by clearing offices, form subcommittees to decide which sub-subcommittees are under which other subcommittees… The list continues indefinitely. Never have so many consumed so much to produce so little for so few so so many can make so little trouble for so paranoid a Computer. Or something like that.

Look at the PLC Runaround Flowchart on the next page. Looks complicated, doesn't it? It's so complicated not even the petrified civil servants in PLC understand it—and they work there!

Sometimes, if someone comes up asking for a left-hand dorsal retaining wing nut designed for scrubot rotating squeegee attachment model S165e-LL/XLII, the barnacle behind the desk may actually *know* where the customer really needs to go for that part—but the odds are against it, and even if the official knows, he may direct the customer halfway across the Complex, just for spite, or as an exercise in applied psychology.

This is the Sprawling Malevolent Octopus the PCs are up against.

Using the PLC Runaround Flowchart

When the PCs show up at Production, Logistics & Commissary, they find the directory of offices, once quite extensive, has been reduced to six listings. (The directory board clearly shows the shadowy outlines of office names imperfectly removed.) The six remnant offices are potential starting places for the characters in their journey through the realms of Supreme and Everlasting Paperwork.

The six offices, with their numbers on the flowchart, are given below:

1. Office of Production
2. Office of Logistics
3. Office of Commissary
4. Registration & Requisitions
7. Complex Coordinating & Planning Commission (Water Recycling Division)
11. Complex Supply Bureau

PCs can go to any of these. (If they ask a guard or The Computer what happened to the other listings, tell them a recent reorganization expunged all traces of filthy Commie subversion from PLC.) The office the PCs go to will lead to another office… and another… and another… and so on, until they work their way through the great chain down to office 13, 'Supply'. There they get the 'special mission equipment' described below. Of course, it might take a while…

About office numbers: Give the offices really long bogus office numbers, like 12902-A. Use the last two digits of the office number to refer to a number of the flowchart—so 12902-A would be flowchart box 2: the Office of Logistics. If your players forget to write down the office numbers you give them, make sure they get lost for a day or two until they can find their way back to the directory.

The flowchart briefly describes each numbered office, gives a waiting time, describes the official(s) likely to be there, and provides the likely result of the encounter—usually a lead to some other office on the chart. To elaborate:

Description: You may wish to enhance the description provided. For example, describe how the PCs got to that office: 'You tramp through a vast maze of identical corridors. Doors line the hallways on both sides; no sign tells what anything is, and you never see anyone enter or leave a room.'

You might also find interesting things to do with guards (do *they* know where they are?), bots, (carrying indescribable objects from one door to another) or even other Troubleshooter teams.

Wait: Use this to increase player frustration. Because the PCs haven't been given a specific time limit for starting the mission, exploit this, and play on their uncertainties. While they journey between offices, have The Computer drop a courteous word over the public address system:

'I'm glad to see you taking such meticulous care in procuring your assigned equipment. I hope you're planning to start your mission at the earliest convenience. It would be most unfortunate for such a fine party of Troubleshooters to be reassigned as

[continued on page 129]

PLC RUNAROUND FLOWCHART

To begin: Have the PCs choose office 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 or 11, the white boxes on this flowchart. Each office description follows this format:

Wait: Time wasted filling out forms, standing in line, etc.

Officials: NPC bureaucrats.

Result: If PCs wait the required time and make it past the officials, they get to go to another office.

Notes: Read all these encounters before running your PCs through them. Boxes 11–14–15 form an endless loop. Send the PCs through this loop at least once.

1 Office of Production

Huge room, 30 desks. Junior executive heaven. PCs can go to any desk, explain their needs, then be referred to next desk to repeat their story.

Wait: One hour total.

Officials: 28 REDs, two ORANGE middle managers, one YELLOW supervisor.

Result: YELLOW chief at last desk tells PCs they have the wrong office; refers them to (5).

2 Office of Logistics

Huge room identical to (1). Thirty desks, each with its clerical drone filling out meaningless forms.Fluorescent lights that buzz. PCs given same treatment as (1).

Wait: One hour total.

Officials: As (1).

Result: Refer PCs to (6).

3 Office of Commissary

Huge room identical to (1) and (2). Thirty desks—all but one empty. Long line for single RED drone.

Wait: One hour total.

Official: Minor RED clerk is harried and rude. He explains, 'All the others were terminated yesterday.'

Result: Gives PCs salmon-colored form RSC-2544/e and refers them to (6).

4 Registration & Requisitions

Small boxy office with customer service counter. Six grim YELLOW clerks cleaning and readying laser rifles; air of imminent action. 'Moving to new quarters' they explain.

Wait: None

Official: Bart-Y-DCN, supervisor; won't listen long.

Result: Refers PCs to (8). 'Better hurry, though, they'll be in new quarters soon too.' Rude, derisive laughter.

5 Office of Intra-Complex Routing & Logistics

Dusty, unkempt, drafty place next to a giant ventilation fan. Room stacked high with forms, schedules, punchcards and brooms.

Wait: Five long minutes.

Official: Slow, insolent ORANGE clerk yawns a lot. Needs form from (3); if PCs don't have it, he refers them there.

Result: Gives PCs goldenrod form 3-67-492/X11 and refers them to (9).

6 Sector Office of the Production and Utilization Committee

Clean, well-appointed office with one desk and chair. No paperwork in sight.

Wait: One hour (see below).

Officials: Mabel-B-KLG, a matronly biddy. Regardless of the nature of the PCs' inquiry, she steers the conversation to an hour-long discussion on the need to avoid waste and maintain efficiency.

Result: Refers PCs (finally) to (9).

7 Complex Coordinating and Planning Commission, Water Recycling Division

Luxurious individual office, unoccupied. Cot, food, nothing treasonous.

Wait: Ten minutes.

Official: A portly, indolent BLUE returns with more food. He's surprised to see the PCs and quite suspicious: 'Who sent you here? What made you think I could help? It was Stanley-B who sent you, wasn't it? *Wasn't it?'*

Result: Refers PCs to (10).

8 Registration, Requisitions, Food Additives & Sidearms

Heavily barricaded door in deserted hallway. Rifle barrels visible through firing ports. If PCs say anything, clerks inside fire warning shots over their heads. 'Can't help you! Go somewhere else!'

Result: None. PCs must devise their next move on their own.

9 Troubleshooter Counseling, Loyalty & Equipment Bureau

An office hardly larger than a broom closet. Some PCs must stand in the hallway; they can't hear what the two inside say.

Wait: None.

Official: A cheery jackobot, eager to please—but intensely curious about PCs' mission, goals, feelings and everything else.

Result: Refers PCs to (10).

10 Inter-Sector Transport and Resource Allocation Division of the Greater Alpha Complex Supervisory Coordination Bureau

Wait: One hour searching through countless hallways.

Official: None; sign on door says 'OUT'.

Result: Sign refers PCs to (12).

11 Complex Supply Bureau

Bewildering array of counters, attendants, and crowds. Any given clerk requires the PCs to sign loyalty oaths to The Computer and the Complex Supply Bureau.

Wait: 1–2 hours.

Officials: Squinty-eyed geeks who argue as much as possible before saying, 'Oh, you want the Bureau of Complex Supply.'

Result: Refer PCs to (14).

12 Coordinating Administrative Council for Citizen Well-Being and Security, Division of Communist Genocide

Clerks behind a line of windows like bank tellers. Deathly silent, stifling atmosphere.

Wait: One day (come back tomorrow).

Official: Officious YELLOW toad who demands form from (3). If PCs don't have it, he refers them to (5).

Result: Refer PCs to (13).

13 Supply

Humble-looking counter with docile RED clerk. No line. Provides PCs with assigned equipment, speedily and without argument. Clerk grants any reasonable equipment request. Requires PCs to sign proper forms.

14 Bureau of Complex Supply

Identical to (11), except the loyalty oath the PCs must sign requires allegiance to the Bureau of Complex Supply and *not* the Complex Supply Bureau.

Wait: 2–3 hours.

Officials: Just like (11), except they say, 'Oh, you want the Supply Complex Bureau.'

Result: Refer PCs to (15).

15 Supply Complex Bureau

Identical to (11) and (14), except the oath requires undying loyalty to the Supply Complex Bureau and *not* the Bureau of Complex Supply or the Complex Supply Bureau.

Wait: 3–4 hours.

Officials: 'Oh, do you want the Complex Supply Bureau?'

Result: Refer PCs to (11).

[continued from page 127]

sluice scrubbers in the Waste Recycling Subdivision.'

The messages grow ominously briefer and more polite as the runaround proceeds.

Officials: Use the notes in each encounter as a guide in creating your own personae to deal with the PCs. In general, each official encountered will A) want to move on to something else other than 'helping' the PCs, and B) energetically and pointedly make the PCs aware of this.

Result: If the PCs don't state their needs forthrightly and aggressively, the official likely shoves a random form at them and waves them to another office—the next one on the flowchart or just wherever you feel like sending them.

Player actions can have some minimal effect on an encounter's outcome. If they perform well (do something unexpected, clever or entertaining), skip them over two or three (or more) intervening offices. Conversely, if they pull their lasers and fry some piddly bureaucrat, The Computer should take immediate action—politely reprimand the characters as the Vulture Squadron guards carry them to the termination center.

One way or another, the PCs should reach Supply with all proper forms *just before the players' tempers run out*. Timing is everything. Achieving the delicate balance between frustrated teeth-gritting and uncontrollable laughter is no simple task. But we know you're up to it.

Special mission equipment

Once the PCs reach the Supply office, a friendly RED-Clearance clerk equips them with most anything they could reasonably want at their security clearances, along with one special container of assigned equipment: a bulky padded box containing eight gross of Teela O'Malley souvenir pocket mirrors.

The clerk explains that HPD&MC has ordered the Troubleshooters to distribute these mirrors throughout NBD Sector to Teela fans of all clearances. This will enhance citizen morale. The box isn't really heavy—say, 15 kilos?—but it's large and cumbersome. The unlucky PC who gets saddled with it (a decision left to the lucky team leader) must set it down before doing anything like firing a laser or running for cover.

And don't drop the box! The RED clerk is quite emphatic about this. The mirrors are amazingly fragile; a Troubleshooter responsible for breaking them is profoundly fined unto the last clone generation.

Of course, all PCs must sign the proper requisition forms for the equipment. The forms acknowledge responsibility if the equipment is damaged. It's useful to remind players about these forms shortly after their characters have broken a bit of The Computer's equipment. *Never* warn them before it's too late for them to do anything about the situation.

How to handle the PLC runaround

Fast and loose, that's how. The *characters* have to endure excruciating boredom, but the *players* should get their frustration in concentrated, rapid doses:

GM: You wait in line for half an hour, then just as you reach the desk, the clerk puts up a sign saying NEXT DESK PLEASE, so you go stand in another line for another half an hour until you reach the next desk. The clerk is a little standoffish guy who blinks a lot. What do you do?

PC: We give our mission clearance identification code and ask for our assigned equipment.

GM: Blink, blink, blink. He stares at you for a minute and a half and says you're in the wrong office. He calls over his supervisor, a sweaty YELLOW-Clearance woman with a figure like a rolled-up mattress, and after a couple of minutes with the first guy, she also says you've got the wrong office. Now what?

—And so on. If your players begin to sit back and watch the show, step out of character long enough to mention that their constructive action can improve the situation. If their idea of constructive action is to mow down a room full of bureaucrats, suggest that Bribery, Bootlicking, Con Games, or Intimidation might work.

Will they work? It's up to you. Certain tactics might be particularly appropriate in certain circumstances. To avoid the need for careful judgment of circumstances on your part, we have thoughtfully provided you with a table to randomize the appropriateness of certain tactics with individual officials. (We also believe this accurately models the seemingly random manner in which most bureaucracies appear to operate.)

Remember that your characters may have some pretty formidable skills. Or no applicable skill. Maybe you think things need to move along a little slower or more quickly. The chance can increase or decrease to whatever ridiculously high or low level you like. After all, why let a lumpy 20-sided die cramp your style?

Of course, you can take a *really* outrageously missed roll as a cue to send your player on a mission to Ultima Thule. It would be a shame to restrict their runaround to PLC alone. Send them to the food vats. Reservoirs. The Waste Recycling Subdivision. A Vulture Squadron target practice range. They could even end up Outdoors—say, Yellowstone National Park. Nice country out there.

But sooner or later you'll have to let them reach the Supply office and pick up their invaluable crate of mirrors. Then it's off to Research and Development.

Appropriate bureaucratic tactics table

Roll 1d20 for each official encountered. For that official, the PCs' usual success chance for the use of the given tactic is doubled, or increased by 20%, or multiplied by 1.54, or increased by the PCs' shoe size or arithmetically enhanced in any manner you find agreeable.

Roll	Tactic
1–4	Bribery
5–9	Bootlicking
10–14	Con Games
15–19	Intimidation
20	Choose, or roll again twice

R&D

Read the following aloud:

You make your way through the cramped, maze-like corridors of Alpha Complex to the Research and Development facilities of QQQ Sector. Eventually you come upon the remnants of a once-sturdy metal door. It looks like a bank vault after skilled application of several tons of high explosives. Hanging from the ceiling above the rubble, a sign dangles from a chain. The sign reads:

RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT
QQQ SECTOR
ENTER AT YOUR OWN RISK
THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION

Beyond the door the narrow corridor opens into a huge, airy, cavernous room several kilometers across. You've never been in an area as open as this.

Time this to cue the players for gasps of awe and wonder.

It's hard to see in here—smoke from the constant explosions, perhaps. ZING! CRASH! BOOM!... Every so often a bit of shrapnel whizzes past your heads. Just a little less often, you see entire buildings collapse.

The journey from the entranceway to the proper R&D building should play like a scene from *The Longest Day*. The players are never sure where the next shell will fall.

Your R&D tour guide: Ned-G-MNB

Just inside the door, the PCs are stopped by Ned-G-MNB, a GREEN Tech who delights in showing off with his laser. He twirls it, holsters it, then quick-draws it, pointing it playfully at the PCs, all in one smooth motion. Well, maybe not always so smooth… Sometimes it spins and bounces to the floor. Sometimes it goes in the holster backwards. Sometimes it goes off. In just any direction.

How Ned-G managed to survive to GREEN Clearance is anyone's guess—probably political connections. He's fat, ill-tempered and foul-smelling… but the PCs must toady to him to get their experimental equipment. And of course the PCs want their experimental equipment. Not to want experimental equipment is treasonous.

The PCs' first encounter with Ned-G should go something like this:

'Hey, pardners!' *[Draw, twirl, twirl, point, twirl, ZAP!]* **'Oops. Sorry about that. Didn't mean to singe yer pretty little uniform there. So. How y'all doin'? New around her , ain'tcha?'** *[KaaaaBOOM! Hiss. Zing. Roll dice, then frown in disappointment.]* **'Keep your head down there, pardner. Gotta watch out fer them big chunks. Now, state yer bidness!'**

(Pause to let PCs state their bidness.)

'Oh, yer here to pick up eeee-quipment, eh? Yew mean The Computer trusts the likesa YEW with valuable experimental equipment? Thats-a-mite hard tuh buhlieve.'

[Kaka-ka-BLOOEY! POW! CRUMBLE!]

'Now listen, son, ya gots tuh duck when yuh hear them 'xploshuns. Now, where ya 'sposed to get this "new ee-quipment"?'

(The PCs don't exactly know.)

'Oh ya don't 'zactly know, eh?' *[Draw, twirl, toss, ZAP!]* **'Well, ain't that int'restin'. And I s'pose yew want *me* tuh lead yuh by the hand…'**

(Yes.)

'What's yer mission? Yew a stinkin' mutant? Ah smells me a Commie rat! Ah should turn you traitors in-ta Internal See-cur-i-tee.'

Ned-G's interrogation continues with questions about the Troubleshooters' personal hygiene habits, their mission and the equipment they're supposed to test. He chastizes them for not knowing precisely where they are to report.

Eventually Ned-G agrees to escort the PCs to the Department of Experimental Apparatus Testing Headquarters (D.E.A.T.H.—but you already figured that out, didn't you?) where they can pick up their goodies. The more toadying and bootlicking the PCs do, the easier it will be to get Ned-G to cooperate. Bribery works real well, too.

Til D.E.A.T.H. do us part

Read aloud:

The trip through QQQ Sector's R&D facility is a lot like a tranquil jog through a minefield. As you dart from rubble pile to rubble pile, trying desperately to stay under cover, you and Ned-G pass several buildings.

From within the buildings, you hear reassuring sounds of technicians developing marvelous devices in the service of The Computer. The most common reassuring sound is 'Aaaaiiiiyyuuughhhhh!' Other comforting noises include the hum of heavy lasers, grinding and grating of great gears and highpitched, pain-inducing screeches of industrial strength drills. (*This can be most dramatically suggested by scraping fingernails across a blackboard.)*

If the Troubleshooters ask about the smoking piles of rubble, constant explosions and the shrapnel flying around everywhere, Ned-G tells them these are successful research projects in the final stages of testing. This should fill the characters with confidence and an even greater zeal to serve The Computer.

The Department of Experimental Apparatus Testing Headquarters is an island of calm. From the outside, it appears to be intact; from the inside the sounds of battle—that is, successful experimentation—are barely audible. Techs of various security clearances move quickly and with apparent efficiency from door to door, some with huge instruction manuals, others with complex equipment and instruments. A GREEN security guard stands at each door.

Here, at last, the PCs may get the idea they can catch their breath for a moment. Soon you'll have an opportunity to dispel this false impression.

Ned-G motions the PCs into a soundproof, airtight, bunker-like room with one thick glass window. As the PCs enter the room, two INFRAREDs carry a body bag out. The bag sags in a way that suggests, not an intact whole, but disjoint parts.

Ned-G remains outside the room. He and a nervous-looking RED named Oscar-R-DES stand outside peering through the thick glass window. Waldoes (mechanical hands) jut into the room just under the window. Ned-G and Oscar-R use these to hand experimental equipment to Troubleshooters. They do this gingerly, with constant warnings: 'Careful now!'—'Don't drop this little number, or that's all she wrote.'—'Don't even breathe!'—'Don't move a muscle, or this baby could *blow!'*

Oscar-R knows better than anyone else the risks involved in using QQQ's R&D equipment. He is ill at ease. (Perhaps you would be too, if your job was to issue obviously dangerous equipment to people with laser pistols and no compunctions about using them.)

Oscar-R: Our, uh, superiors, uh, instructed us to give you this, uh, equipment.

Troubleshooter: Is it safe?

Oscar-R: Why, uh, of course it is, isn't it, Ned-G? *[Sweat, twitch, glance about, lick lips, look wide-eyed and innocent.]* The Computer wouldn't give dangerous equipment to valued Troubleshooters, would it?

Ned-G is no help at all, but Oscar-R may be intimidated, conned or bribed into discussing the equipment in some detail. He knows something about each item's inventor, problems encountered during development and so on.

If the PCs—some of whom are of higher clearance than the lowly RED—put up a fuss or refuse any of the equipment, Ned-G threatens to report the lack of cooperation to The Computer (and he will, too). He 'asks' the offending PC(s) to accept the equipment. Any PC foolish enough to refuse ends up examining the business end of many GREEN laser barrels. After the 20 or so IntSec goons have cleaned up the ashes that used to be the troublemaking Troubleshooter, Oscar-R again offers equipment to the mission group.

Once the group has decided to accept the equipment, Oscar-R gives the Communications and Recording officer a multicorder and asks him to record the proceedings. Then Oscar-R assigns the entire team an experimental new clone delivery device.

The CRUD system

The full title of this experimental project is Clone Recycling Unlimited Delivery System QQQ-R&D-66-6. Each Troubleshooter must wear around his neck something that looks like a spiked dog collar. At inconvenient moments during the mission, the tight-fitting collar constricts even more, choking and Snafuing the PC.

Despite appearances, this is not a malfunction. The collar is simply monitoring the PC's life signs. The Troubleshooters have no way of knowing this, of course, for Oscar-R doesn't tell them what the chokers are for—just to put them on.

If (when) a PC dies, the collar alerts The Computer through a radio link. The Computer activates the former Troubleshooter's next clone and deliver it nearly instantaneously through the nearest Clone Recycling Unlimited Delivery (or CRUD) outlet. These outlets—sort of like giant pneumatic mail tubes—are positioned in selected sectors throughout the Complex—and coincidentally in NBD Sector, where the PCs will search for Teela. The Troubleshooters must give the new system its baptism under fire.

Note: The CRUD system is designed to keep all players in the game for the entire mission. When a PC dies, wait until the next logical moment (or illogical moment, if that suits your fancy) and have the new clone drop through a CRUD tube into the team's current room. He wears a CRUD collar too.

Amazingly, this intricate high-tech device actually works! Still, who are we to say it works all the time? Nothing works perfectly in Alpha Complex. If you want the CRUD to foul up, delaying the return of a new PC clone, go ahead. The radio link could get damaged and zap!—fresh, clean clones go smack into the sewer. Or the food vats. Or the Waste Recycling Subdivision.

The CRUD system can also send PCs to parts of the mission they may have overlooked. Exercise your twisted imagination.

Don't overlook the possibility that CRUD's high-velocity ballistic delivery can easily scramble a clone replacement's brains in transit. The poor jerk may be so dizzy on arrival he just has to sit still for a few rounds.

The staff of D.E.A.T.H.

Roy-Y-TWQ: Roy-Y is a huge, well-muscled goon, not at all the sort of person you'd expect to find working for R&D. He looks more like a boxer than an inventor, and is as dumb as he looks. (Picture a cross between Sylvester Stallone and Alfred E. Neuman.) The other technicians tolerate him because he's as big as a refrigerator and could pound them into pulp. None of his inventions work, all are dangerous, but the PCs should have little trouble weasling this information out of him.

Brian-I-HIG: Brian-I is an R&D star. He's earned his INDIGO Clearance. His inventions really work—most of the time, anyway. He's perfect in every way—at least, he's sure he's perfect. He stands tall, thin, ramrod-straight, utterly loyal to The Computer. (Picture Dudley Doright without his horse.)

Don't even think of questioning his loyalty or the quality of his inventions. He reports even the slightest hint of treasonous behavior to Internal Security. He never allows any of his equipment to be given to anyone who doesn't give the impression of being as loyal as he is.

Dan-Y-FGH: A good-looking, well-muscled, perfectly groomed (if hirsute) fellow. Quite self-centered. Some of his inventions work; others don't. He really couldn't care less. Players who fawn all over him earn his favor—which is worth exactly nothing. He ignores any questions.

Ben-Y-FGH: Ben-Y is the newcomer to R&D, a real youngster. The PCs are the first Troubleshooters to test his equipment, and boy, is he excited! He gladly explains how his devices work. (Actually, none of them work, but he explains the dubious principles involved.) If pressed—in private—he even reveals anticipated flaws or problems. He does anything to cooperate with Troubleshooters of YELLOW or higher clearance, especially if there is some hint of possible advancement.

The equipment

After much signing of forms and discussions of the grave responsibilities the PCs are accepting by 'volunteering' for the CRUD project, Oscar-R presents the experimental equipment to be tested and explains its principles. (More or less.) The nine devices are listed on the next page.

At this point several techs of varying clearances join the RED Tech behind the glass. These are the equipment designers. See the box at left for their descriptions.

Here are some standard ways you can use to distribute this equipment to the PCs:

Tactic 1: Have Ned-G read off the serial numbers from the equipment described below, then ask characters to pick the numbers they want.

Tactic 2: Ned-G grills the PCs about their mission and the sorts of equipment they expect they'll need. Then he asks them to pick a number from one to nine. Give them the item with that number *unless it vaguely resembles the sort of equipment they expressed an interest in.*

Tactic 3: Give the PCs whatever you feel like giving them—if a player has been giving you a hard time, give his character something sure to cause trouble.

Bud-O-INK-2 makes a good first impression.

Once you've assigned the devices, the PCs may want to ask their designers some questions. The designer of each device is listed in parentheses after the serial number.

Each designer has his own personal style, or lack thereof, in describing his equipment, but generally it is good politics to be completely positive about one's own work in R&D. When describing another designer's equipment, however, staffers tend to be catty:

'Oh, it's a nice force field, sure. Of course, I would have designed one with a portable power pack, but it works just fine… *most* of the time. Field tested? Oh, sure, Roy-Y-TWQ *always* field tests his equipment. Doesn't he, boys? *[Smirks contemptuously]* **If he can remember how to turn it on.'**

Your host for this evening's program…

Okay, the PCs have got their Teela O'Malley mirrors, their R&D gadgets and their CRUD dog collars. With such armament, the world itself is within their grasp—but they're not quite done in R&D yet. Read this aloud:

Once you've signed for your valuable experimental equipment, Ned-G-MNB (or his next of kin) leads you out of the bunker and across the battlefield—I mean, testing area—of QQQ Sector.

[continued on page 133]

Send in the Clones R&D devices

1.**Force field:** QQQ-R&D-57-543 (Ben-Y-FGH). A belt device worn by one PC. Once it's turned on, the wearer is completely impervious to harm. It really works, but it has a few… bugs.

Its most obvious drawback is that it has to be plugged into a wall socket. Wall sockets are just about everywhere in Alpha Complex.

The force field belt taps right into the central power system. This leads to all sorts of interesting effects when a user plugs it in and pushes the clearly marked 'On' button. For one thing, the lights dim throughout the sector. If the device isn't turned off within three rounds, it trips all circuit breakers in the sector and deprives the entire area of power. Power Services will investigate the power outage. (Make sure they show up during *Entertainmentworld*'s climactic battle in the Clone Arrangers lab—see 'The big pie fight').

Worse, the field itself is airtight—in fact, it consumes oxygen. Within five rounds, the character begins to suffocate. The field stays on if the PC goes unconscious. Give the player some warning—'My, it's getting stuffy in here!' and so on.

If this marvelous device accidentally proves useful to the PCs, its fuse can conveniently burn out. Requisitioning this fuse requires ULTRAVIOLET Clearance.

2. **Petbot:** QQQ-R&D-12-34 (Dan-Y-FGH). The Computer has determined citizens are happier and more productive when they have a pet. R&D has developed a little mechanical petbot—sort of a cross between a poodle and a spider monkey.

Its primary function is to keep PCs company by extruding a super-glue from its 'feet' and attaching itself—seemingly permanently—to the shoulder of its 'owner'. From this perch it spouts a ceaseless string of nonsense phrases ('Polly want a lube job! The Computer is Your Friend!'). The petbot can answer direct questions, but it has the processing capacity of a digital watch; have fun dreaming up profoundly stupid responses.

The petbot also signals the presence of deadly gas, emitting loud beeps. There's a button on the side marked 'Test.' When this button is pressed, the petbot sprays deadly gas (S2M bio damage) right in the character's face. (It does beep, proving the petbot's warning system is functional.)

The petbot has a third-hand brain—in its first incarnation, it was a snooperbot. It records the PCs' every action. (Through this device any PC trying to bluff his way through a final debriefing is revealed as a liar.) At some point the snooperbot brain was reprogrammed to act as a docbot. If the PCs ask the petbot for a medical opinion (we are hard pressed to imagine this ever happening, but you never know…), it can give medical/first-aid advice—which may even be accurate (your discretion).

Note: The petbot can go berserk and lead the characters into trouble if the funbot (the device intended for this purpose) has been destroyed.

3. **Kliegun:** QQQ-R&D-987-321 (Brian-I-HIG). Emits a highly directional, blinding light, leaving a victim unable to see for one or two combat rounds. It looks like a magic wand—a thin tube ending in a small, translucent bulb. Near the base of the tube is a small button—it's either a thumb switch or a trigger, depending on which direction the button faces when the PC holds the rod.

There is no way to tell which way the button should face. In fact, the direction of the light beam varies—the reflector that focuses the beam has come loose and floats around inside the wand. Determine the light blast direction by rolling 1d20 each time the device is used.

1–6: The desired target is affected.

7–12: The wand-wielder is affected.

13–20: Another character (PC or NPC) is affected, or all PCs and NPCs are affected (your discretion).

4. **Mini hand-flamer:** QQQ-R&D-2451-3 (Brian-I-HIG). This is a modified Old Reckoning cigarette lighter. It works just like a full-size flamer—once—emitting a large but controllable jet of flame (Stun damage to anything it hits). The second time it's used, it emits an amazing amount of flame for an instant, burning everything within a five-meter radius (including the person holding it), doing wound damage. After the second use it runs out of fluid.

5. **Ice gun:** QQQ-R&D-187-56 (Roy-Y-TWQ). Just like a normal ice gun, except it uses a built-in water supply carried in a *big, heavy* backpack-like rig. Any Troubleshooter saddled with this has trouble walking, let alone shooting, climbing, running, or much of anything else. Oh, the mellifluous tones of whining players! (Actually, a pretty minor inconvenience considering the device really works….)

6. **Smoke alarm:** QQQ-R&D-911-411 (Roy-Y-TWQ). Looks like a regular smoke alarm. Anytime the PCs encounter a heat source (greater than body heat, unless you're feeling really nasty), the alarm goes off.

It's *very* loud. Characters who don't plug their ears (PCs and NPCs) are Snafued and can't hear well for the rest of the scene. Anyone wishing to communicate with one of these unfortunates must yell. Characters with the wit to immediately plug their ears take no damage.

7. **Sonoblaster:** QQQ-R&D-123748-23487 (Dan-Y-FGH). An experimental version of the standard sonic rifle. The sonoblaster never needs reloading. The firer simply makes a sound—any sound—into a tiny microphone mounted in the gun's hilt, and the sonoblaster turns it into a noise loud and concentrated enough to do damage. Otherwise it is similar to a normal sonic rifle.

Unfortunately, there is a good chance it will fire, and continue firing. *Forever.* Each time the sonoblaster is used, roll 1d20; on a 16 or higher, the weapon cannot be turned off. Well, it *can* be—if the user smashes it repeatedly against a solid object until it's completely shattered.

8. **Heat pistol:** QQQ-R&D-19834122190-128732873 (Brian-I-HIG). This is a modified Old Reckoning device, which the players—but not the PCs—recognize as a portable hair dryer with styling attachments. R&D techs have modified it and added a powerpack.

The side of the 'pistol' has two switches: one red, one blue. (Inferences made by players concerning the implications of security clearances should be blandly, and ominously, ignored.) When the blue switch is pressed, the pistol emits a warm gust of air (perfect for styling hair; disappointing as a weapon). When the red switch is pressed, the pistol emits a slightly hotter blast of air (perfect for drying hair; still unsatisfactory for combat). When both switches are pressed simultaneously, the pistol whines, whistles and erupts with a red-hot gale of superheated air. (Treat as a flamethrower.)

Note: If the smoke alarm is anywhere in the vicinity when both switches are pushed… okay, okay, just thought we'd remind you.

9. **Speed-O:** QQQ-R&D-0-1 (Biochem Labs). Three little green pills. Each one increases a character's strength but decreases his endurance. Because ***PARANOIA*** elegantly avoids cumbersome fatigue rules by omitting them from the game, you are completely free to improvise the effects of this change in character stats. We playtesters just let the PC rip off a few doors, then had him fall over and need to be carried around for the rest of the scene.

As you all dodge and weave your way across the devastated floor, Ned-G shouts at you, 'We'z headin' for the most hahly confeedenshul area of this whole blamed Complex. Beats me why this scruffy lot o' Troublemakers 's gittin' sech priv'lidged access—but dontcha be gittin' hah'n'mahty, y'hear?'

ZING! FWOOSH! ZOOP-ZOOP-ZOOP! 'AAAHHHYAAGGGHH!!!' The noise is all around as you sprint for the far wall of the enormous chamber. In its vast expanse you see one single door, an insignificant blemish in the distance. Only as you approach do you realize it's as large as a vault.

Ned-G punches an elaborate security code into a panel beside the door, and with a groan that drowns out the chaos behind you, the barrier swings ponderously aside. Ned-G barks, 'Y'all gittin' in theah, or would yuh rather stay out heah an'become paht o'some feller's 'sperimint?' He turns and runs inside.

If the PCs stay outside—sigh. Deliver a short oration on the tragic and senseless waste of life. Activate the CRUD system.

Continue reading:

You follow Ned-G into a long dark corridor stretching into the distance. Along its length are batteries of lasers, security checkpoints and iron portcullises that rise as you approach them, then fall with a clang as you pass. You march maybe a quarter of a mile, deeper and deeper into this sanctum. Every so often a pair of massive blast doors slide closed behind you.

If the PCs hesitate to follow Ned-G down this hallway, The Computer, speaking over their PDCs, politely but firmly orders them to follow Ned-G. See? Simple. Read on:

Ned-G stops at one checkpoint to hand you over to a BLUE-Clearance R&D technician, who silently escorts you further down the corridor and passes you to an INDIGO at the next stop. The INDIGO wears a powered exoskeleton and carries a plasma generator. He looks like he'll fry you if your breathing doesn't suit him. *[GM: He will.]* **He never says a word.**

At the last checkpoint he gives you to a VIOLET-Clearance scientist who seems to have no armor at all—that you can see.

This citizen—Dave-V—speaks like a narrator for a 1950s 'Wonderful World of Science' educational film:

'Greetings, Troubleshooters. I'm Dave-V-JNS, head of this sector's R&D program. You are about to be confronted with the end product of a major research effort. Vast resources, countless man-hours, untold credits have gone to produce this mechanism—and The Computer has chosen *you* to demonstrate that this effort has not been spent in vain.

'Your valor in voluntarily submitting to the testing of this new mechanism will long be remembered. Courage and sacrifice, citizens, in the service of The Computer! Now, please go through that door.'

He gestures to an open vault door about a half a meter thick, pitted and blackened on its inner side. Beyond, you see only blackness. You catch a whiff of metal and grease on a gentle current of air.

It's just possible a PC, excited by his or her new stuff from R&D, will hesitate to go through that door. Before vaporizing this person, be aware that the CRUD system has not yet been installed in this sector. Anyone you let them murder must wait while his backup clone makes it to QQQ Sector by conventional methods.

It's entirely possible the player in question needs to sit on the sidelines for a bit and calm down. In this case, summon a phalanx of guardbots. Everyone who survives the firefight goes through the door. (By the by, Dave-V really has no armor, but try to avoid wasting him here.)

Note: Study the principle at work here at the door of the vault. You put the PCs in an unpleasant situation, let them try wriggling out of their fate, then either kill or coerce them (or both) into it anyway. In this way you allow your players freedom of choice and still lead them around by their noses. The official term for this is 'Hobson's Choice.'

Through the door…

Complete darkness. Close, stifling atmosphere. Flashlights or infrared goggles show a small R&D facility identical to the one the PCs visited in the last section: bare walls, thick glass windows, waldoes, nobody in the room beyond the window, one door (locked) in the far wall. (The kliegun will show all this, too, in the instant before blinding everyone.)

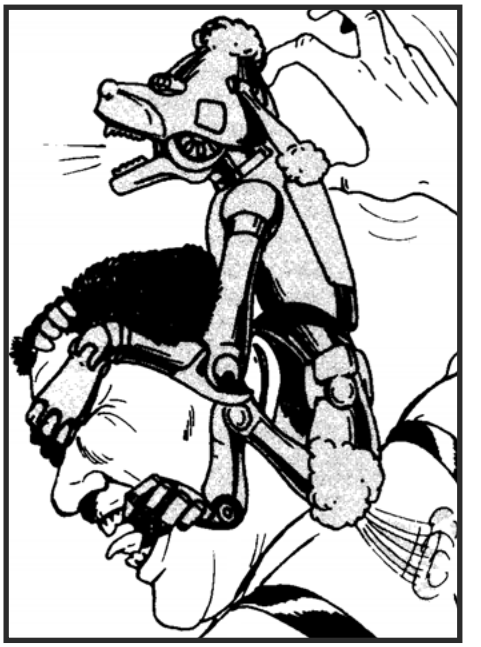
The vault door closes and locks behind them. THOOM! Silence.

If the PCs use a flashlight, a stern warning will sound over a speaker in the ceiling: 'All light sources strictly prohibited!'

Why? No real reason—and in fact nothing happens if a PC continues to bravely flash the light around, though you may feel like fining the nervy little devil for insubordination.

The only reason for the darkness is game-related. It puts the PCs in the dark. Alone. *Together. Alone.*

Think about it. This may very well be the first time they haven't been preoccupied with guardbots, briefings, sewer traps, sewer trapsters, kids, Captain Botaroo, Teela, PLCers or R&D techs. And these PCs are all just yearning to plug each other.



'How much is that petbot on the YELLOW?'

Shouldn't you, the good and generous GM, find it in your heart to give them an opportunity? To say portentously, 'You're all alone together, in the dark. None of you can escape. No one can see or hear you. I can receive any notes you want to pass me.'

Then lean back and watch their eyes narrow (or bulge) with suspicion. Can you forsake this opportunity?

(What we said before, about not killing the PCs while they're in QQQ Sector—*forget it.* We were *joking.* Let them die like cattle! Hey, maybe the CRUD system is here after all! You're the GM—if you say it's here, who argues?)

But maybe no player will rise to the occasion. Maybe no one will kill anyone at all. Maybe you've got a wimpy bunch of do-gooders, little trusting lambs who stare at you with doe-like liquid eyes and say serenely, 'Now what?' Maybe your group needs to be led into major discomfort.

Have we got a guide for you!

…And off the wall

When the PCs have finished either killing each other or not, read this aloud:

The lights come on suddenly. You're in a small R&D room just like the one where you got your other equipment. The lights are dim and flickering, the walls are bare, and the thick plexiglas window along one wall has a lot of deep gouges and cracks in it, as though it has yielded 'valuable experimental results' in one test too many. There's a door in the

far wall. Beyond the plexiglas window is the VIOLET technician who ordered you in here, Dave-V.

'Hello again, brave Troubleshooters,' he says. 'Prepare now to meet the newest, most advanced machine the fertile minds at Research and Development have yet produced!'

Begin reading the next three paragraphs in a hushed whisper, building gradually and dramatically in volume and intensity. Give the PCs the impression that from behind the far door anything might appear. A Panzer division. The battleship *New Jersey*. The Mother Ship.

Suddenly, from beyond the far door, there comes a great rumbling. The floor trembles beneath you. Far off you hear sirens blare and alarms ring out. The deep rumble builds to a crescendo, until it sounds almost identical to the pre-festival warmup of the giant hovercar personnel carrier floats at the last Vulture Squadron Support and Appreciation Celebration. Remember what happened to those hovercars, just after that deep rumbling began? Sure you do—but this time you don't have any blast shields to protect you.

About the time your molars start rattling, the plexiglas window begins bulging outward, the ceiling groans, the walls seem to close in and you can almost see the floor cracking—the noise stops.

Silence falls. The far door slides back. Suddenly you hear a strange, mechanical-sounding voice:

[Brooklyn accent, very nasal tone, monotonous delivery, bush-league tacky comedian:]

'How-are-ya how-are-ya how-are-ya?!'

A strange-looking bot a little over a meter tall trundles into the room on tiny wheels. It has an oversized grin and a little derby hat. A smiley face is painted on its chest plate. It wears baggy brown pants and a big polka-dot bow tie, which spins around like a propeller.

'Wow, what a crowd!' it says. 'Troubleshooters. My favorite audience, never a dull moment, I love 'em. just came back from WES Sector and boy, are my arms tired! Great crowd, terrific crowd. Hey, people are funny, y'know? Take my designer—please! But seriously, folks…'

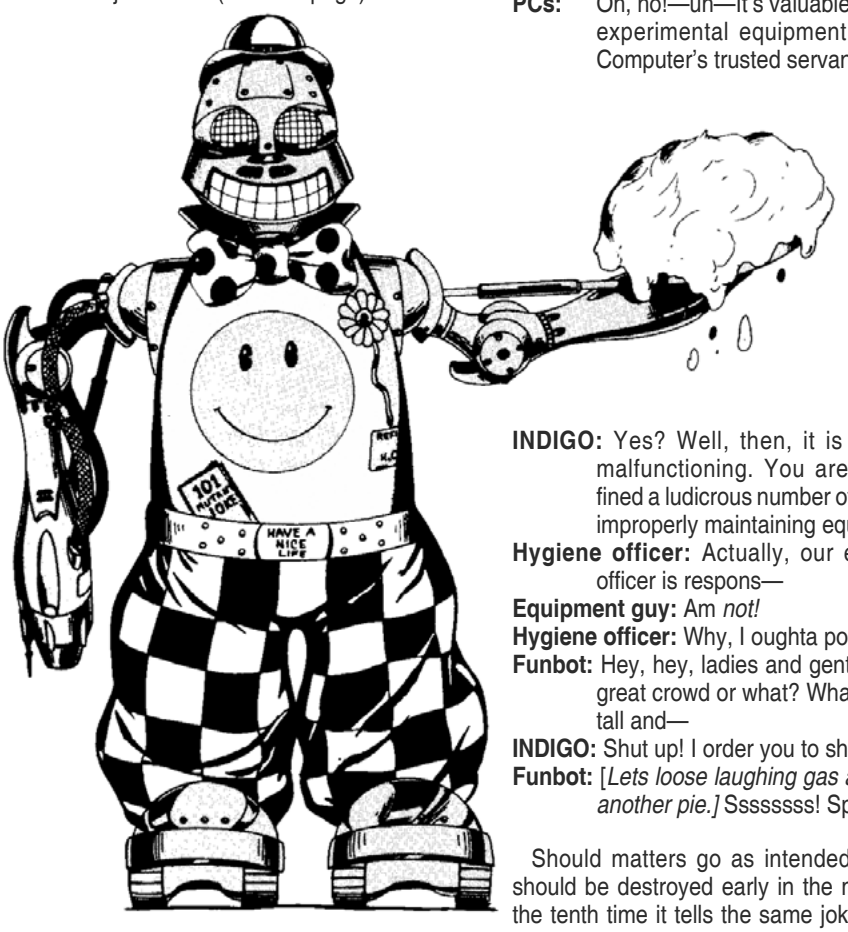
At this point Dave-V interrupts, speaking into a microphone from behind the window. 'This is the funbot,' he says. 'Someday, bots like this will entertain citizens all over Alpha Complex, making our lives even more joyously satisfying. The funbot's functions are many: It tells jokes, dances a little and—uh—some other fun things. It will be your guide, entertainer and constant companion throughout the rest of your mission. Thank The Computer's infinite wisdom!' Dave-V is overcome with emotion at this point—all choked up.

Probably the PCs are too. Especially when they sign all those forms—endless, horrendous forms—swearing to protect the funbot and acknowledging responsibility, individually and as a group, prone to fines, torture or termination, should anything unfortunate happen to the funbot.

About the funbot

Yes, this thing really is the PCs' constant companion throughout the rest of the mission, and no, it doesn't work real well just yet. It's the mechanical embodiment of every beery nightclub comic who ever bombed in the Catskills. When you play the funbot, think of Henny Youngman's less talented disciples—the ones that made *him* seem *funny*. That's the funbot.

Its most obvious drawback—aside from that nasal, whiny, all-smiles delivery—is that it's programmed with only five jokes, which it tells incessantly, over and over and over. At every free moment in the mission, roll a die and consult the 'Random joke chart' (see next page). The funbot tells that joke. If you roll the same joke six times in a row—well, practice makes perfect.



At the first sign of a tough audience (i.e., when the PCs don't laugh at its jokes), the funbot emits clouds of laughing gas. Anyone in the area is engulfed, laughs uproariously (and painfully) for a minute or more and is Snafued for the next round.

Clever PCs might use the funbot to disable enemies—saying, 'Hey, funbot! Tell these Vultures the one about—' and pulling on their gas masks. Let the PCs benefit from this shrewd strategy once or twice, but if they are filling too many rooms with gas and laughing opponents, the gas supply should run out at an opportune moment.

The funbot also has a built-in cream pie dispenser. At random intervals, or at any inappropriate time, the bot reaches into a slot in its side, pulls out a pie and tosses it at the highest-clearance person in the room. Its aim is unerring. The PCs will have loads of fun explaining the funbot's actions…

Besmirched INDIGO: That bot has covered my face and upper torso with an unpleasant creamy substance. Are you the felons responsible for it?

PCs: Well, it's not actually ours, it just follows us around.

INDIGO: Then please destroy it immediately.

PCs: Oh, no!—uh—It's valuable Computer experimental equipment from The Computer's trusted servants in R&D.

INDIGO: Yes? Well, then, it is obviously malfunctioning. You are therefore fined a ludicrous number of credits for improperly maintaining equipment.

Hygiene officer: Actually, our equipment officer is respons—

Equipment guy: Am *not!*

Hygiene officer: Why, I oughta pound you—

Funbot: Hey, hey, ladies and gents, is this a great crowd or what? What's ten feet tall and—

INDIGO: Shut up! I order you to shut up!

Funbot: [*Lets loose laughing gas and throws another pie.]* Sssssss! Splat!

Should matters go as intended, the funbot should be destroyed early in the mission—say the tenth time it tells the same joke. This is an

Random joke chart

Roll 1d20 and consult the chart below to determine which joke the funbot tells:

1–4: 'What did the RED Troubleshooter say to the YELLOW Troubleshooter after the RED Troubleshooter stepped on the YELLOW Troubleshooter's foot?'
— 'Please don't shoot me!'

5–8: 'Why did the ORANGE Troubleshooter cross the corridor?'
—'To get out of the way of the guardbot.'

9–12: 'What's Outdoors?' the INFRARED asked the INDIGO.
— 'I'm sorry,' said the INDIGO. 'Could you tell me where you heard that term?'

13–16: 'What smells worse than the food vats?'
— 'Nothing.'

17–20: 'What's ten feet tall and loaded for bear?'
— 'What's a bear?'

awful disaster for the PCs, and they're in for incredible fines and treason charges—but since they're all likely to die anyway, there's little point in belaboring this.

What matters is that the CRUD system immediately delivers a new *replacement* funbot wherever the PCs are. ('How-are-ya how-are-ya how-are-ya? I'm back for an encore. You're such a great audience I couldn't stay away…') And naturally The Computer notifies the Troubleshooters by PDC that they are deeply responsible for this one, too.

The funbot goes on the road

We'll be candid. The funbot has nothing to do with this mission. At least, it doesn't have to. Nominally it's a guide through NBD Sector where the PCs will seek Teela, but the Troubleshooters quickly learn the funbot doesn't know any more about NBD Sector than they do. ('But what a great sector, I gotta tell ya. Hey, the people don't come any nicer than in NBD Sector. Anybody here from NBD? Give yourselves a hand! C'mon, let's hear it for our friends in NBD Sector!') To the Troubleshooters, the funbot is just one big albatrossbot around their necks.

But for you, the GM, the funbot has one great function that renders it indispensable to your storyline.

No, it's not that it gives you a 'voice', a persona to take on while speaking to the PCs—though that's always helpful.

It's not that the funbot complicates any delicate situation with laughing gas or a pie.

It's not that it can record and, later, randomly repeat any treasonous statement made in its presence.

No, its primary function is not immediately apparent to the players… but they'll find out what it is eventually.

See, the funbot goes berserk.

Yes, really. It runs away from the Troubleshooters whenever you wish. Either it leads them exactly where you want them to go, magically 'repairing' itself at the destination, or (if you feel like throwing in a few arbitrary encounters) it starts hiding—in the most interesting and inconvenient places—little *bombs*.

The bombs were supposed to be simple whizbangs that make a loud 'BANG!' to startle innocent bystanders—funny, right? Unfortunately an overzealous R&D technician put in a little too much explosive. Can you say 'nitroglycerine'? Sure you can.

The beauty of this—which you will appreciate as the bombs explode, sirens blare, warnings sound over PA systems, and Armed Forces evacuates the sector—is that the Troubleshooters are *responsible* for the funbot. It's *theirs*. When it runs away, they *have* to go after it. No matter where they are. No matter what they're doing. They have to find and subdue it—without damaging it, of course.

Once you've made sure the PCs understand their responsibility, and the unnamed but certainly hideous fates that will befall them if anything happens to the funbot, you can dump on them any time thereafter. If things seem to be going too smoothly, or they run out of clever ways to cause themselves trouble, or the action slows down, or you just feel impish, the funbot burps.

Just a little burp. Hardly anyone notices.

It burps again.

Its speech slurs: 'Hey-yy, I j-just gottt baaack from APV sssss-Sector and boy boy boy BOY boy are mymymmy arms legs wheels pseudopods retractive metalized processor housing connections ti-ti-ti-ti-*tired.'* That should make the PCs perk up their ears.

Then the funbot beeps and boops like a video game. It gets squat, then tall and thin. Tendrils of steam curl out of every joint. And then…

The funbot is speeding away—like a bot out of hell. You see it race down one corridor, then skitter around a corner on one wheel, one manipulator on its head to keep the little derby in place. It's making very odd noises: 'Woowoo! Woo-woo! Eee-bee-beebee!'

Then it rolls out of sight beyond the corner. You hear a 'clunk… BOOM!' Smoke billows through the corridors. Looks like some kind of explosion.

Now what?

The PCs have to chase it. *Have* to. If they don't, remind them the funbot is precious experimental equipment. If they still don't, it's P3T treason charges apiece, and The Computer speaks over the PA system in its more-in-sorrow-than-in-anger tones:

'Attention, Troubleshooters. Sorry to bother you, but I've received reports that a valuable bot assigned to your mission is undertaking unauthorized demolition in your sector.

'Your calm reaction to this emergency is heartening. Such calm in the face of likely termination validates The Computer's faith in your bravery. Please secure the valuable bot at your earliest opportunity. Thank you. As always—your friend, The Computer.'

'You've been a great audience, but I gotta run…!'

The chase is on

So the PCs run after the funbot. The chase resembles an old Keystone Kops two-reeler—speeded-up motion and all. The Troubleshooters get glimpses of the rogue bot as it skitters around corners and out of sight a la Charlie Chaplin. They get to bravely defuse little bombs, a Fine Manipulation or Demolition roll—or fail to defuse them (S2M energy damage). The bot sets its bombs in neat places like trash disposal chutes (Violence/Agility roll, or else the disarming PC goes down the tube to the Waste Recycling Division), vidshow studios (see encounters in the next episode for show ideas), GREEN goons' foundation garments, and so on.

Don't worry if the PCs lose the funbot while defusing a bomb—as each bomb is disarmed, the bot peers around a corner, saying, 'How-are-ya! How-are-ya! How-are-ya?' Then it's off again.

The funbot can lead the PCs directly to their next encounter, or it can divert them into arbitrary chaos in the most heavily- populated parts of NBD Sector:

Commissary: Known throughout Alpha Complex for its tetraoxychloramazine soup and all-around awful food, the NBD commissary is a hangout for many popular vidshow performers and behind-the-scenes technicians. It looks something like a 1950s automat (individual chemical concoctions available behind little windows), except the ejection mechanism for the dishes is sometimes—*strong*. In other words, duck when opening.

If the PCs have already met the various NBD HPD NPCs (like Hal-Y-OOO or Don-Y-YYY, described in later sections of this mission) when the funbot guides them to the commissary, they'll likely run into the same folks again. There are also food service bots and scrubots and numerous costumed actors. (Is the INDIGO who just got a pie in the face for real, or a fake? Only you know for sure.) You'll find plenty of opportunities for food fights, slippery floors and disgruntled high-clearance officials caught in the maelstrom.

Bathrooms: Another great funbot destination. It so happens that when the funbot bursts into a stall, it interrupts a VIOLET IntSec trooper in a reflective moment. The PCs arrive just in time to witness the action (and be implicated by their presence).

The sequence is: **1.** joke, **2.** laughing gas, **3.** bomb. Streams of water arch from the ruptured water pipes. Maybe a short circuit in the funbot for seasoning. Let the PCs splash around trying to get a grip on the careening gigglebot while the INDIGO sputters indignantly and looks up his schedule of fines.

Then the inspector from the Waste Recycling Subdivision appears. 'Hi, Perkins-R from Waste. Understand you had a little backup here.' (Water fountains from a dozen shattered pipes. The funbot scurries about throwing up rooster-tails as the PCs struggle to grapple it.) 'Could you answer a few questions for my report?'

'No, no…everything's fine—now…really!'

(If the PCs are cooperative, perhaps Perkins-R shows up at the final debriefing as the only witness in their favor, eloquently pleading they should be spared because of their loyal cooperation with the Waste Recycling Subdivision.)

Dressing rooms: The performers in NBD Sector have to don their costumes somewhere. Dressing rooms, complete with costumes, makeup and dusty powderpuffs provide ample opportunities for funbot zaniness. Have the PCs charge into the room after the funbot, smack into a crowd of BLUEs and VIOLETs—or, to be even more devious, a lot of INFRAREDs who comport themselves like BLUEs and VIOLETs. Are they real, or just actors?

And suppose there's nobody in the dressing room—just a rack full of white robes. Or VIOLET, or INDIGO. How much would these be worth on the IR market? Can the PCs disguise themselves? Can they convince a big, nasty IntSec agent who sees right through them when they claim they were 'just fooling around' with those BLUE robes? It's your call.

How to fix a funbot

So you finally lead the PCs where they were supposed to go. Then the funbot stops rolling, burps once or twice and returns to what passes for normal. 'Hiya, I'm back again! That's what I love about Troubleshooters, always on the run. Hey, what is this, a mission or a marathon?'

Maybe the PCs want to fix the thing. Ounce of prevention and all that. Of course, none of them know how. If they try to fix the bot, they probably just make it worse.

They could try taking it back to R&D, saying, 'Here, it doesn't work.' But how to get it back to R&D? If they try to make the funbot go under its own power, it will do just that—go—*away*—and they just have to chase it again. As for the brute force approach, it's way too heavy to carry (at least half a ton).

So much for getting it back to R&D—and of course no one from R&D will pick it up, for that would be as much as admitting their important project *is not going so well.*

Reprogramming the funbot might work—sort of. This is, as you well know, treasonous. And any PC who tries to meddle with the funbot's innards activates sophisticated software protection systems (so the player can't spend Perversity to improve his Bot Ops & Maintenance or Bot Programming roll). Failure results in the funbot 'attaching' itself to the treasonous PC, following the offender around crying 'TRAITOR-TRAITOR-TRAITOR-TRAITOR' without interruption for the rest of the scene. What happens to the traitorous reprogrammer is up to you. Permanent assignment of the funbot to the PC as a Malfeasance Control Device ('McD') might be a suitable punishment.

In any case, it's a bad idea to let the PCs actually 'fix' the funbot. It's an incredibly useful device, far too useful to be fouled up by a bunch of upstart players. Funbots serve admirably as nuisance devices, narrative devices, nutritional devices (all those swell pies) and perverse-GM devices. Is the point made?

And now, our feature presentation

Finally.

Now the Troubleshooters have everything Cleto-B sent them to get. After Dave-V finishes collecting PC signatures on innumerable forms, Ned-G leads the party back to the exit from QQQ Sector.

The party now resembles a gypsy caravan, laden with hundreds of kilos of experimental equipment and Teela O'Malley mirrors, constantly entertained and disordered by the irrepressible funbot. Their passage along the halls of Alpha Complex may draw much undesirable attention.

Considerable time has passed since Cleto-B specifically admonished the Troubleshooters to avoid delays and return quickly for the rest of their briefing. However, when the Troubleshooters' carnival pulls up in front of the familiar elevator to Cleto-B's office, the doors are closed and the elevator does not respond to the PCs' attentions. When the PCs report to Troubleshooter Headquarters or The Computer, requesting directions, they are told to go to bed and get some rest.

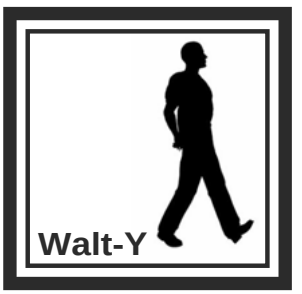
When the phalanx of guardbots rumbles into the PCs' sleeping quarters, the Troubleshooters are probably all awake and expecting just such a visit.

'King of the Laundromat' counters

These counters are used in Episode 3's *Date With Death* boardgame, 'King of the Laundromat'. That game isn't described for another eight or ten pages yet (pages 146–150, actually). But we have a big space to fill here and no space there, so what the hell.

Photocopy these counters, glue them onto cardboard if you want, and cut them apart on the heavy outside lines. Mongoose Publishing grants you permission to photocopy these counters for personal use only. Unauthorized photocopying is treason punishable by a quick round of *Date With Death.*

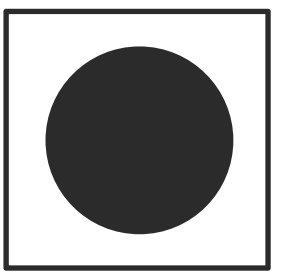
TROUBLESHOOTERS



VULTURES

REFBOTS

SPHERE



Open call for ***Vulture Squadron Fights Commie Mutant Traitors in the Service of The Computer****.*

3. Entertainmentworld!

Mission summary

Cleto-B dispatches the Troubleshooters to hunt down and terminate Alpha Complex's darling, Teela O'Malley. He sends them to make contact with Hal-Y-OOO, NBD Sector HPD & Mind Control, for aid in locating Teela.

Hal-Y is a big help. He gets the PCs on a quiz show, *Date With Death,* where they can win a date with Teela. Win or lose, Hal-Y manages to arrange a meeting with Teela—though his directions to the meeting site are vague enough to permit the PCs to stumble into two secret society meetings before they run into Teela.

When at last the Troubleshooters catch sight of Teela, she flees, leading them into a climactic battle in the Clone Arranger laboratory. There they discover the Rangers turning out Teela O'Malley clones in gross quantities. The climactic conflict pits the PCs against innumerable bootleg Teelas, myriad berserk Clone Arrangers, and Peppers of the Pepsi Generation.

At the debriefing, after all this excitement, the PCs are almost grateful to get executed for treason.

Staging the mission

Now, GM, you have concluded the overture and prelude. You have completed the outfitting. You have saddled the PCs with the obligatory deadly experimental devices and have established the funbot as guide and nemesis. The way is clear to NBD Sector. Here, at long last, the PCs are *actually going to begin their mission.*

Now what?

To ease your transition into the more structured (ahem) sections of this mission, we have prepared an intermission essay. Here we introduce you to the important narrative elements of this section, and we give some tips on staging and pacing these elements. We tell you what encounters are coming up, what order they should come up in and how much time each encounter should occupy in your sessions.

The guided tour

In 'Once More, With Feeling' Cleto-B orders the Troubleshooters to report to Hal-Y-OOO's office in HPD & Mind Control, NBD Sector. There they meet a variety of Hal-Ys—all identical members of a clone family—in circumstances engineered to confuse your players. The six Hal-Ys, who can substitute and cover for each other with dizzying speed, are the Temporary Associate Director of Entertainment Programming in NBD Sector. They have been the Temporary Associate Director for 12 years, and now have enormous authority. They are Cleto-B's—and The Computer's—chosen contacts for the Troubleshooters.

'Hooray for Hal-Y-OOO' describes the encounter in Hal-Y's office. Apart from its comic elements, this episode provides necessary background information. Here the PCs pick up clues about the Clone Arrangers and about a treasonous new drug circulating throughout this sector. The drug will figure prominently in a later encounter.

Because the PCs are essentially observers here, keep the pace brisk and direct, avoiding extensive digressions and arbitrary encounters, and consuming a minimal amount of session time. Move the Troubleshooters along to situations where they can more actively create incredible distress.

The quickly-resolved encounter in Hal-Y's office leads to the more restrained opening portion of 'You're Going Out There a Youngster, But You've Got to Come Back a Star', an episode on the vidshow *Wide Complex of Sports.* In this episode, the PCs struggle in vain to answer simple questions in a contest called *Date With Death.* The length of this encounter depends to a great extent on when a PC presses an unmarked button just sitting in front of him, begging to be pushed. The pace, however, is the leisurely, pleasant pace of the TV game show—the host asks questions, the contestants fumble a bit, buzzers sound, the point is scored and on to the next question. This low-key, verbal interchange provides a suitable contrast to the spirited hijinks in the second half of the section.

The PCs' failure to answer the simple questions in the first round (a preordained GM-orchestrated hose-job) leads them to a laughably unbalanced battle against overwhelming odds in the second round of *Date With Death*. The action is fast and furious, with little dialog and lots of weapon fire. This scene pits the PCs against a squad of NPCs in a game blending elements of basketball, Roller Derby and freestyle swimming in a shark tank. Things move quickly here, and the players scramble to keep their wits about them and their characters alive.

After this peak of frenetic action, we shift to 'Pick a Door, Any Door', where the PCs encounter three closed doors. Behind the first two doors are cute dilemmas involving the discovery of secret society meetings in progress. Though each meeting reveals some useful clues, these two encounters are basically minor dramatic digressions. Once you've set them up, and the PCs have reacted, move quickly on to the third door.

Behind the third door is Teela O'Malley, the hook that drags the PCs to the climax of the mission. Once the PCs are in this room, they find a hostile militia bringing up their rear, reinforcing their motivation to keep moving.

From this point on, the pace, action and pressure builds right through the climactic battle—'The Big Pie Fight'. This is the super slam-bang megadeath apocalyptic Gotterdammerung grand finale. Like all climaxes, it may be fairly long, but the players must perceive it as short and constantly building in tension until the big blowout. That means they must have too much to do and think about—lots of hopeless situations and desperate straits.

Then *wham!* Suddenly everything resolves. Make the transition to the debriefing swift and smooth—if possible, the PCs should be sitting in the briefing room before they can wipe off the whipped fungal cream of the Big Pie Fight. Like all anticlimaxes, it should be brief—just enough time to wrap up mysteries the PCs were unable to solve and to line them up for the firing squad. Or the awarding of commendations, if you're that kind of ***PARANOIA*** GM. (We give you a nice selection of ways to end the mission—something to suit every GM style.)

To summarize, your preferred sequence is 1) Hal-Y's Office; 2) Wide Complex of Sports vidshow, featuring *Date With Death*; 3) the Three Doors; 4) the Big Pie Fight; and 5) Debriefing and Termination. However, the ordering is fluid—with minor tinkering, you can shift the first three parts around at will. Why? Because this is ***PARANOIA***, and the players are yours to command. Here's how you can do it.

Achtung!

Every roleplaying game tells the GM, 'You're in charge.' That's true…but in many cases the method of enforcing control boils down to, 'Uh-ohl The ceiling caved in! You all die.' This is arbitrary and inelegant—though as ***PARANOIA*** designers we certainly admire the spirit.

One unique aspect of Alpha Complex is the *institutionalized* ceiling cave-in—arbitrary and inelegant control techniques *become* elegant by incorporating them into the game's worldview. Don't like where the mission's heading? Order the PCs somewhere else, or forbid them access to their chosen destination, or have their transportation or equipment malfunction, or wait for them to kill each other—or, yes, have the ceiling cave in and kill everybody. In Alpha Complex, *this all makes sense.*

You have many 'channeling' devices available:

Couriers: 'Special Emergency Dispatch from Troubleshooter HQ! Go somewhere other than where you are right now.' Couriers can relay messages verbally, bring coded documents (requiring the PCs to return to Headquarters to find someone who knows the code), hardcopy printouts from The Computer (if the printer's Enter key got stuck, your PCs might meet a platoon of couriers struggling with huge bags of printouts, all of which read 'Return to HQ' 20 million times), or they might even arrive empty handed ('Gee, I had that VIOLET-sealed envelope just a minute ago—think maybe you better go back to HQ in case it was something important?')

The Computer: Is the PCs' trusted friend ever far away? We've already established public address speakers everywhere. Don't forget monitors and confession booths. If the PCs try to disobey a direct command over the PA or PDC—well, The Computer always needs new volunteers for side-effect testing in the Department of Pharmaceutical Novelties. Activate clones.

NPCs: Never overlook the possibility that some BLUE or INDIGO clown may walk by and spot the Troubleshooters. 'You! You there! This is a restricted-access area. Leave the premises at once and I won't turn you in. Oh, and when you go, would you be good citizens and deliver this bulky, mysterious package to my fellow citizen Joey-B in PLC? I don't remember exactly which department he's in, but don't worry, you can find your way around easily. Just ask for help.'

Contents of the package are left as an exercise for the apt pupil.

The funbot: The foolproof, failsafe default option. The little metal monstrosity runs off at a moment's notice, leading the responsible PCs wherever you wish, then mysteriously 'fixing' itself and calming down on arrival at the destination. ('Hiya-hiya! Boy, what a great complex, I love it. Isn't this great, folks? Let's give it a round of applause…')

A fundamental principle of ***PARANOIA***: Maintain triple redundancy of player character coercion systems. Should you feel the mission is better served by throwing the PCs onto *Date With Death* before they've even met Hal-Y, or should you wish to blow off most of the encounters and get right to the Big Pie Fight, or should you have your own delectable ideas for paranoid encounters—well, no problem, right? Do everything in whatever order you want.

You're welcome.

Once more, with feeling

Once again the PCs are hustled into a very familiar elevator by a squad of very familiar guardbots. Suddenly the guardbots part, revealing behind them a sleek, glistening titanium guardbot about the size and shape of a golf cart without a sun canopy.

It glides silently into the elevator with the PCs. The doors close. The elevator descends and halts abruptly. The doors open on a remarkable corridor—only three feet high and five feet wide—just large enough for the bot to fit. The corridor glows with an eerie, yellow-green light, and flesh prickles at a sudden gust of icy air. The strange bot slides silently out of the elevator and the doors close before the PCs can react. (Alternatively, the PCs who react disappear in a flash from the bot's indescribable weaponry.) The elevator descends again.

Just another of life's little mysteries.

Read this aloud:

When you arrive at the very familiar featureless room at the bottom of the elevator shaft, Cleto-B and his companions, Sonny-Y-TLS and Dewer-Y-ILK, are waiting for you impatiently.

Cleto-B says, 'Troubleshooters! Once again you have disappointed me beyond all expectations. Did I not emphasize the need for haste? Did I not adequately express the seriousness of the situation?'

Give the PCs a few moments to hem and haw. Then the funbot wheels forward and tests his audience.

'How-are-ya how-are-ya how-are-ya? Havin' a good time? You betcha! Hey, what's ten feet tall and loaded for bear?'

Suddenly Cleto-B reaches into his desk, pulls out a gauss gun and drills the funbot right in the brain plate.

The funbot goes, 'WheeeeEEEEELLLLLL…', spins around three times and darts smack into a wall. For the next two minutes it squeals shrilly and tries to burrow through the wall.

Cleto-B continues the briefing. The PCs must shout to make themselves heard over the din. After two minutes the funbot quiets down and returns to normal, but is unusually subdued for the rest of the briefing.

Read aloud:

'As I was saying,' Cleto-B continues, 'your careless disregard for Alpha Complex security is treasonous in the extreme. Fortunately, there is still time for you to redeem yourselves.

'I have arranged for you to report to Hal-Y-OOO in HPD & Mind Control, NBD Sector. He will assist you in locating Teela O'Malley, but you may not reveal the reasons for your search. I remind you, this mission is strictly confidential!

'If there are any further questions, please submit the usual Information Inquiry Form. Thank you for your cooperation. Dismissed!'

Cleto-B and his aides head directly for the elevator. As they pass the PCs, Sunn-Y winks obtrusively at *[pick a PC]*, then turns and gestures openly and at some length to *[pick another PC]*. The series of gestures resembles a third-base coach giving signals.

He tugs his ear, pulls up his socks, scratches his nose, draws a finger across his name tag, rubs his eye, spits, hitches up his belt, takes his cap off and waves it vigorously, then crouches and leaps high into the air like a mating bullfrog. If you can perform such a series of actions for your players with a straight face, hats off to you. Really.

Then all three enter the elevator and the door closes. The PCs wait forever for the elevator to return. When it appears, they ascend to the main floor and make their weary way to NBD HPD & Mind Control.

Hooray for Hal-Y-OOO

A word about HPD&MC

'Free-thinking.' The lowly personnel of Housing Preservation and Development & Mind Control aren't going anywhere. Nobody likes them. The propaganda they pump out is by-the-numbers (and mostly written by The Computer, anyway). They're in constant, numbing contact with all those dreary INFRARED drips.

'The Computer is my friend. So what? It's everybody's friend. Who really cares, you know?' The attitude, though never explicitly stated, prevails in this spiritless service group. The morale in HPD is low, but not as low as the quality of programming shoved onto Alpha Complex's single vidchannel. If morale were that bad, there would be high volunteer rates at The Computer's Happy Homecoming Euthanasia Centers.

Discipline is lax in HPD. HPDers routinely get away with statements that would send your standard Power Services technician to the recycler in a hurry. Is this a sign of The Computer's confidence in its servants?

Of course not. The Computer tolerates relative freedom of thought here because it figures that even if someone is a traitor, there's not much in HPD worth screwing up.

So secret societies flourish in HPD and Mind Control, and the PCs may be astonished at the open and undisguised approaches there. For instance, Hal-Y-OOO clones 1 through 6, all loyal servants of Free Enterprise, may cheerfully offer IR market items to the PCs, even in the first meeting.

The PCs naturally want to turn the Hal-Ys in to The Computer or IntSec for a quick commendation, right? Observe their disappointed reactions when The Computer says, 'Thank you for your concern. Your report is noted. Now, please return promptly to your mission'—and then the same Hal-Y is waiting for them when they return to his office!

The Computer may be paranoid, but not even The Computer gets excited about anything in HPD&MC. You may wish to exploit the PCs' bewilderment at Hal-Y's seeming invulnerability. Does he have a highly placed patron? Is he Internal Security, or some clandestine figure with mysterious power and influence? No, no and no, but how are the PCs to know?

The outer sanctum

You can make the actual journey to NBD Sector as frustrating or hair-raising as you want. Maybe the malfunctioning autocar delivers the PCs to a VIOLET-Clearance security area. Maybe a cross-scannered scrubot mistakes the PCs for lint. Maybe a drugged guard misdirects the PCs to the Waste Recycling Subdivision. Maybe the funbot goes bananas. Who knows?

All such stuff is only window-dressing. The real mission recommences when the PCs report to the Division of Entertainment and Education in Correct Thinking, NBD Sector.

The PCs should have no trouble finding Hal-Y-OOO's office. There are lots of signs everywhere, and helpful INFRARED Junior Citizen pages wait in every corridor, ready to aid the glamorous Troubleshooters.

Read this aloud:

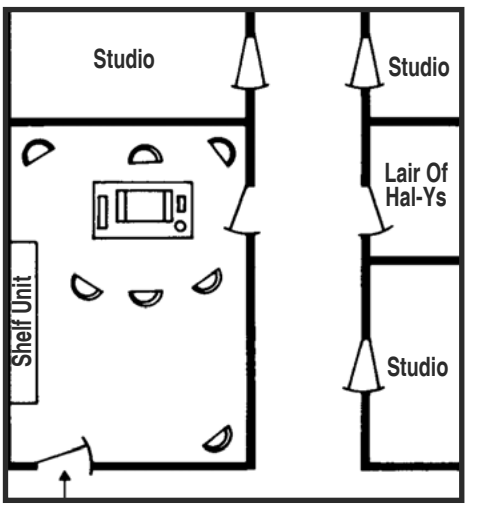
At last you find an ordinary door. The name Hal-Y-OOO is painted on it, and below the name are the words 'TEMPORARY ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMING!' The lettering looks old, faded, and the paint is flaking off. Beside the door is a little speaker panel with a button underneath and a sign reading 'VISITORS PLEASE PUSH!'

If the PCs push the button, a recorded message says, 'Hi, I'm Hal-Y-OOO. I'm not here right now, but if you'll enter my office and wait, I hope to be back before the end of the day. Thanks ever so much for cooperating. I really mean it!' The door is indeed unlocked. (See the map on this page of Hal-Y-OOO's office.)

Hal-Y's office cubicle is unusually large and plush—thick carpeting, attractive wallpaper in a pattern resembling a giant photo of a microchip, weird kinetic sculptures like mobiles hanging from the ceiling and one large steel desk with simulated aluminum finish. This is one of the most luxurious workspaces the PCs have ever seen. Right now it's empty. There are enough chairs for all the PCs to take a seat, and the chairs are even comfortable. Gosh.

Against one wall is a big bookcase-organizer shelf unit—no books, of course (not even Hal-Y is that treasonous), but lots of drawers and cubbyholes and doors. Make this as attractive to the PCs as a blank termination voucher. No tedious slot-by-slot description of the shelf unit's contents is necessary; treat it as a Self-Regulating Cluedropper Nexus. These drawers, slots and cabinet spaces contain any number of clues pointing to the nefarious activities of Teela O'Malley, the Clone Arrangers or anything the Troubleshooters should know: cryptic notes, ambiguous warnings from secret society agents, treasonous IR market documents, Old Reckoning videotapes of *Eight is Enough* or its more recent remake, *Six Clones is Plenty.*

Hal-Y-OOO's Office



A few modest examples:

- Poking out from the corner of one drawer is the sleeve of what looks like a VIOLET jumpsuit. It's just a vidshow costume, but only an expert could know for sure.
- Some handwritten notes with cryptic messages: 'Teela for John-V-LOX-5, 30K CR.' (John-V has ordered his own Teela O'Malley clone for 30,000 credits.) 'Four new Zelda-I-NRN, 3 mos.' (Three months delivery time for a quartet of Zelda-Is.) 'Need tongue covers size 6 pronto!' 'Troubleshooters due soon. Send to Fan Club?'
- A large drawer filled with old-fashioned (20th Century) videocassettes, all unmarked. A player and battery pack are in the drawer beneath. (Anyone can operate these after some preliminary fumbling.) The tapes may be viewed via a monitor on Hal-Y's desk. The subject of this large collection is a liquid—perhaps a drug. Among other miracles, this liquid apparently caused an entire planetary population to sing together in perfect harmony. The tapes are profoundly treasonous—or would be, in the hands of someone who mattered. But this is HPD, remember?
- Tucked away in one slot is a rough draft of what looks like advertising copy: 'Your immortality assured at a [reasonable? affordable?] price. Our innovative method gives you high-quality backups indistinguishable [word choice] from Tech Svcs! Contact Cleto-B-QRK for details blah blah'.

You can let these clues proliferate endlessly, limited only by your perverse improvisation. Remember, however—ignorance and fear. Most of the clues can be complete red herrings or unintelligible gobbledygook. ('Requis. 2x cable benders for *Bedtime for Bongo*.' 'Check with R&D on funbot project status. Follow up on joke list specs!')

Taking a meeting with Hal-Y-OOO

Hal-Y-OOO enters the office from the far door just as the PCs are up to their elbows in clues from the wall unit. If the PCs just sit around and wait, rather than rummaging through the wall unit, Hal-Y arrives in 45 minutes (45 seconds of real time—a looong time that encourages impatient players to do something).

When Hal-Y enters, read this aloud:

A slick, short, balding citizen sweeps into the room with a flourish. He wears dark eyelenses, like welder's goggles, and is decked out in a splendidly ornamented YELLOW jumpsuit with a bright, geometric pattern in electric, shockingly contrasting colors. The suit is unzipped from throat to waist, revealing a sparse tuft of curly hairs. Dangling from a yellow chain around his neck is an odd item—apparently a tiny little spoon.

He looks startled when he sees you Troubleshooters. He seems nervous and is obsessively wiping his lips. However, he does a quick, smooth recovery, greeting you energetically.

'Hey, hey, hey? Whatta *surprise*! *[Pumping hands enthusiastically.]* **Hey, who loves ya, baby? Is this guy great or is he great! Troubleshooters, right? Marvelous! Marvelous! Hey, I'm sure we can get right behind you all the way on your concept. Hey, let's do lunch sometime, you total maniac, I love ya, come to poppa!'**

Babble on in this fashion as Hal-Y invites everyone to introduce himself while exclaiming repeatedly and enthusiastically how great it is to see everybody and how wonderful a surprise and blah blah. Keep it up until the PCs start fingering their lasers, then read aloud:

'Hey listen, cats and chicks, my close personal friend Cleto-B tells me you're looking for a confab with Teela, and Uncle Hal-Y is here to see that you get it. That Teela, she's such a gadfly, she's here, she's there, what a total lunatic, I love her!

'The bottom line is—well, I don't know *exactly* right where she is at this exact moment…but I've got a totally elegant—and are we talking *el-lay-GHANT!*—solution to this whole fubar. I mean, no problem, right? Hey, who loves ya, I mean totally the most?

'So, you guys get to go on one of our most *popular* shows…*[Pause for excitement.]* **Yeah! Sure! *Wide Complex of Sports*, of COURSE! Hey, how 'bout a little contest of skill? Hey, hey, hey, piece-a-cake for Troubleshooter superstars like you guys, sure! I got the whole thing set up so you're SURE to WIN, *no problem*, hey? And…the prize? Of COURSE! SURE! A date with Teela O'Malley! Huh? Hoo-hoo! When she shows up at the rendezvous—'**

Hal-Y's voice trails off abruptly. His eyes seem to glaze over, tracking on some invisible object floating before his face. Suddenly he says, 'Hey, excuse me, just a minute—right back, sit tight, love ya, baby, the most—sure.' He darts from the room through the far door.

Pause here for just a beat. Give the Troubleshooters a chance to react; they might do something impulsive and dangerous. If they don't move instantly, continue reading:

After just a few moments, Hal-Y comes back in through the same door. He's wiping his lips. He looks at you, does a double-take, then says, 'Um—oh. Sure. Troubleshooters, right? Hey hey hey! I'm Hal-Y. Fabulous to meet you, just fabulous.' He eagerly pumps everyone's hand in greeting.

A new Hal-Y clone. Yeah, you guessed immediately, but it may take the PCs a while to tumble to this because all six Hal-Ys look, dress and act *exactly* alike. All the Hal-Y clones are involved in Free Enterprise contraband, each in a different commodity, and they're all experienced in covering up for each other.

If the Troubleshooters say something like, 'But we've already been introduced', any given Hal-Y clone smoothly glosses it over:

'Oh, right, man, whatta total goof! My memory, right? You know, plays tricks sometimes. Lotsa folks through here every day. Busy, busy, busy! Now, what show was it I said I'd get you on?'

The Hal-Ys resolutely pretend there is only one Hal-Y as long as the players hold even a shadow of a doubt. This will be long after the PCs are quite sure something fishy is going on, and things may get ugly. When the ruse is no longer even remotely plausible, each Hal-Y abandons the pretense and goes into his Free Enterprise spiel (see the 'Crime family' box nearby).

In portraying the Hal-Ys, remember they are all excessively guilty. They all cover for each other. They all want to sell you something. ('*Psst*... can I interest you in—wink, wink—*Gilligan's Island* vidtapes?') All pop out of the room at odd intervals, to be replaced immediately by a clone

Six Hal-Ys?

This mission, *Send in the Clones*, dates from 1985, when ***PARANOIA*** handled clone backups in a way different from the current XP edition. Each Alpha Complex citizen belonged to a family of six identical clones, all decanted at the same time and living parallel lives. The six Hal-Y-OOO clones comprise the entire Hal-Y family.

You may be concerned about explaining this idea in the current Alpha Complex setting, where each citizen is a single individual with multiple clone backups floating in a tank somewhere. If so, how's this: Technical Services screwed up (yeah, like *that* could ever happen) and accidentally grew and decanted multiple Hals. To keep the paperwork straight, The Computer had all six Hals raised as a single collective citizen (at least on paper), assigned them the same duties, and promoted them all at the same times.

Then again, we'd guess you're not interested in such pedantry. Since when do you have to explain anything to your players? 'There's six clones of Hal-Y, Troubleshooters! Deal with it!'

brother who's wiping his lips as he enters. Play up the vaudevillian Feydeau-farce angle—strange people entering and leaving at speed, doors slamming, utter confusion.

He's high on life, too

All the lip-wiping business is a clue to an important secondary plot in this episode: a marvelous new illegal drug taking NBD Sector by… well, light drizzle. It's newly rediscovered from Old Reckoning times, and (though most Hal-Ys don't know this) has been conclusively identified by treasonous history texts as 'co-cola.'

Hal-Y-OOO-5, who deals the stuff, knows it only as a 'brown, bubbling liquid'. He may try to pitch it to the PCs, telling in glowing terms of its marvelous, stimulating, hallucinatory properties. 'Believe me, I have never, I mean *never,* done anything like it—and I've done it all, my friends.'

Make sure the PCs are aware the drug is a big secret, not authorized by The Computer, and therefore treasonous. Exaggerate Hal-Y's secretive, whispering manner. If a PC wants to sample the drug, Hal-Y produces a small plastic vial of it from his pocket, pours a drop or two into the small spoon hanging on his chest and offers it to the PC—'First hit is no charge, hey?' You might even provide a real-world sample, assuming you can find some kind of brown, bubbling liquid. Remember: The petbot is recording everything, and maybe the funbot too, but don't remind the players.

If a characer pauses to drink the co-cola, he or she feels refreshed. No other effects. But roll dice, ask to look at the PC's character sheet and chuckle maniacally as you scribble lots of notes behind your Gamemaster screen. Psychological warfare, you know.

Hal-Y-OOO: A crime family

Hal-Y-OOO-1: Producer of *Bowling for Credit Vouchers* and other popular shows, he secretly markets bootleg clones for the Clone Arrangers. He's the only Hal-Y clone who has reason to want the PCs dead—that's why he's sending them on *Wide Complex of Sports*. But he's passed the word along to his brothers, and they are more than willing to steer the PCs to new deathtraps. ('Hey, what? Didn't like the sports show? Hey, bad vibes, sure, no problem. Hey, why not check out the old *Captain Botaroo* studio? Teela shows up there all the time, dontcha know.')

Hal-Y-OOO-2: Guiding force behind the long-running serial *The Bot Patrol*. Runs tongue covers, in a wide selection of sizes and numbers ready-made, and made-to-order special jobs in rush-time.

Hal-Y-OOO-3: Produces *Name That Meltdown*. Sells illegal Old Reckoning programming: *Walt Disney's Wonderful World of Color*, gymnastics tournaments, detergent commercials, test patterns.

Hal-Y-OOO-4: Usually handles a full line of exotic IR-market weapons, but he's been too busy lately with his legit job—producing the megahit adventure program *Vulture Squadron Fights Commie Mutant Traitors in the Service of The Computer*.

Hal-Y-OOO-5: Known for *One Clone's Family*. He sells the illicit drug co-cola to the Clone Arrangers, who use it as an ingredient in their cloning process.

Hal-Y-OOO-6: Runs the game show *Truth Serum* (featuring the exciting 'electric chair' round). He sells co-cola to a newly formed splinter group of the Romantics—The Pepsi Generation. Since co-cola supplies are limited—the Hal-Ys can't always bribe the techs in the food vats to divert critical supplies to them—the Clone Arrangers and the Pepsi Generation sometimes fight over scarce resources; Hal-5 and Hal-6 are often caught in the middle.

Roll call

The six Hal-Y clones are Free Enterprise members. Each traffics a different traitorous commodity. Each also knows a different clue that may help the PCs—if they happen to get it out of him. (See the 'Hal-Y clue chart' nearby.) Each Hal-Y can be intimidated or bribed easily (automatic success on Bribery or Intimidation rolls).

The Hal-Y clones are distinguished in the same way as all clones in Alpha Complex: Get them to stick out their tongues. Each member of a clone line has his or her clone name and number tattooed on his tongue. Pass this information along to the players as if reminding them of common knowledge—after all, their characters are clones themselves, or else have their own clone backups waiting. For citizens who wish to mask their true identity or numeration, rubber tongue covers are available on the IR market—just ask Hal-Y-OOO-2, who runs a thriving sideline in tongue covers.

The 'Crime family' box nearby offers a rundown of the iniquitous operations of the entire Hal-Y-OOO crime family.

What if they do this…?

Once the PCs have looked around Hal-Y's office, met a Hal-Y or two and picked up a couple of clues, it's time to send them off to *Wide Complex of Sports*.

Direct the Troubleshooters to Studio 54, just a few dozen meters down a corridor outside Hal-Y's office. One of the Hal-Y clones may personally conduct them there. ('Hey, right this way, kiddos. Love ya, great act, socko, you'll knock 'em dead.') Or an eager-beaver studio page may show up to guide them. Or they hear an announcement over the PA system: 'Attention! Paging guests *[list PC names]* to Studio 54! Taping of *Wide Complex of Sports* is about to begin! Two minutes to taping!'

But suppose the PCs start to wander around on their own in HPD Sector or act uncooperative in other ways?

Some suggestions:

If the PCs follow Hal-Y out of his office: Beyond his door is a tan-colored corridor running right and left, with doors all along both sides of the hall (see the map). Assuming the tan color doesn't freak out the PCs, they see Hal-Y enter a doorway right across the hall, just as another Hal-Y comes out the same doorway. The new Hal-Y energetically and urgently tries to herd the PCs back into the office.

If the Troubleshooters enter the room across the hall: They find another office and five identical Hal-Y clones (unarmed), sitting around swilling the new drug co-cola from strangely shaped glass flasks (soda pop bottles). The Hal-Ys don't want any trouble. If threatened or intimidated, they spill general information on any

The Hal-Y Arbitrary Clue Availability Chart

Whenever the PCs get a Hal-Y in a tough bind (like peering down the barrel of a cone rifle), just consult this chart and pick a clue. This is *all* Hal-Y will divulge on the subject. Subsequent bribery or intimidation is for naught; Hal-Y holds out like a French Resistance fighter.

Clue 1: A secret society called the 'Clone Arrangers' offers additional illicit clone backups for wealthy citizens.

Clue 2: The Romantics secret society has calved yet another radical group. This new society is called 'The Pepsi Generation'. Their central ritual is the sharing of a new illegal drug, a liquid with mysterious properties called 'co-cola.'

Clue 3: The current Teela O'Malley is the last of her line. IntSec has marked her for erasure. She's looking for illicit backups, price no object.

Clue 4: Don't press the fifth button labeled 'X' on the *Date With Death* gameboard or your team is in real trouble.

Clue 5: Those who know say Cleto-B-QRK is a high-degree member of a new society called the 'Clone Arrangers'.

Clue 6: Apparently the abandoned studio where *Captain Botaroo* was produced is now unhealthy to visit. (Okay, not a particularly helpful clue.)

topic the PCs think to ask them about, though they clam up about details.

If the PCs don't follow Hal-Y into his office and instead wander off down the corridor: They can go into any door. Each door is tan-colored. On each is painted the word STUDIO and a number. A red lightbulb is on the wall just above each door. None of the bulbs are lit. If the Troubleshooters enter any studio, they fall into the *Wide Complex of Sports* deathtrap; go to the next section.

If the PCs leave Hal-Y's office and go somewhere else: The Computer politely inquires about the progress of their mission over the PA system. Perhaps gentle guidance is necessary—maybe a Vulture Squadron supported by a division of combots. Deliver the PCs right to Studio 54 and go to the next section.

If Troubleshooter Chuck-O-VKJ tries to gain Hal-Y's confidence as a fellow Free Enterpriser: Play along. Agree to anything Chuck-O says. Then send him directly to the deathtrap along with the others.

If the PCs terminate all the Hal-Ys: Well, makes for an interesting debriefing. A PA announcement tells the PCs that a priority request has been cleared and the PCs are to report at once to Studio 54 for 'Special Duty'. (Who sends this PA announcement? Cleto-B-QRK? Hal-Y-7? The Ghost of Christmas Past? Doesn't matter. Just do it.)

And remember the fail-safe option—Funbot on Parade. Now we return you to the regularly scheduled program…

You're going out there a youngster, but you've got to come back a star

A surviving Hal-Y, studio page or announcement over the PA summons the PCs to Studio 54. When they enter, read the following aloud:

> **Before your eyes adjust to the darkened studio, a harried, hustle-bustle GREEN-Clearance guy waddles over and says, 'All right, all right, it's about time, don't you know I've got a schedule? You're way overdue and I've had to remap the entire shoot. Over here, over here to the playing area. Pronto!'**

The GREEN guy is Morrie-G-III-5, the director of *Wide Complex of Sports*. He's as authoritarian, officious and persnickety as the PCs can stand without shooting him.

The playing area

Read this aloud:

> **The GREEN fellow introduces himself as Morrie-G-III-5, director of *Wide Complex of Sports*. He leads you through darkened areas of a very large studio, behind brightly lit sets, between partitions, over cables…. The ceiling is lost in darkness. You can hardly see the far end of the studio.**
>
> **You pass one set with a large painting of two autocars crashing. Another set shows two enormous INFRAREDs beating up on one another in a boxing ring. A third set is dominated by the giant logo 'COMMIE MUTANT TRAITOR HUNT'. Finally Morrie- G escorts you to a well-lit, colorful set surrounded by cameras. The elaborate neon logo over the soundstage reads 'DATE WITH DEATH'.**
>
> **'Now pick one guy to represent your team, then you all wait here for the other team's guy,' Morrie-G says. 'Oh, and I need to collect all your weapons and armor. Wouldn't want any accidents on the set, would we?'**

What? You say Morrie-G doesn't look likely to intimidate a team of Troubleshooters into surrendering their weapons and armor?

Hah! Let them get stubborn, then let the platoon of guardbots fall whistling from the darkness above them, support cables ringing with speed and tension, guns bristling from compact, well-armored flat-black capsules of awesome menace. if a PC looks crosseyed, waste him. At Morrie-G's gesture, the bots disappear as suddenly as they appeared, reeling back up into the darkness above them.

Cute, huh? And if the PCs balk at any other point in Studio 54, these security bots zip down from the ceiling and clarify matters.

No, Morrie-G won't tell the PCs what the game is about—'Whatsamatter, I'm supposed to hold your widdle hand?' No, he won't tell about their opponents—'Fairness regulations! Trying to get me in trouble?' No, he doesn't know anything useful about anything at all. No, the PCs can't leave—Hal-Y has seen to that. At each door the PCs find four combots blocking their exit route. Railroaded!

For the rest of this episode, Morrie-G is the Troubleshooters' 'off-camera' contact in HPD. Hal-Y won't show up here. He's a producer, so he hardly ever visits the set. Morrie-G knows and respects Hal-Y, insofar as respect is a concept in HPD. However, Morrie-G is seriously bugged that a lowly YELLOW (Hal-Y) is his nominal superior in production. Oh, Morrie-G tries to conceal his resentment…sort of:

> **'Sure, Hal-Y is great people. All of them are great people, I mean. I'm sure eventually they'll perform well enough so The Computer will promote them to GREEN, like me.**
>
> **'Now, don't get the idea I hold YELLOW Clearance against them. No sir, no ma'am. Morrie-G-III can put pride aside to work for a YELLOW. And no one will say different.**
>
> **'You hear anybody say Morrie-G is sensitive about that clearance stuff, you say so right now, hear? You never did, right? Okay, but listen, I don't appreciate that kind of rumor-mongering, that's all it is.'**

Morrie-G's babbling requires no response from the PCs. Morrie-G doesn't converse with the Troubleshooters; he bounces statements off them like handballs.

Blind date

The PCs must now select one representative. This is either trivial or impossible, because they have no idea what qualities are useful. If they try to get some ideas by looking around the soundstage, read this aloud:

> **The soundstage is a large semicircle walled in by thin plastic partitions. At one end of the stage is a raised lectern with built-in microphone.**

'…let's see—Yep! This tongue is expired, boy!'

At the other end, near where you're standing, are two long metal desks, each with a row of large pushbuttons on the top and a big red light bulb in front. The desks are about five feet apart and oriented at an angle so they almost face each other. On the wall between them is a scoreboard reading TEAM 1 (and beneath that, WEAPONS—0) and TEAM 2 (and beneath that, WEAPONS—0).

That's right: It's a game show. Now, before you start this scene, get four index cards or pieces of paper and write the following in big letters:

SIGH!
LAUGH!
CHEER!
SPOUT LOYAL SLOGANS!

These are cue cards. Whenever the readaloud text calls for one of these responses, or when in the course of the *Date With Death* show you feel one might be appropriate, hold up the card to the players and encourage them to simulate a canned audience response. This is a whole bunch of fun and lets the players blow off some steam they have built up from your persistent abuse.

Give the Troubleshooters slightly less than a reasonable amount of time to choose the representative. Give them the idea this is a critical decision. Build the tension.

Of course, as you have guessed, the choice is immaterial. Sooner or later, everyone marches onstage; no one has much chance to succeed.

After they make their choice, read this:

Around the partition at the opposite end of the stage walks a scrawny little pencil-necked RED-Clearance guy in a badly fitting jumpsuit with an Armed Forces insignia. He takes position behind one of the desks. Morrie-G bustles up and says, 'Hokay, showtime! Who's your guy?—Get up on stage behind your desk, pronto! The program's about to start.'

You *[the chosen PC]* **stumble onstage and stand behind the second desk. The buttons on the desk are arranged in a square of four, numbered 1-2-3-4, and there's a fifth button labeled 'X', set off from the others at the upper right-hand corner.**

Morrie-G sits down at a control console offstage behind the cameras. Suddenly, lights flash and you hear bouncy theme music and recorded applause. Over the applause you hear Morrie-G's voice saying, 'And now, it's time once again for…*Date With Death*! *[Cheer!]* **Brought to you by…your friend The Computer!** *[Spout Loyal Slogans!]* **And here's your host, a loyal citizen *just like you,* Don-Y-YYY!'** *[Cheer!—and keep waving this sign before your players, encouraging them to sustain the racket.]*

A handsome YELLOW HPDer trots onstage to the lectern. The canned applause continues for a while, then Morrie-G turns a knob on the console and the sound fades.

[Still hold the Cheer! *sign up, but signal with the other hand to slowly lower the volume until you cut off the* Cheer! *by hiding the sign.]*

Don-Y says, 'Hi, fellow citizens! *[Cheer!]* **The Computer has lined up an exciting contest today—and what do you say to that?'**

Morrie-G hits a button *[Spout Loyal Slogans!]* **and a chorus of voices praises The Computer's generosity. Don-Y smiles broadly saying, 'Great. Great. Now, you all remember the defending champion representing Team 2, Ozzie-R-DFP-6?** *[Cheer!]* **Right! Now, let's meet our challenger, a heroic Troubleshooter representing Team 1,** *[name of fingered PC]***.'** *[Cheer!]*

'Hey, tell us a little about yourself, *[name of fingered PC]***,' Don-Y says. 'What sector are you from?—Who's your closest and most trusted friend?'** *[The Computer!—or there's some explaining to do at the debriefing.]*

If the PC tries to ask Don-Y a question, Don-Y laughs heartily and say, 'Hey, what a kidder! How about that, audience?' Morrie-G twists a knob. Hold up the 'Laugh!' sign.

After you establish the utter banality of the situation, continue reading:

'Okay, studio audience and friends at the barracks, you all know how to play our game. By answering questions in our first round, the team will gain weapons that aid them substantially in the second round, as they approach their—*Date With Death*!

'Right? Okay, let's go to the first question. For one weapon, what is—*your security clearance*?'

Wait for a perceptible fraction of a second. The player may shout out the answer. A sharp one may say, 'I'm pushing a button.' Ask him which one. If it was one of the four numbered buttons, ignore the answer—whatever it is, the answer is wrong. If the button was the 'X' button, see below in 'What if Someone Presses Button X?'

If a player answers without pushing a button, hold up the 'Sigh!' sign. Read the following:

Don-Y says, 'Oh! I'm sorry. You must *buzz* **before answering. But thanks for playing, and let's welcome the next player from Team 1!'** *[Cheer!]* **Under cover of the noisy applause, Morrie-G gestures impatiently for the chosen PC to get off stage and for somebody else to get on. And fast!**

If no one moves quickly to take the loser's place, Don-Y laughs, shouts encouragement, Morrie-G twists a knob and you hold up the 'Laugh!' sign. Security bots come whistling down from the dark ceiling and loom menacingly.

If the PC hits a button before answering, read this aloud:

You hit the button well in advance of Ozzie-R from Team 2, but nothing happens.

After an extended pause, and after several expressions of alternating comprehension, confusion, inspiration and motivation have played across Ozzie-R's face, he lunges forward and stabs at a button.

'Tell us about this high-tech armament, Donpard-O!'

[Pick a button other than the numbered button the PC pushed. Make a loud, annoying 'EHHNNNT!' noise.] **A buzzer sounds, and the bulb lights.**

Don-Y says dramatically, 'For one weapon, what is your security clearance?'

Ozzie-R pauses, thinks a moment and finally guesses, 'Uh, RED?'

Don-Y shouts, 'Yes! That's right!' Morrie-G twists a knob *[Cheer!]* **and an audience tape blares.**

If the PC didn't do anything at all, read the paragraphs above from 'After an extended pause…'

Now, no matter what the Troubleshooter did, he failed to answer the question. Don-Y thanks him, asks for a hand for him *[Cheer!]* and summons the next pigeon.

As the PCs change their representative, Don-Y says something like:

'Well, Troubleshooters, am I right that you missed our last show? Eh? Am I right? Well, if you'd seen it, you'd know the button you should have pushed to work the buzzer to answer the first question today is the same number that worked for the final question last time! *[Sigh!]*

'Ah, well, it's all part of the fun and suspense on…*Date With Death*! *[Cheer!]* **So now the score is…one weapon for Ozzie's Team 2,** *[Cheer!]* **and a big *zipperoo*** *[Laugh!]* **for the Troubleshooters' Team 1. Right. Ready? Okay, the next question…'**

And so on

One by one the PCs trot up to answer some insanely easy question. Likely as not, one by one they fail. There *is* a pattern to which button works the buzzer (the button changes from question to question)—but because each team member is allowed only one wrong answer, the PCs may all go down to defeat before deciphering it.

The pattern is simple—after the casual hose job of question 1, where whatever the PCs do, it is defined as wrong. Button 2 answers question 2, and then the buzzer numbering goes backwards, 2-1-4-3-2-1-4-3-2, etc. Button 1 answers question 3, button 4 answers question 4, button 3 answers question 5 and so on until each of the PCs have been defeated. Ozzie-R, of course, knows the pattern.

A PC may stab at a button at random and accidentally activate the buzzer. You have two options then: Ozzie-R could beat the Troubleshooter to the buzzer and have first crack at the question, or you could actually let the PC win one and get a chance at the next question before being replaced. This maintains player interest and avoids the appearance of arbitrariness.

GM: Gosh, *me* arbitrary? How could you say such a thing? *[Scribbles notes behind the GM screen and grins broadly while shrugging his shoulders in exaggerated innocence.]*

The questions, with answers, follow. Ozzie-R, a lackluster dimbulb, might not know the answers to all of these. In this case he won't even hit the buzzer, and the question may pass unanswered.

Questions for *Date With Death*, Round One

1. What is your security clearance? *(Whatever.)*
2. (Button 2) Who is your friend? *(Guess who.)*
3. (Button 1) What is six times nine? *(54.)*
4. (Button 4) Who wears white? *(High Programmers. ULTRAVIOLET Clearance.)*
5. (Button 3) What popular video heroine is The Computer's most trusted, loyal and beloved servant? *(Teela O'Malley—ahem!)*
6. (Button 2) What did the RED-Clearance Troubleshooter say to the YELLOW-Clearance Troubleshooter when the RED-Clearance Troubleshooter stepped on the YELLOW-Clearance Troubleshooter's foot? *('Please don't kill me.')*
7. (Button 1) How many fingers am I holding up? *(Whatever.)*
8. (Button 4) Who wants you to be happy? *(See question #2.)*
9. (Button 3) Who do we hate? *(Commies, traitors, etc.)*
10. (Button 2) What do Troubleshooters do? *('Shoot trouble' is the simplest correct answer; dull but accurate answers are acceptable.)*
11. (Button 1) What's between YELLOW Clearance and BLUE Clearance? *(GREEN Clearance.)*
12. (Button 4) What color laser barrel can a RED-Clearance Troubleshooter carry? *(RED.)*
13. (Button 3) Who protects you above all others? *(See question #2.)*

…and so on until all players have answered wrong, or until they're are completely convinced they're hosed. Deliver the questions in a high-powered, glad-handing, mock-friendly manner. Keep thinking 'Pat Sajak, Bob Barker, Peter Marshall, Richard Dawson, Bill Cullen, Gene Rayburn, Wink Martindale' like a mantra. Announce the team scores after each, and always dwell on the wide gap between the two. And always—*always*—smile.

Of course, accidents happen. The PCs could get lucky or too smart, tumble to the button pattern early on and walk all over poor Ozzie-R. And don't discount the possibility some ratfink player has read this fine roleplaying supplement already and has discovered the pattern. If this happens, change the button pattern or make the questions tougher. ('Which High Programmer is the inventor of the new fertilization process that recently tripled algae yield in LIS Sector hydroponics?')

What if someone presses Button 'X'?

Read this aloud:

You press the button marked 'X' and suddenly a loud gonging noise fills the studio. Don-Y gapes in amazement. The 'crowd' goes wild. *[Cheer!]*

'Incredible! Studio audience! Viewers! The Troubleshooter challengers have elected to *forfeit all weapons* to Team 2 and go *directly* to Round Two and their *Date With Death*!' *[Coax players to frenzy by madly gesturing as you display the 'Cheer!' sign.]*

Stop the questioning and go directly to the next section—Round Two.

Round Two

No matter what, the Troubleshooters fare poorly. Round One soon ends because someone pushes button 'X' or because each PC has been eliminated by giving a wrong answer or no answer at all. At best the PCs may answer a couple of questions, whereas Ozzie-R answers quite a few and wins a dandy selection of portable ordnance to employ in Round Two.

When Round Two is ready to begin, read the following:

'Time for Round Two!' says Don-Y. *[Cheer!]* **All at once the soundstage floor vibrates. At upstage center, the partitions divide and slide back, revealing a wide, brilliantly-lit concrete ramp leading into some kind of arena. Ozzie-R trots blithely up the ramp. Offstage, Morrie-G gestures frantically for you to follow. He indicates the security bots dangling from the ceiling.**

Anyone who doesn't go up the ramp checks out in a blaze of glory, in a fatal Commie-execution spectacular televised Complex-wide.

The arena is a spacious, historically semiaccurate reconstruction of an Old Reckoning site. It seems to have been a center for ancient pagan rituals. (At least that's the way you'll describe it to your players.) if they reveal any knowledge of this site's true purpose during play, that should be worth a treason charge or two.

You're sent up the ramp into the arena, while Morrie-G's recorded voice blares out, 'Today's *Date With Death* is set in The Computer's faithful recreation of an ancient site recently rediscovered by The Computer's loyal servants in

the Department of Patriotic Culture Improvement, Office of Discovery and Purification.

'This site was used by primitive cultures for bizarre pagan rites of water worship. It makes us thankful we're living in a happier, more sensible age, under the loving care of our trusted and dependable mentor, The Computer.' *[Spout Loyal Slogans!] [Cheer!]*

The arena is a long, rectangular room with a high ceiling and strange cubical machines arranged in two rows from one end to the other. Each machine is a large white metal box with an open lid on top. Along the walls are large dark machines with glass portholes for viewing, but what they reveal is incomprehensible—bits of cloth tossing and twirling in the obscure patterns of some unknowable ritual. The sounds of rhythmic bumping and humming machinery fill the arena, and the air smells unnaturally fresh and clean.

That's right: a laundromat. Your players have probably also guessed, but you must remind them, this alien environment is nothing their characters have ever seen.

Ozzie-R and his friends

The PCs are standing in the arena with Ozzie-R, whom you should now describe in much greater detail—a tiny, skinny guy, with a whiny voice. He looks like he'd blow over if you whispered 'stiff breeze'. He looks nervous. If any PCs try to intimidate him with fierce looks, he skitters away like a squirrel.

Read this aloud:

Don-Y-YYY trots into the arena with an armful of weapons: a laser rifle with an INDIGO barrel, a tangler, something that looks an awful lot like a plasma generator and others. He gives them to Ozzie-R, who just barely avoids collapsing under the weight. Ozzie-R looks more nervous than ever.

If the PCs got any questions right in the first round, read this:

Then Don-Y trots over to you and, with a broad smile, reaches into his pocket and brings out *[number equal to the number of questions the PCs answered correctly in the first round]* **laser pistol(s) with RED barrel(s). 'Congratulations, Troubleshooters!' he says sincerely.**

These are ordinary laser pistols (W3K energy). Then, in any case, read the following:

Don-Y trots down the ramp and in a moment his voice resounds through the arena. 'We'd like to thank Ozzie-R and his defending team for their diligent service to The Computer in testing several experimental weapons provided to us today by the brilliant technicians in Research & Design. Let's give them a big hand, citizens!' *[Cheer!]*

You hear enormous applause, and Ozzie-R seems to shrivel a bit.

Probably the Troubleshooters—if you've elected to foster their little illusions—are breathing easily now. Encourage this misguided sense of well-being. Then read this:

Don-Y continues, 'And now let's welcome the rest of Ozzie-R's team! From the 256th Vulture Squadron, let's give a warm Alpha Complex greeting to Biff-G, Magilla-G, Gorgo-G, Goliath-G and Megatherium-G from GOG Sector!' *[Cheer!]*

Amid tumultuous applause, the room seems to shrink as five gigantic GREEN Armed Forces troopers trundle into the arena and loom protectively around Ozzie-R. Each Vulture grabs one of the experimental weapons in a hand the size of a vat-gruel bucket, glances at it in distaste and lays it aside with a grunt. They place the weapons on the floor almost without bending over. Their knuckles brush their knees. They look at you, grinning broadly.

In comes a trio of tall spindly bots in black and white tunics with little whistle attachments on their faceplates. Each has a laser built into one arm.

Don-Y-YYY continues, 'Here are the three refbots to judge today's match, and here's the game ball: a finely-crafted, precisely-molded, 60-kilogram sphere of solid carbon steel from our friends in Technical Services.'

One refbot is listing to one side under the weight of this big steel ball. One of the Vultures takes the ball and tosses it one-handed to a teammate.

'Remember, viewers, each team is trying to get that steel ball in the porthole at the other team's end of the arena', says Don-Y-YYY.

Spotlights shine down on two portholes at opposite ends of the arena, and the portholes flip open automatically. The Vultures lope to their end, and the refbots guide you to your own.

Don-Y finishes, 'And don't forget, citizens—anything goes! These brave contestants want that date with Teela O'Malley and they'll stop at nothing to get it! It's all part of the fun on...*Date With Death*!' The partitions are sliding closed behind you and the refbots are signalling for the game to begin. The Vultures are pounding their fists into their palms, beating on their chests and growling. Isn't this exciting?

King of the laundromat: The rules of the game

As a special treat, we present the *Date With Death* bloodbath as a boardgame. In spirit, this boardgame is typical ***PARANOIA*** combat, but the boardgame format makes it easier for you to run the NPCs and maintain some illusion of balanced, objective conflict.

In fact, it doesn't matter much who wins; the mission will continue regardless. The opponents are considerably tougher than the PCs, but their chart-driven tactics give the PCs plenty of opportunities. Further, the random element of refbot penalties is a big factor in determining the winner (most casualties are inflicted by refbot lasers). Therefore, no matter how tactically brilliant the PCs are, they could lose by a bounce of a die. And finally, because *you* are the referee, you have plenty of opportunities to influence the outcome.

So, remember, this is a roleplaying game, not *Stalingrad*. The point is to do some full-tilt roleplaying and have fun.

If the PCs manage to figure some way to win this apparently lopsided match—well, bully for them.

Rules of play

The playing area is a reconstructed Old Reckoning laundromat. The teams are the PCs (Team 1) and Ozzie-R-DFP and his GREEN Vulture Squadron companions (Team 2). The object is to advance a 60-kilogram steel sphere to the opposing team's goal and stuff it inside the goal (an open clothes dryer). There are some rules about what sorts of things are illegal, but the PCs are not told about those rules, and learn only from experience by watching the kinds of penalties the refbots assess.

Components

1. The arena (the laundromat)

Set the board between you and the players so everyone can see it. The playing area is an arena resembling a laundromat, with rows of clothes dryers along the walls and two rows of washing machines running the length of the area.

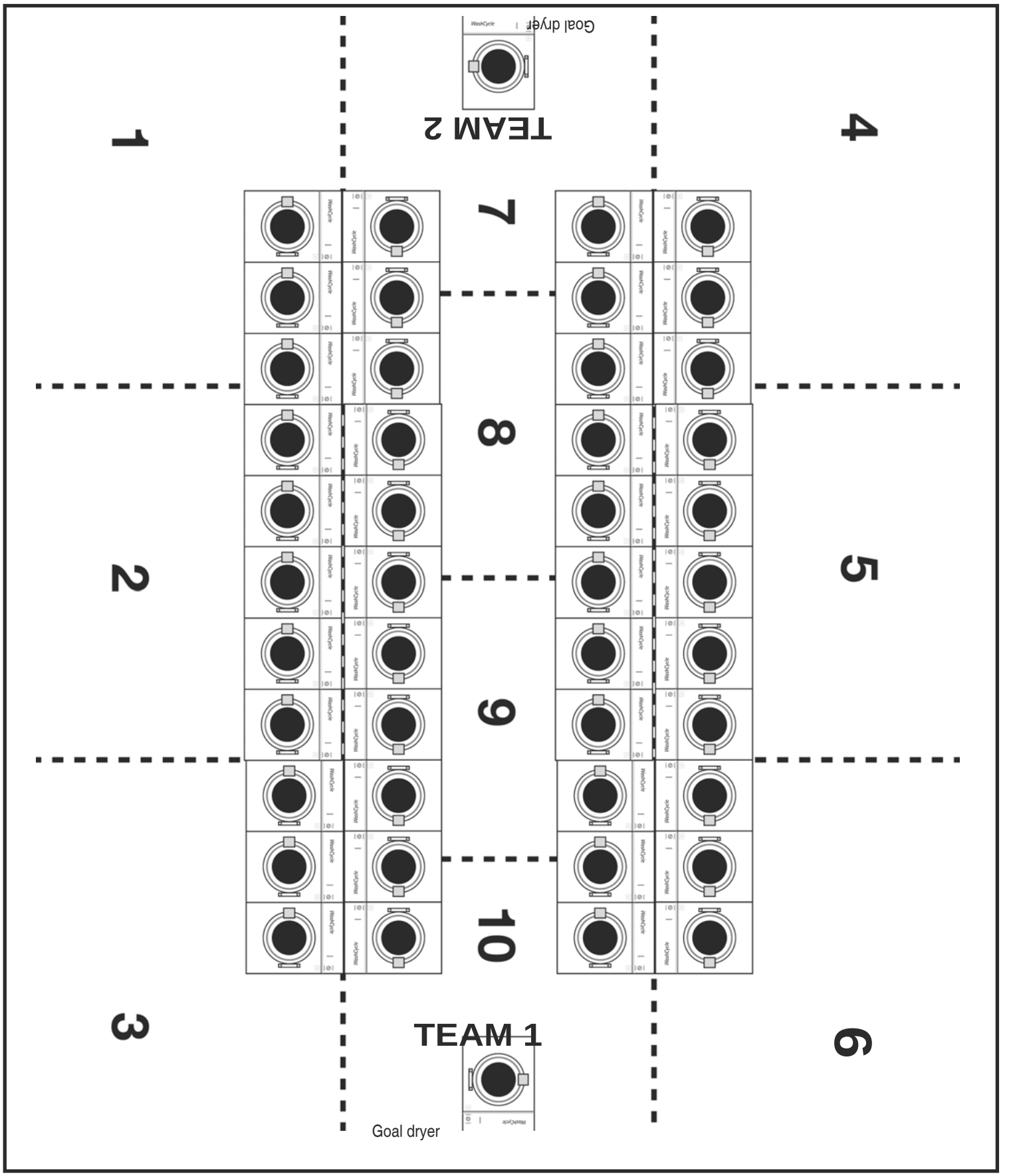
The area is divided into ten sectors, numbered 1 to 10. At each end is one special dryer designated 'The Goal'.

2. The player characters, NPCs, refbots and metal sphere

Markers for six player characters, six NPC opponents, three refbots and a metal sphere are printed under the map.

Date With Death Round 2 Arena: ‘King of the Laundromat’

For the counters used with this boardgame, see page 137.



Do you want to chop up your book just to get those silly markers? Remember, damaging Computer property is a treasonous offense, punishable by summary execution.

If you are too fastidious to cut up this book, and too la-di-dah to use regular, paper-thin copies of the markers, well, make your own elegant markers, or use Mongoose Publishing's metal ***PARANOIA*** miniatures, or adapt counters from another (non-fun) boardgame.

Setting up the game

Read the following aloud:

The refbots direct the members of each team to stand in their appropriate goal areas. Do you follow directions like a good citizen?

Execute uncooperative traitors. Studio security bots and combots offer support if the refbots request it.

Place all Team 1 markers in Sector 10. Place all Team 2 markers in Sector 7. Place one refbot in each of Sectors 3, 4 and 9. Place the metal sphere in Sector 8.

Then read aloud:

Here are your PCs. *[Point. No, it isn't polite. Do it anyway.]* **Here are Ozzie-R and his GREEN Vulture Squadronier buddies. You notice Ozzie-R has strapped on the weapon resembling a plasma generator and is cowering behind his hulking comrades. There is no sign of the other weapons. It seems the Vultures disdain the use of experimental weapons. I wonder why…?**

Here are the refbots. They all have a VIOLET-color laser built into one arm.

So, did you guys get any weapons? If so, who's going to start out carrying one? If not, too bad.

Now, remember, nobody has any armor, Ozzie-R has got something that looks like a plasma generator, and you guys have *[either no weapons, or one or more RED laser pistols]***.**

Everybody ready? Okay, the refbot in Sector 9 has dropped the sphere in Sector 8. That is closer to Team 2 than it is to you. Does that seem unfair? Anybody want to complain?

Yes, it is unfair. No, complaining does no good. The refbots ignore PC and NPC comments alike. Unruly contestants get shot. *Period.*

Sequence of play

Now you're going to explain how the game turn proceeds. Read aloud:

Okay, Troubleshooters, here's how things are going to work.

How to win: The first team to advance the sphere to the other team's goal and stuff it in the goal-dryer wins the game.

How to lose: If all members of one team are incapacitated or dead, that team loses. If a team stuffs the ball and gets wiped out at the same time, we'll call it a draw. And if both teams get wiped out simultaneously—always a possibility with the plasma generator—then both teams lose.

We play in rounds, just like regular combat. First, everybody writes down on a piece of paper what his character is doing in the next five-second round. Here's what has to be on your note:

One: your PC's name.

Two: which sector you end up in. These numbered spaces are sectors. You can go to any sector you choose. Don't bother telling me all the swell things you want to do on the way to that sector. You move to, or stay in a sector, then you do something. Got it?

Three: what you intend to do in that sector. Shoot? Shoot who? Clobber someone? Who? Pick up the sphere? Attack a refbot? Hide in a dryer? Sing 'I'm an Alpha Complex Dandy'? Remember, I decide whether you can do what you say you intend to do. Of course, as always, I'll be reasonable. *[Smile.]*

Remember those three items: name, sector, what you do.

I bet you want to know what kinds of things I will and won't let you do. Well, I'll give you some examples, but mostly I'll keep you in suspense. You'll find out as we go along. Won't that be exciting?

Here are some examples:

YOU CAN:

- **Try to pick up the sphere and then try to score by putting it into the other team's goal**
- **Attack someone—an opponent, a refbot, or even your own teammate**
- **Exchange, steal or throw weapons**
- **Use a mutant power—if any of you are mutants, perish forbid**
- **Help each other**
- **Make eloquent pleas for justice to the refbots**
- **Appeal to the reasonable nature of Ozzie-R and his Vulture buddies**
- **Direct questions, statements or orders to your teammates, but the communication must be real short, and it is likely that's all I'll let you do in one round**
- **Hide—any character who says he is hiding and is, in my judgment, out of line of sight is not a target for laser fire. As far as hiding from the plasma generator… well, good luck.**

YOU CAN'T:

- **Do impossible or silly things. Exceptions may be made for incredibly clever or entertaining proposals**
- **Break any normal *PARANOIA* game rules, though I may make exceptions**

REMEMBER: The more you try to do in a five-second round, the more likely you will foul up in an entertaining fashion.

Okay, that's the first part—writing your intention in a note to me. You will write your notes simultaneously and without consulting each other. You will have about thirty seconds to write your notes.

Next, I'll collect and read your notes. I'll figure out what your character can do and arrange your markers in their new positions. I'll let you whine and plead a little, but mostly I'll impress you, as usual, with the wit and discernment of my judgments.

Then I'll use a bunch of charts to figure out where your opponents go and what they do.

Then I'll rearrange the NPCs on the Playing Area and tell you what each of them is doing this round.

Finally, everyone's actions happen at once—combat, mutant powers, all kinds of exciting stuff, just like in every *PARANOIA* free-for-all. Anything that isn't covered in the *PARANOIA* rules, such as they are, I'll judge with typical impartiality and generosity.

The refbots decide if there have been any infractions of the rules, and assess penalties. What's that? You weren't told the rules? Gee, it must be some oversight. I'm sure The Computer will fix everything in good time.

Ready to start? Good.

Special combat rules

1. **Plasma generator:** The plasma generator's blast area is one sector. All characters and refbots in that sector are affected (V1V energy). All objects are partially melted and probably useless. This plasma generator is experimental and automatically malfunctions the second time it is fired. A warning buzzer sounds, and, if the malfunction is not repaired, the weapon explodes in one to ten rounds (roll 1d20 and divide in half, round up); everyone in the sector takes V1V energy

'King of the Laundromat' tables

Gorilla with sphere

If a gorilla has successfully grabbed the sphere, roll 1d20 on this table. If the gorilla is in Sector 10, the roll is automatically 20.

If two or more gorillas are in the same sector with the sphere, and no PCs are with them, their roll is automatically 5. They stay there and argue over who gets the sphere. When a PC takes the sphere, or when the number of gorillas is reduced to one by combat, the deadlock is broken.

1–5: Stay put. *PC here:* Attack. If a PC is struggling for the sphere, make Unarmed Combat roll (rating 16) to maintain grip. If PC is not struggling for sphere, bash him with it (S4M impact).

6–10: Stay put and bellow in bewilderment: 'Uhh, now what? What's the plan? Hey Ozzie-R, cover me! Ozzie-R? Hey, where's Ozzie-R?' *PC is here:* Make Unarmed Combat roll if necessary (rating 16) to hold onto sphere, but don't attack.

11–12: Move toward Sector 10 (1 Sector/round). *PC is here:* Make Unarmed Combat roll if necessary (rating 16) to hold onto sphere, but don't attack.

13–16: Throw sphere to Sector (1d20/2, round up). *Gorilla receiver in target sector:* Roll 1d20; receiver catches sphere on 12 or less, otherwise misses and sphere drops to ground. Gorilla who catches sphere rolls on this table next round. *PC in target sector:* If gorilla misses sphere or is absent, roll 1d20; on 1, PC is hit (S4M impact); otherwise sphere hits wall or machine. *No one in target sector:* Sphere smashes wall or machine, damaging Computer property

17–20: Gorilla tries to score. *Gorilla is in Sector 10, and no PC is here:* Gorilla automatically scores. *Sector 10 and PC(s) is here:* Gorilla bashes random PC with sphere (Unarmed Combat rating 16, S4M impact); failure means gorilla drops sphere. *Gorilla is not in Sector 10:* Gorilla throws sphere at goal (scores on roll of 1; otherwise sphere drops in thrower's sector). Gorilla not in *Sector 10 but PC is:* **Before you roll,** ask player if PC tries to block the throw. Block automatically succeeds, but blocking PC takes S4M impact damage.

Team 2 GREEN gorillas

Gorilla #1 automatically rolls 1 each round. He is the goalie.

Roll 1d20 every round for each other gorilla who isn't holding the sphere. A gorilla holding the sphere rolls on the 'Gorilla with sphere' table.

1–2: Go to Sector 7 and guard goal. *PC with sphere is here:* Grab sphere. *PC without sphere is here:* Attack.

3–6: Stay in this sector, rip a chunk of metal from an appliance or wall (dryer door, soap dispenser, change machine) and throw it at a random PC. (Hits on roll of 1; S4M impact.)

7–14: Run to Sector (1d20/2, round up). *PC is here:* Attack. *No PC here:* Yell 'Hey, look here, I'm open, throw it, throw it!'

15–16: Run to random intact refbot and try to rip its head off (Unarmed Combat rating 16). Success means refbot is busted. *No refbots intact:* Run to sphere and grab it.

17–20: Run to sphere and grab it. *PC(s) here:* Make Unarmed Combat roll to grab it (rating 16). Success: Roll on 'Gorilla with sphere' table next round. Place Gorilla marker under sphere.

Refbots

Roll 1d20 each round for each intact refbot.

1–5: Stay in this sector and observe.

6–10: Run to Sector (1d20/2, round up) and observe.

11–20: Blow whistle and assess penalty.

Look for rules infractions nearest the refbot. See the text for suggested infractions. Don't get fussy about 'nearest'—if two targets seem equally near, roll some dice, whistle loudly (if you have a real whistle, great!), announce the penalty ('Delay of game!') and drill the victim with laser fire (Energy Weapons 14, W3K energy damage).

You might want to show favoritism to one side. It happens. Do your best to cloak it in apparent impartiality. Roll lots of dice; pretend to objectivity; appear surprised or sympathetic when 'luck' favors one side more than the other.

Ozzie-R

['Hides' means Ozzie-R tries to climb into a washer or dryer and peek out through gap in lid or door.]

1–4: Hides in this sector.

5–16: Runs to Sector (1d20/2, round up) and hides.

17–20: Hides in this sector and fires the plasma generator wildly into Sector (1d20/2, round up). It's an area weapon, so don't bother rolling; the whole sector is applesauce.

The plasma generator malfunctions on the second firing (no damage). Ozzie-R doesn't even dream of fixing it. Roll 1d20; he can remove the backpack on 5 or less. It takes him a round or two, during which he screams for help. His teammates ignore him. If he gets loose, he runs as far as possible from the backpack and hides for the rest of the game.

An intrepid PC may try to salvage the plasma generator. As described in Chapter 41 of the ***PARANOIA*** XP rulebook, this requires three successful Field Weapons rolls, one per round. Tricky, but if they succeed, the PCs likely gain a convincing victory. If repaired, the plasma generator has the same malfunction chance as any experimental weapon.

damage. Everyone in adjoining sectors (about a ten-meter radius) takes W1V damage.

2. **Struggles over objects (specifically the sphere or weapons):** If two or more characters in a sector are struggling over an object, each checks Violence/Unarmed Combat. Anyone who fails the roll loses grip of the item. If all fail, the item falls to the floor in that sector. Characters who succeed continue to grip the item.

Note: The plasma generator can't be taken from Ozzie-R unless he's dead and the PC has managed to remove the backpack. (See the Ozzie-R table.)

An object cannot be moved to another sector if characters from opposing teams are struggling over it. **Exception:** Team 2 members are strong. If two or more Team Two members have a grip on an object, they can drag the object and any Team 1 members at a rate of one sector per round.

3. **Delaying an opposing team member:** The PCs may try to grab Team 2 members to keep them from moving. The only way to do this is to obtain a Snafu result (or worse) against the opposing team member. Other methods, like hanging onto or tripping Team 2 members, have no effect.
4. **Laser fire into crowds:** If there is more than one character in a sector, roll chance to hit. If success, swell. if failure, roll 1d20 for each other target; low roll gets hit.

Special movement rules

Any character carrying the 60-kilogram steel sphere can move no more than one sector per turn. Assistance from other characters does not increase the movement rate.

Rolling for a sector

If you ever have to randomly determine a sector (to assess a penalty, move a gorilla, etc.), just roll 1d20, divide the result in half and round up. The result is the sector number.

Rules infractions and penalties

After you have resolved all combat and other actions, roll for the refbots' actions. Sometimes they move around, sometimes they just observe and sometimes they assess penalties.

When they assess a penalty, look around the playing area for the excuse. Here are five sample rules infractions. You can improvise more on the spot. The penalty is always the same—the refbot shoots at the penalized character with its built-in laser (W3K energy damage).

Rules infractions

1. **Damaging Computer property:** Fire and miss with an aimed weapon (including the sphere) or area weapon, or bash with the sphere and miss.
2. **Out of bounds play:** Hiding in a washer or dryer. **Note:** Hiding can protect from refbot laser fire—that's your call.
3. **Delay of game:** Holding sphere without advancing it. Happens a lot when there is a struggle over the sphere.
4. **Improper conduct:** Damaging a refbot or making treasonous statements.
5. **High humidity:** In case you can't find any real rules infractions, excess humidity causes refbots to malfunction, whistle, announce a penalty in unintelligible gibberish and fire at a hapless victim of your *choice.*

'And the lucky winners…'

If the PCs won Round Two of *Date With Death*, award them their prize—a date with Teela O'Malley. Well, maybe not a real date. Actually, it's just a chance to see her for 15 minutes at a Teela O'Malley Fan Club meeting.

'Chuck-O blocks as GOG Sector's Magilla-G drives in for the SCORE!!'

Don-Y makes a big announcement, there's a lot of cheering and the PCs are hustled offstage as Don-Y launches into a long-winded hype praising the generosity of The Computer.

Backstage Morrie-G gives them an address in NBD Sector where they are to meet Teela—'Room 13, corridor QB-7 on the Victory Promenade'—returns their equipment and shoves them rudely out of the studio.

'Too bad, but our consolation prize…'

If the PCs lost the gladiatorial contest, Morrie-G returns their equipment and dispatches the disconsolate losers to Hal-Y's office (or the CRUD system delivers clone replacements there). After suitable expressions of sympathy, tch-tching and clucking of covered tongues, Hal-Y shows what a swell guy he is.

'Oh, bad scoobies, guys and gals, really bad vibrations—but your pal Hal-Y just may be able to do you up after all. Hey hey, no, don't thank me, it's just the kinda crazy guy I am, right?

'Now, I hear from some very close personal friends in Public Relations that our gal Teela is planning a special surprise guest appearance at a Teela O'Malley Fan Club meeting—'

Hal-Y gives them the address, tries to sell them something illegal and sends them off.

Don't worry that the Troubleshooters might encounter the GREEN Vultures there, even though by all rights those gorillas won the meeting with Teela. The PCs won't ever see them again. Artistic license, right? But feel free to let the players worry.

Pick a door—*any* door

After leaving the *Date With Death* studio, the PCs find Room 13. If you're picking up here fresh for a new session, you might want to give them a little improvised runaround on the way to Room 13—nosy Vulture guards, malfunctioning transbots, a wise old wizard at the crossroads, stuff like that. When they reach their destination, read aloud:

Uh-oh. You've come to Room 13—miraculously without any mysterious delays, casualties or Kafkaesque encounters with the citizens of Alpha Complex. Here, at last, you will meet the elusive Teela O'Malley.

The problem is, there are *three* Room 13's—three identical doors arranged in a row, labeled 13A, 13B and 13C.

There's a corridor directory on the wall nearby. You read a lot of names you don't recognize, and near the bottom, 'Teela

O'Malley Fan Club—Room 13.' That's all it says. The hallway stretches in both directions, but there are no other doors in sight. No one is around.

You know Teela is behind one of these doors. Which one do you want to try?

Listening at doors conveys no benefit ('You hear a muffled voice—it might be Teela's'). No one can help; Hal-Y, Morrie-G, the studio pages, the whole population of NBD Sector—they're all nowhere to be found nor called. The PCs just have to choose one (or more) door(s) at random.

(They're all unlocked.)

You've probably already realized that the choice of doors is completely irrelevant. No matter which door they choose first, the Troubleshooters run through the encounters below in a predetermined sequence.

If the PCs want to try more than one door simultaneously, you can handle that: Split the group and let them open two doors at once. The third door is now locked. If they try to blast it open, that works—but the encounters in the other two rooms should distract them before they can manage this.

Run the first two rooms alternately, shifting from one group of characters to another. The separate encounters probably tend toward the same outcome. [Snort, snort.] After the first two firefights are resolved, then the Troubleshooters, or their heirs, can open the third door. This time it's unlocked.

Keep in mind the PCs should go through all three doors in sequence, and at the last of the three the PCs should all enter together. To encourage them, keep reminding them Teela must be around here somewhere…

The only situation you can't allow is the PCs' refusal to open any door. In this case, remember all the coercion devices we told you about. The funbot can go bananas and dart through a door at the drop of a derby hat. ('How-are-ya how- are-ya how-are-ya? New crowd—new show—new laughsl What's ten feet tall and loaded for bear?') Or let them return to Cleto-B and explain they couldn't find Teela. He yells a lot and send them back to investigate the Mystery of Room 13.

Anyway. The PCs choose a door and go through it. Oh, gosh. How unfortunate. They chose the wrong door. They meet …

Door #1: The Pepsi Generation

Let's talk for a minute about secret societies. Now and again they influence life in Alpha Complex. But usually they're so small, so loosely organized and so heavily infiltrated by Internal Security, they're ineffectual against the ever-vigilant Computer. (Recall that The Computer itself started most of them as harmless outlets for conspiratorial impulses.)

Given this sense of futility, secret society members tend to turn from grand, long-range plans to more easily achievable short-range goals—like individual wealth and aggrandizement. As a result, society infighting is fierce.

Any given society harbors so much petty politicking, backbiting, back-*kissing* (ahem), sneering snobbery, craven deference and internecine warfare it makes the AFL-CIO look like pantywaists. Imagine the Fort Dix League of Officers' Wives trying to cooperate with a local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. Is it any wonder The Computer has stayed in power for generations?

Sometimes factions breed so much animosity the society splinters. Offshoot groups, a dozen or so strong, break from the hated parent organization to 'recapture the true ideal of our founders.' They often die out in a couple of years, but the less likely an organization is to achieve its goals, the more idealistic its factions grow—and so the splintering continues. (Factional idealism is inversely proportional to group effectiveness. Students, feel free to steal this for your next Poli Sci paper. But if you flunk, don't blame us—that's what you get for relying on a roleplaying supplement for political theory.)

Thus the Pepsi Generation.

Members of the Romantics secet society share a lofty aim to reestablish that long-ago golden age, when the godlike 'Me Generation' ate 'fried french' and 'burgers', rode 'roller coasters', and traveled through the Outdoors to wondrous places like 'Disneyland' and 'Vietnam'.

But factions within the Romantics differ, often violently, on the ways to recapture Utopia. Some spirited intellectuals favor close study of ancient documents (travel brochures, matchbooks, *Car Wars,* Sears catalogues, *Wonder Woman*), while another group demands focused concentration on the politics of the time (as revealed in an ancient vidtape of the 1976 Republican National Convention and scholarly treatments of the mysterious leader Uncle Sam). Other factions recommend attention to the arts (Harold Robbins, Nelson Eddy, The Smurfs), or great 'religions' of the time such as Dianetics, Rosicrucianism and Bob.

And then there's the bunch the Troubleshooters meet as they enter the first of the three doors. Read this aloud:

Well, Teela's not here. Instead there are half a dozen oddly-dressed citizens gathered around a strange mechanical apparatus resembling the fluid-distilling systems in the food vats. The liquid this machine produces is different, though—it's brown, it smells sweet, and it bubbles.

The citizens—they're pretty strange-looking. They're wearing weird *multi-colored* shirts and blue, stitched brown pants, and they're pouring this liquid into strangely shaped flasks with strange metal caps. Some of them are slurping down this odd liquid, burping and humming along with a melody that issues from a wall vidscreen.

The screen shows a triangular array of citizens dressed in the same, weird, colorful garments, all swigging this brown fluid from the strange flasks and raising their voices in song—in praise of the virtues of this mysterious substance—well, what else can it be but some kind of *drug*—that can apparently unite all citizens in perfect harmony.

But nothing can unite all citizens except The Computer! Everything in this room definitely looks treasonous.

As you stand there trying to figure this out, the six citizens in the room turn to you—a ritualized greeting? 'We're all Peppers. Wouldn't you like to be a Pepper, too?'

Now what?

PCs act friendly

If the PCs agree to 'be a Pepper', or otherwise behave in friendly fashion, the Pepsi Generation gives them a taste of the brown liquid, the re-discovered Old Reckoning drug called 'co-cola'. Pepsi Generators live for co-cola and despise above all things the mythical 'un-cola' which they believe to have been the cause of the downfall of Old Reckoning civilization.

Remember, What-Y-WHO is a member of the Romantics. Maybe the Pepsis will try to recruit him from their parent organization …

If a PC drinks the co-cola, he or she feels refreshed. He or she will also be branded a traitor at the mission debriefing—not only are the multicorder and petbot recording everything, one of the Pepsi Generators is an Internal Security plant who will squeal like a baby to the Troubleshooters' superiors. (At your discretion, you can pass a note to Eve-R- RAT, the IntSec PC, telling her she recognizes the IntSec plant. The discovery is unlikely to comfort her, in any case.)

PCs are hostile or suspicious

If the PCs decline to try co-cola, or are uncooperative and threatening in some other way, the secretsociety members will open fire immediately, firing laser pistols and throwing bottles. Make a point of hitting the funbot with a bottle—it breaks, dousing the bot with sticky, syrupy liquid. (In case you don't follow, this provides yet another plausible excuse for the funbot to go ding-dong later on—as if you needed an excuse.)

Firefight! The PCs can stay and blow the Generators away, die gloriously for The Computer or run away. If they choose the better part of valor

(i.e., run like bunnies), the Pepsi Generation will chase them all over NBD Sector shouting slogans like 'Death to the Unsweetened-Beverage-Consumers!' or 'Remember the Cyclamates!' The chase can lead the PCs to some of the more interesting locales the funbot was supposed to drag them to, or to some other part of the mission. ('You're chased into a studio with a bunch of stage sets labeled 'Wide Complex of Sports…') Another amusing idea is to chase the PCs in a large circle, down lots of hallways with lots of doors (all locked and miraculously resistant to weapon fire), until they happen by—yes—the same three doors of Room 13. They can go in a second door, or you can take them through the loop again. And again. And when the PCs reach the second encounter, you can have the pursuing Pepsi Generators con veniently vanish in a cloud of artistic license.

But say the Troubleshooters don't run. They either make friends with or slaughter the Pepsis; either way they get to look around the room they're in. If they do, read this aloud:

The walls of this room are covered with what look like battle plans. it seems the citizens here have been preparing for war. on one wall is a map of the sewers beneath NBD Sector—you remember the sewers, don't you? One area you don't recognize has a big 'X' drawn on it, and beside the 'X' the words 'Clone Arrangers Lab!' A banner spread across another wall reads 'Death to the Clone Arrangers, Abusers of Co-Cola.'

There's nothing else of interest in this room except a big, bulky distilling apparatus, a bunch of glass flasks of this liquid 'co-cola', and the vidscreen displaying the treasonous programming. *[Ancient soda pop commercials, provided by Hal-Y-OOO-3.]*

The Pepsi Generators, it turns out, are mortal enemies of the Clone Arrangers. Co-cola is a vital ingredient in the revolutionary new Ranger cloning process (hey, c'mon, isn't it said that the stuff 'adds life'?), and since supplies of the beverage are limited, the two organizations are in constant conflict over this scarce resource. Thus the Generators are planning a raid on the Ranger lab.

If the PCs engage the Pepsi Generators in conversation, they can find out all of this—but they can't learn a) exactly what the Clone Arrangers are or Teela's connection with them, b) Teela's whereabouts or c) the time of the planned raid on the Clone Arrangers laboratory. The raid will take place—of course—later in the mission, just as the Troubleshooters discover the lab themselves.

'Will the Real Thing please step forward?'

Moving things along

Don't forget, you want the PCs to go through all three doors in this encounter. You can drive them like sheep to the next door with laser-toting Pepsis, make them chase the wicked funbot or just make the Pepsis disappear behind locked, secret doors, then say, 'Now what?' Sooner or later they'll either pick Room 13 again or receive some imperious command from Cleto-B to 'Find Teela, you incompetent vatslime! Hal-Y says to look in Room 13. Do it. Now. Thank you for your soon-to-be-more-satisfactory-or-you'll-be-reactor-shielding cooperation.'

But suppose everyone is behaving calmly, chatting with the Pepsis, wondering what's supposed to come next. Consider these ways of poking your players in the proper direction:

1. Suddenly you see Teela O'Malley herself run by the open doorway outside. You hear a door open nearby, then close again.
2. The funbot pipes up with, 'Hey ladies and gents, what's a drink without a main dish, right?' *Shloop!* The funbot hits one of the citizens with a cream pie. The citizen wipes away the white stuff and says, 'Uncola-drinking deviant! I'm part of an original crowd! How dare you?' He pulls a laser and aims it at the funbot.

   Now, do you let him blow away that extremely valuable piece of equipment that you signed your life away to protect, or do you wanna stop him?
3. Ooops! The ceiling suddenly started sagging. it looks like it's gonna collapse! Oh oh, a cliffhanger! Maybe you all die, maybe not. We'll find out next week…

   [Use this when the evening is getting long and you're ready for a co-cola yourself.]
4. Remember that the members of the Pepsi Generation, although superficially mellow, are members of a fanatic secret society. That means they could go bonkers at any moment—for any reason:

PC: So, you fine folks know where we can find Teela O'Malley?

Pepsi #1: Teela! I saw her the other night! She played a helpless citizen kidnaped by Commies! *[Glug.]*

Pepsi #2: If only they had *paused*, to be *refreshed*! The magic of co-cola would have changed their ways!

Pepsi #1: What, surely you don't want to give our precious elixir to *Communists*, citizen? *[Gulp-gulp-gulp!]*

Pepsi #2: Do you deny any person the right to find the path to apple trees and honey bees and snow-white turtledoves, you callous revisionist backslider?

Pepsi #1: Commie-symp anarchist non-Pepper! Let's ask these valiant Troubleshooters who's right! Who do you agree with, noble Troubleshooters?

Of course, there is no right answer to this question, and both parties have laser pistols. Take it from there, and be sure the surviving Troubleshooters get chased or led to the next door.

Door #2: I've got a secret

Let's talk for a moment about secret society *meetings*. Some societies don't ever have meetings—Computer Phreaks, Psion and (of course) the Illuminati. Others meet all the time—FCCC-P, Humanists, Romantics—or splinter groups thereof.

The level of paranoia surrounding each meeting varies by society. Communist gatherings are hushed, rushed, and participants keep weapons trained on every doorway. Conversely, members of societies tolerated by The Computer—FCCC-P, Anti-Mutant—enjoy meetings for their 'naughtiness'. Getting caught at one of these is

about as treasonous as reading comics under the covers after bedtime.

In HPD&MC, the tolerance for such goings-on increases to the point that many meetings are held with no security precautions at all—no sentries, no locked doors, no camouflage.

Like this one. Read aloud:

Well, Teela's not here either. But when you open this door you find half a dozen citizens of YELLOW Clearance gathered around a small table. When you enter, they look terrified—but in a moment, they calm down.

Why do they calm down? They see a face they recognize! That's right. This is a meeting of one of the PCs' secret society! Pick some PC at the front of the group, or who needs a challenge to rise to his full potential, or who has annoyed you. Describe the trappings of the meeting according to that PC's secret society.

Look in the 'Secret Society Meetings' box for appropriate descriptions for the societies of each pregenerated character provided with this mission. Follow the read-aloud paragraph above with the appropriate read-aloud paragraph for the secret society of your chosen victim. If you're running *Send in the Clones* using your own PCs (sigh—all our work for nothing), take these descriptions as examples to inspire your own description of other society meetings.

Take a moment to consider your chosen PC victim's options in this situation.

- He can greet his fellow secret society members cordially, introduce other Troubleshooters as friends and try to brazen it through. You probably have an idea how well that will go over with the other PCs.
- He can deny knowing his fellow Troubleshooters, whereupon they open fire on the traitor and his companions.
- He can shoot his fellow Troubleshooters and—should he survive—try to figure out what to say at debriefing.
- He can smile widely and back out of the room, then run like blazes. The secret society members get wise and give chase, firing at the traitor's fellows as well.
- Or he can stand paralyzed by indecision, or sink to his knees blubbering. You won't believe how many PCs pursue this course of action.
- In one session the designers ran back in 1985, the target Troubleshooter inexplicably pulled his laser and called out, 'Internal Security, everybody freeze!' In the decades since, we have never thought of anything worse he could have said.

Regardless, you should have *somebody* start shooting. Then the encounter becomes a fight or a chase—and you can use the options described in the previous encounter to bring the PCs back to the third and final door.

How sad that this moment—this exquisite freeze-frame of one PC caught between his own personal Scylla and Charybdis—cannot be drawn out at length. It is a quintessential Alpha Complex incident. Help your players appreciate, as they drop like flies in the firefight, that this is one of those situations unique to ***PARANOIA***.

Turn this into a combat no matter what approach the PCs take. To be blunt, this encounter exists only to bedevil your players; it makes no contribution to the storyline.

Sure, maybe Pro Tech or Free Enterprise could drop a few clues to the motives behind the Troubleshooters' mission, but why bother? It doesn't help them find Teela; it only gives them a better idea what's happening behind the scenes. Who needs a bunch of smug, savvy players? Let the encounter dissolve in laser fire, and they'll never tumble to its complete lack of motivation.

The PC survivors (or successors) will want to go through the third door. They *will* want to. Or else! Coerce them through Door #3 if necessary (you're an old hand at this by now). They'll thank you, because here they find Teela—eventually.

Society meetings

Program Group (Tammy-Y-BWR or Walt-Y-QGI)

One of them smiles, looks at you and says, 'Oh, it's you. You're late. Our esteemed High Programmer has ordered us to take care of Cleto-B-QRK and his Troubleshooter mission. If The Computer finds out, we'll be argon vapor.'

Another YELLOW points at *[the other Program Group PC]* and says, 'Hey, I recognize that one. Isn't [he/she] from another Program Group?'

Now what?

Free Enterprise (Chuck-O-VKJ)

There's lots of treasonous merchandise around: vidtapes, actual printed *books*, flasks of bubbling brown liquid like you saw before, and lots of things you've *never* seen before. The six YELLOW citizens are passing plasticreds back and forth. On the wall is a banner with a big winged dollar sign.

One citizen smiles, looks at Chuck-O and says, 'Oh, it's you. You're late. Got anything to sell? Who you got there? They interested in anything in particular?'

Now what?

Anti-Mutant (Sam-R-JBS)

One of the citizens smiles, looks at Sam-R, and says, 'Oh, it's you. You're late. We're making plans for genocide in KSA Sector. That lily-circuited Computer has tolerated the mutant menace for too long. Now we'll take matters into our own hands.'

Then he stops, looks carefully at *[another PC]*, and says, 'Hey, isn't that the mutant scum we told you to kill? Why did you bring that subhuman filth to our meeting?'

Now what?

Pro Tech (Elmer-R-DYS)

A big banner on the wall reads 'Better Living Through Technology'. One of the citizens smiles at Elmer-R and says, 'Oh, it's you, Reddy Kilowatt [Elmer-R's code name in Pro Tech]. You're late. We've just broken one of The Computer's encryption schemes and determined the whereabouts of the cloning equipment we sent you to retrieve. It's in the Clone Arrangers lab, down in the sewers.

'Say, who are these other people you've brought with you? What are your Pro Tech code names, citizens?'

Now what?

Sierra Club (Eve-R-SWB)

Lots of banners on the walls have slogans like 'Green is Beautiful' and 'Destroy All Dams' and 'Jacques Cousteau Will Live Forever'. There are treasonous documents all around: Old Reckoning propaganda with titles like *National Geographic, Stalking the Wild Asparagus, Tropical Fish Quarterly, House and Garden*, and *Donald Duck.*

One of the citizens smiles at Eve-R and says, 'Oh, it's you. You're late. We were just about to let loose a mosquito that Herb-Y brought in from the Outdoors. Isn't it great?

'Say, who are these other people you've brought with you?'

Now what?

Door #3: You mean… Teela's *really here?*

Read this aloud:

Well, actually, Teela's not here either. In fact, no one's here. But you can hear Teela's melodious voice coming from a lot of vidscreens on the walls. The screens display views of a huge laboratory—it looks like some sort of biological facility. Teela is singing an extremely odd jingle: 'One clone, two clones, three clones, four; five clones, six clones, seven clones, *more*!'

There are a lot of chairs facing the front of the room, where a giant vidscreen features a continuous teletext display—lines of text that roll upward. Beside the vidscreen is a small closed door.

The door is locked. It wouldn't do for you to let them shoot through the door right at this moment; if they try, go directly to the readaloud section below that starts with 'The small door…'.

If they don't start blasting immediately, they can watch the vidscreen teletext. It displays the Clone Arrangers sales pitch, normally presented to the wealthy and influential high-clearance clients the Rangers cultivate.

This is probably the most important and coherent source of information the PCs encounter in the mission. It can give away as much—or as little—as you like about the Clone Arrangers' origins and doctrines, bootleg clones, the missing cloning equipment, Teela and Cleto-B's positions in the organization, or whatever else you want.

An example pitch:

'Immortality assured through infinite clones!

'For citizens of status and influence in Alpha Complex, the perfect hedge against age, disease and the unfortunate misunderstandings that can bring a swift and surprising end to one's career…

'New, fully formed adult clones, at only a few months' notice!

'For those willing to grasp the opportunity, the Clone Arrangers offer endless clones, guaranteeing your lineage survives troubled times and goes forward to greet our glorious destiny. Clones for yourself or friends—for supervisors or subordinates—for the INDIGO who has everything—easily available without troublesome and time-consuming Technical Services bureaucracy.

'And not just your *own* clones, no.

'A clone of any desired individual can be yours, for your own use or as the perfect gift for that special someone.

'Our introductory offer: clones of beloved entertainer Teela O'Malley, ready for immediate delivery—and at affordable prices.

'Contact Cleto-B-QRK-2 or Hal-Y-OOO-1 for free pamphlet and further details, or talk to our founder, Teela O'Malley herself, after tonight's presentation. No obligation; no Free Enterpriser will call. (This offer made by formal prospectus only.)'

And so on. Give the PCs ample opportunity to mull this over; they should figure out they've hit paydirt. At that point, who should enter but Teela?

When the PCs have finished talking things over or are about to do something significant, read this aloud:

The small door next to the vidscreen opens, and who should enter but your intended victim, the lovely, elusive Teela O'Malley! She sees you and gasps. Just as you spot her, you hear a door opening behind you.

Now. I need to know from each of you whether you're facing *forward* toward Teela, or *backward* toward the door opening behind you. Raise your right hand for forward, left hand for backward.

Ready? Hands up!

Anyone who didn't choose is assumed to be dithering (a cardinal sin in ***PARANOIA***) and spends a round woolgathering. Anyone who raised both hands (tried to face both ways) is showing the right spirit—just roll 1d20 to determine which way he's actually looking when everything gets interesting.

PCs facing *forward* can get off a shot at Teela in the nanosecond before she ducks back through the door. If a shot hits, roll the dice, check some imaginary chart and cluck sympathetically, 'Shucks. No effect.' (Shake your head regretfully.) 'But you shot at point blank range—okay—the door jamb buckles, and it can't be locked.'

(This should get some pretty interesting reactions if anyone is firing something explosive at the door, like a tacnuke, but… Oh well.)

If the PCs don't fire, of course, they just watch their quarry get away without opposition. They can follow but are vulnerable to laser fire from…

…What the *backward*-facing PCs see coming through the door: Cleto-B-QRK and a crowd of VIOLET and INDIGO Clone Arranger customers (six, all armed with laser pistols).

If no PCs are facing backward, they'll all get drilled automatically by the high-clearance mob (call it an automatic Wounded result).

If any Troubleshooters are facing backward, as seems likely, Cleto-B doesn't risk endangering his own BLUE hide and his high-level customers; he'll bluff it out. 'You! Troubleshooters! You're dangerously close to foiling one of the most elaborate covert Internal Security operations of all time. If the traitor Teela escapes, it will go very hard for you at Troubleshooter Headquarters. Pursue her at once! Shoo!'

No, we don't expect all your players to fall for this, but if you deliver it forcefully and angrily, you may create enough doubt in their minds to achieve the desired result—they'll follow Teela. The deck is definitely stacked toward this end, inasmuch as few PCs would desire to stick around and deal with a crowd of people whose security clearances are so high the Troubleshooters can barely recognize the colors.

And if they do stick around, it's their funeral.

Use whatever coercion you feel is appropriate to get the PCs to follow Teela. ('Teela! Teela *baby*, how-are-ya how-are-ya how-are-ya? Am I or am I not your *biggest*, most *devoted* fan? Don't run away, dollink! What's ten feet tall and...') Then Cleto-B and his group follow the PCs to ensure they meet their death at Teela's destination—the Clone Arrangers laboratory.

The big pie fight

It's possible you're tired of sending the PCs into deathtraps, or the players are tired of dying. Now's the time to get them into *real* trouble.

The PCs probably followed Teela from the Clone Arrangers showroom. If they delayed chasing her, or were delayed by a firefight in the showroom, when they pick up the chase again, they discover that Teela has been listening behind the door to see how things were going. She has taken flight again, and is just out of range, but the PCs can just manage to keep up.

If the PCs haven't come from the Clone Arrangers' showroom, presumably you have run Teela across the PCs' trail at some point and gotten them to chase her. In any case, here's where the action picks up.

You follow the fleeing Teela down the chute-like access tube from NBD Sector into (once again) the sewers! She lands gracefully at the bottom of the tube and sprints down a tunnel.

Have the PCs make a Violence/Agility roll—if they succeed, they land on their feet; if they fail, they end up in the sewer flow with a splash. The funbot automatically slips into the muck, and will be unappetizingly soiled for the rest of the mission.

Slogging through the muck, you take off after Teela, who is just far enough ahead to be out of laser range, yet close enough to remain tantalizingly within view.

This part of the sewer looks familiar—this is where you encountered the old Troubleshooter and the kids. You stay in pursuit, and finally see Teela pause

ahead of you, open a metal door and fling herself through it. You hear several bolts sliding home in the door.

Then, silence.

When you reach the door, there is no sound from within. There's a panel of buttons next to the door.

Now what?

In order to make the buttons work, PCs must succeed in a Security Systems roll; the mutant power Mechanical Intuition works too. If the PCs succeed, the door swings open. If they fail, the door doesn't budge. If they simply try pushing on the door, they find (argh) it was open all along.

If the PCs stand around for a while before doing anything, they hear feet sloshing through the mire and Cleto-B's voice (or the voice of a surviving INDIGO compatriot) saying, 'Quick, they're over here. Want your merchandise? Then hurry up! And keep your lasers handy!'

The antechamber

If the PCs burn through, break down or just open the door, read the following:

You find stairs in a tunnel leading down about 20 feet. Teela is just disappearing into a room below at the end of this descending tunnel.

Sooner or later the PCs head down these stairs, either on their own or because Cleto-B and his buddies are right behind them.

As you reach the bottom of the stairs, you see a small room and Teela, fumbling with another panel of buttons. As you enter the small room, a big, *big* door swings slowly open behind her. Beyond the doorway you see a railing, and beyond the railing, a big, *big* laboratory.

This antechamber is filled with Clone Arrangers' promotional material—pamphlets featuring the image of Teela O'Malley, videos featuring Teela O'Malley and audio announcements extolling the virtues of the Clone Arrangers' revolutionary cloning system ('As new as tomorrow, yet available today…').

Let this sink in—especially if the PCs managed to avoid the third room in the last encounter. Once they realize the enormity of their discovery, read the following aloud:

Teela turns toward you, and a shudder passes through her as she realizes her days—nay, her seconds—are numbered. Then she smiles, just a little.

'Why, it's you, my valiant band of Troubleshooters. I was so deathly afraid… but I know you'll protect me from that terrible Cleto-B and his evil minions.'

Suddenly, you start to feel a little—odd. Like the room is moving. You can hear Teela talking ('I know you'll help me… I know you'll help me… I know you'll…'), but it sounds as if she's far away and underwater.

Teela is using her power to Cloud Men's Minds in an attempt to save her skin. On this page we give you two notes you should now hand to the players. You'll need three copies of each note.

Who gets which note? Tell everybody to make Management/Moxie rolls. The first three players who succeed in the roll get note #2; the rest, and those who fail, get note #1. Note #1 tells the player his character's mind is clouded, and he is irrationally compelled to aid Teela. Note #2 tells the player he felt funny for a second, but the feeling has passed and some of the other PCs are acting strangely.

You have divided the Troubleshooters into two opposed parties with opposite objectives—as though the players needed any further motivation to shoot at each other.

After you hand the players the notes, all hell breaks loose in this antechamber. Let's see if we can keep this straight:

1. First, Cleto-B and his modest horde of three VIOLETs and three INDIGOs burst into the room, lasers blazing at anything that moves.
2. Next, the PCs must decide who they're blasting—each other, Teela or Cleto-B.
3. Immediately after this, Teela leaps through the open doorway into the laboratory shouting, 'You'll never take me alive, coppers!'

We'll return to *Send in the Clones* after this:

This seems as good a time as any to interrupt our narrative for this important word about Teela's big death scene. (It's coming up any second now.) Teela's a star, and she plans to go out in style. No puff of smoke and… gone. She's got a speech all ready—an homage, if you will, to every treasonous Old Reckoning vidprogram she's ever seen. She hasn't seen many, but that's not going to stop her from giving it a good shot.

As soon as she is hit by sufficient laser fire to drop a bull elephant, Teela falls to her knees and cries:

'Computer of Mercy, is this the end of Teela? I ain't so tough! Top o' the Complex, Computer… top o' the Complex.

[Gasp!] **'One wants to stay alive, of course, but one only stays alive by virtue of the fear of death. But I am not afraid. It is a far, far better rest I go to than I have ever known. And so, alas, I am done!'** *[Sob!]* **'Remember: the Force will be with you—'** *[Wheeze!]* **'—always.'**

We're proud of this moving speech, so make sure the PCs have ample opportunities to riddle Teela with laser fire so it gets used. Have her pitch from side to side, clutching her wounds, moaning a phrase or two with each shot. Thank you.

Anyway, with those last words, Teela falls deader than a Troubleshooter.

Forensics note: The disposition of Teela's body is crucially important in the debriefing. The PCs need proof they have fulfilled their mission and terminated Teela. (They may regret having preserved the evidence, but more on that later.)

Normally it wouldn't be a big deal to keep track of a body. Normally…

But to cap this big action scene you will shortly flood the Clone Arrangers lab with the mighty currents of the Alpha Complex sewer system. This will make it tough to keep track of a body, not to mention stay alive while doing so. So pay attention to the body, even if your players don't.

We just thought you'd like to know.

Note 1

Your mind has been clouded—you don't know how or by whom. All you know is, **you want to help Teela.** You want *nothing in life* but to help Teela. Right now that means doing one of three things (your choice):

1. Turn against your erstwhile companions and blast them.
2. Stand back and watch Cleto-B and his buddies blast your fellow Troubleshooters. (Don't worry, they'll be arriving any second.)
3. Follow Teela through the open door behind her—ooh, ooh, there she goes!

Now what?

Note 2

For a moment you felt a little queasy, but now the feeling has passed.

1. You notice some of your fellow Troubleshooters look a little strange. They seem to be staring moonily at Teela.
2. You hear many footsteps behind you, the sound of a crowd rapidly approaching.
3. Teela seems ready to bolt through the door behind her—there she goes!

Now what?

Oh, by the way, don't worry about Teela. You're not actually killing her off. Where there's a clone, there's a way.

And now, on with the show…

The PCs have a decision to make. Cleto-B and his band of INDIGOs and VIOLETs—all carrying lasers of appropriate security clearance—charge into the fray, shouting, 'Traitors! Commies! Mutants! Free market suppressors!' and other appropriate epithets. Teela is leaping through the door into the lab.

The only way out for the PCs is through the door, over the railing and down after Teela. How far down? The PCs can't tell. Actually, it's only a drop of a meter and a half (five feet). If Teela is still alive when she hits the floor, she runs off amongst the lab apparatus, providing a fine target for concerted laser fire.

If the PCs seem reluctant to enter the lab, the funbot can grab a PC by the shoulder and drag him or her through the door. ('Hey, tough audience or what? Let's get out there and mingle!')

It's the Real Thing

The PCs are now in the Clone Arrangers lab:

You're in a room hundreds of meters long. This is the laboratory described in the treasonous promotional literature outside as a state-of-the-art cloning facility capable of turning out fully-grown clones in months or even days.

There's a funny ozone smell in the air. Your hair stands on end. Conveyor belts carry bubbling pie-tins of protoplasm and big two-liter unbreakable bottles of co-cola toward huge molds. The gooey, slimey stuff and the bubbling brown liquid pour into the human-shaped molds.

Large pincers pick up each overflowing mold, shake it well and carry it to a huge open-topped freezer tank. As each mold drops into the tank, a bolt of lightning leaps from a pair of enormous electrodes, and the tank and the air around it glow for a second.

Then another set of pincers picks up the mold from the freezer tank, whacks it against the wall of the tank and shatters the mold. This leaves a hunk of human-shaped, quivering stuff the consistency of jello. This semi-gelatinous, quasi-organic protoclone flops onto another conveyor belt leading to a holding tank. There are many holding tanks, and each contains a clone in various stages of completion.

All the wonderful pseudo-scientific wizardry occurs in these holding tanks over a period of several days to a few months, depending on the clone. A sense of decency and respect for science force us to rush hurriedly past the preposterous processes implied by this hokey lab.

Here is a perfect place for a little creative improvisation on your part. The lab is filled with devices you can turn to your own perverse ends. The huge pincers could grab a PC instead of a protoclone. The Troubleshooters might swing from them like circus acrobats. Conveyor belts can swiftly transport PCs from one trouble spot to another. And who knows what happens if a PC drops into the freezer tank, or into one of the protoplasm-and-co-cola-filled molds?

We're confident you'll think of something.

Electrical effects: The air in the lab is charged with electricity. Anybody holding anything metal can be zapped by pseudo-lightning bolts that leap from the giant electrodes (S4W energy). Of course, everyone in Alpha Complex carries things made of metal.

Static electricity causes everyone's hair to stand on end for the rest of the scene. No electrical device works properly here. Anything electrical malfunctions the moment it is turned on. Then a lightning bolt hits it.

This is particularly entertaining when the first PC thinks to call in an airstrike to eradicate this illicit cloning operation. (Click. 'Troubleshooter Chuck-O-VKJ calling for—!' PDC squeals, buzzes, rattles, falls silent, and a plume of smoke rises. Then… BBBZZZZORRCH! SISSS!—a smoking boot…)

You've had a chance to look around briefly. Now you hear Cleto-B and his minions—customers of the Clone Arrangers secret society—pressing their attack.

But wait!

From all sides you hear the pounding of running feet. Lots of them. Then you see a horrifying sight—Teela clones, in all sizes, shapes, numbers of limbs and states of completion. Dozens—no, hundreds of them!

Is the funbot still with the PCs? We just remembered it depends on electronic circuitry:

Just when you thought things couldn't get any worse, the funbot goes berserk (yes, again!)—letting loose its laughing gas, hurling cream pies and shouting,

That Teela, always cloning around.

'How-are-ya! Pies! How-are-ya! Pies! How-are-ya! Pies!' It launches itself toward the conveyor belts, toppling pie-tins and co-cola bottles, flipping globs of protoplasm and fountains of pop.

If the funbot isn't around, the petbot goes berserk instead. Have *something* go berserk—the PCs don't have nearly enough to worry about yet.

You're surrounded by citizens of the higher end of the spectrum, berserk bots, mutated Teelas and The Computer only knows what else.

Suddenly the doorway fills with a charging throng of citizens waving lasers and screaming. No, it's not... but it is! Yes, it's the Pepsi Generation! They're screaming death threats and horrible oaths—'Give us co- cola or give us death!' 'We're the Pepsi Generation, comin' at ya, goin' strong!' 'Death to the Uncola!' They want the co-cola in this lab, and they'll stop at nothing to get it.

Now what?

A scholarly survey of the tactical options

Here are some hints on how to stage this gala free-for-all:

First, you probably won't keep this up for more than four or five combat rounds. The PCs have plenty to do, no doubt, but the walls will cave in any minute, and the lab will flood with sewer water. That will end the conventional firefight part of the climactic ending, whereupon the PCs must deal with a more unusual life-threatening challenge.

Now. What are the PCs likely to do? And what do you do to bedevil them?

One good PC tactic is to hide. Once the PCs are in the lab, they have plenty of opportunities to crawl under conveyor belts or squeeze in between tall vats of protogoo. From a relatively safe vantage point a PC can sit and take potshots at targets of opportunity.

You can tolerate this cleverness, or you can persecute the PC by sending INDIGOs or Pepsis after him. Squads of multi-armed Teelas can saunter over and cloud his mind. And so on.

A classic routine in this sort of slugfest is to stand toe-to-toe with the opponents and shoot it out. Here it's pretty much the luck of the die. You'll be studying the combat charts and plugging away at the PC as he plugs away at your NPCs. This PC is obviously trying to rack up a good Commie traitor body count for the debriefing, so give him a chance. And if he goes down fighting, well, drink a round of vatslime for him at the end of the session.

If a PC wants to get fancy about this firefight, looking for fine tactical maneuvering and advantages, okay. If he is creative and entertaining, indulge him. If he is boring and analytical, make sure his opponents are tactical geniuses—taking perfect advantage of superior numbers, superior firepower and superior organization—veteran fireteams that take no chances, no prisoners and make no mistakes. Better yet, have the petbot bite his ankle.

A shrewd PC may try to join the opposition. Short of mutant power assistance, no soap. All the attackers here shoot first and ask questions—well, maybe next week.

Maybe a PC wants to play dead, or surrender, or in some other way take himself out of the confusion. Indulge him. When the water starts pouring in, this ceases to be a viable solution, but you can give him a few moments of peace and repose.

PCs may express an intense desire to escape this madness. Too bad. The exit is clogged with off-brand Teelas, berserk bots or raving Pepsi Generators. But this is the right spirit. And when the room begins to flood, it will be a good idea—in fact, the *only* good idea.

The mirrors! Don't forget!

Oh, yeah! We almost forgot the mirrors. You know—the crate of Teela O'Malley souvenir pocket mirrors the PCs got from the PLC clerk back in the PLC Runaround. These mirrors have a magical effect on Teela clones. Just hand one to a Teela and she'll immediately stop everything, gazing carefully into the mirror, primping and fussing with her hair, checking her eye liner and complexion.

Big deal, huh? Well, maybe it's not Excalibur or The One Ring or something of that stature, but in ***PARANOIA***, when something you are issued actually *works*, it is sort of a special occasion.

Let them break open a couple of cases of co-cola and celebrate if they like.

Just add water and… poof!

After four or five rounds of epic confusion in the Clone Arrangers' lab, lots of things have been broken, lasered, abused and squirted on. Now it's time for a dramatic twist.

Normally, a battle to the death between the Forces of Good and Evil is a necessary climax to a good roleplaying adventure. However, because the concepts of Good and Evil are of dubious import in the context of ***PARANOIA***, it is better that an Act of God interrupt this Final Conflict, leaving it unresolved… and therefore full of potential for intentional loose ends, escaping villains and sequels.

So how about a flood? It worked with Noah.

Setting up the dam burst

In the confusion, some accident ruptures a wall of the lab, letting sewer water rush in. However, you want to set this up so it seems to be a result of some action a PC takes. (Otherwise this is just another iteration of 'Oops, the ceiling collapsed.')

Here are a few suggestions. Remember, the opportunity doesn't have to come in the last round. Something that happens in the very first round could slowly unfold in a series of linked accidents that results in the desired destruction of a wall.

1. **Weapons fire:** A perfect device. The effect can be direct (the shot hits the wall, plaster shatters and a thin stream of water appears) or indirect (the shot hits a tank, which then explodes, or a scrubot, which then goes berserk, rams into a column supporting the ceiling, which topples into a great vat, which explodes, cracking the wall behind it, producing a thin stream of water).
2. **The funbot:** Sure, the funbot isn't really under the PCs' control, but they're responsible for its actions, which is just as good. Even better, have the funbot request permission to do something awful. We know it will do whatever it wants, but making the PC respond in some way makes him think there must have been *something* he could have done to stop it. Further, let the funbot act slowly enough that the PCs get the idea they might stop it if they hurry or do something drastic.

   For example, the funbot asks, 'Say, what a crowd! Hey, chief, suppose I go up there on top of that big vat—the one bristling with fragile-looking pipes, valves and instruments—and entertain the troops?' And the only way to the top is a spindly ladder, and the funbot must drag his massive bulk up, gripper over gripper, his little treads spinning and whining, searching for traction.
3. **Fooling with the machinery:** This can work directly (for example, a character punches buttons that look like a security door lock, but that really activate a doomsday device) or indirectly.

   For example, a PC hiding under a conveyor is being pulled out by a squad of scrubots. He hangs on, and accidentally grabs a lever that stops a section of the conveyor belt. Nothing happens immediately, but in a round or two something bounces off onto the floor, when it meets the stopped section of conveyor belt. This object bounces under the tread of the funbot, which squeals and cartwheels like a comedian slipping on a banana peel. Crash! the funbot slams into a control panel... and so on.

For 40 days and 40 nights…

Once you've set things in motion, you're ready for the dramatic flood scene. For color and detail, keep in mind all those great Hollywood scenes of dams breaking in monster movies.

Suddenly the lab goes quiet. Everyone turns to watch a narrow jet of water spraying from a widening crack in the wall. The crack seems to be getting larger… Bits of concrete are crumbling away…

And then, all at once, the wall shatters! Like a waterfall, a torrent of sewer water erupt into the lab, tossing machinery, bots and people around like tub toys. In an instant, the floor is awash. The waters are rising rapidly. Currents swirl around first your knees, then your waist.

Some machines carry on, oblivious of the rising tide—pincers grapple objects from the foaming streams, submerged conveyor belts still carry half-submerged clone molds through the crashing surf. Other, more delicate equipment shorts out and sparks like lightning.

And the citizens, standing knee-deep in the flood, scan the room for exits, but realize there is only one—the door you entered through. That door is, even as you watch, slowly and ponderously drawing closed, as impassive and final as the white-pearled gates of the termination center.

Now what?

Here the players must improvise clever solutions to the problem. Shooting and threats won't work—you've taken away everyone's weapons (shorted them with static electricity and the rising flood) and substituted a swimming lesson for a shootout.

This problem can be broken down into several stages:

Looking for other exits: Nope. Not unless they blast one, which results in a second cataract. Nice work.

Trying to open the one door: Nope. Profoundly locked and remarkably resistant to damage from knives and clubs, which are about the most sophisticated kind of weapons still working in the lightning and flood conditions.

Staying afloat: Very important. May be achieved by learning how to swim (bad idea) or by learning how to hang onto stuff that floats (much easier).

Getting out alive: The final exam. The only way out is through the big hole in the wall, and they must wait until the flow into the lab has stopped. This is just before the lab fills completely to the ceiling. That means the PCs must make their way out the hole while completely underwater.

On staying afloat

You can make this simple: Just let grabbable things float in front of the PCs. Or you can make them scrounge around for suitable objects as the water rises above their necks: plastic cargo containers, empty vats, lightweight foam plastic partitions and furniture, ice (from the freezing vats) and clone molds.

You can complicate the floating problem by arranging for other citizens—Clone Arrangers, Pepsi Generators, Cleto-B-QRK-2 and oodles of Teela clones—to successfully solve it first. PCs have to battle the other citizens—or each other—over the last unclaimed buoyant objects. Fanatics like the Pepsi Generators may carry on their feud even while paddling in the water.

One more serious challenge for the PCs is the problem of retrieving valuable objects and keeping them afloat—for example, Teela O'Malley's laser-riddled body, or—gasp—the funbot. Don't make it easy, but indulge this dedicated effort as much as you can—encourage the PCs to improvise, and give them the benefit of the doubt.

On getting out alive

When the floating PCs' heads are bouncing against the ceiling, tell them the flow into the room has stopped.

Maybe the characters get the idea. It isn't so difficult—they need only hold their breaths for two rounds to get through the hole and into the treatment reservoir on the other side of the wall. They may rig safety lines from power cords, or try to hold air in their gasmasks, or improvise diving bells from empty protoslime vats, or try any of a million harebrained schemes. Go ahead. Cut them a break. You can always kill them in the debriefing.

If they don't get the idea to go through the hole, show them how. Let Cleto-B or a Teela clone float toward the hole and visibly, purposefully push him- or herself under water in its vicinity.

Beyond the wall

When the PCs leave the lab, they emerge on the other side of the wall in a vast underground treatment reservoir. A railed walkway runs around the rim, but because the water level has fallen as the reservoir drained into the lab, the walkway is now two meters (six feet) above the water level, and the sides of the reservoir wall are wet, steep and slippery.

Let the PCs improvise a way out of the mess or wait until IntSec and officials from the Water Recycling Subdivision show up to investigate the mysterious sudden drop in water pressure. IntSec troopers are of course glad to assist the Troubleshooters into the heavily-guarded transbot that waits to transport them to Troubleshooter Headquarters and their debriefing.

Nothing fails like success

If you've gotten this far, at least some PCs managed to survive all the deathtraps we provided. But celebrations may be premature.

See, the multicorder (and/or the petbot with its built-in multicorder) recorded the entire episode. If the PCs slipped up anywhere, engaging in anything even vaguely treasonous, the debriefing is the time to air dirty laundry.

Treasonous activity you could bring out in the debriefing includes partaking of co-cola, purchasing tongue covers (or anything else) from Hal-Y-OOO-4 through 6, damaging valuable Computer property, uttering treasonous statements on *Date With Death* or attending secret society meetings. Even if your PCs committed no treasonous acts, they're taken to task for *succeeding* in their mission—but we'll get to that in a minute.

Life is just a bowl of Commie mutant traitor cherries

When the PCs arrive (under IntSec trooper escort) at Troubleshooter Headquarters, they are sent immediately to a debriefing room. They can bring any evidence: exhibits, prisoners or witnesses they may have in tow. Because they have come fresh from the sewers, they drip on the carpet, smell bad and generally present an appearance unbecoming a Troubleshooter.

When you are hustled into the briefing room, Cleto-B-QRK-3 sits waiting behind a large desk, flanked by his flunkies Sonny-Y-TLS and Dewey-Y-JLK. 'Oh, it's you. About time. I've been waiting for your report.'

He gestures to a row of chairs in front of his desk, then notices your current poor hygiene. He wrinkles his nose, then says, 'Well, perhaps you'd better stand. Now, I am Cleto-B-QRK-3. Cleto-B-QRK-2 has been reassigned. Give me your multicorder and fill out these Mission Report Forms immediately. Quickly, now, I haven't got all day!'

If the multicorder didn't survive, Cleto-B asks for the petbot. If that didn't survive, the PCs can give their own account of the mission—that is, lie and backstab to their heart's content without fear of contradictory evidence.

Cleto-B waits for the Troubleshooters to fill out the complicated Mission Report Forms. If you like, actually have them fill out copies of the form in the ***PARANOIA*** *Gamemaster Screen* insert booklet. These forms provide a lovely opportunity for creative and anonymous backstabbing and misrepresentation.

After they've all put down their pens, read the following aloud:

When you've filled out the forms and turned over the multicorder *[or petbot]*, **Cleto says, 'Fine. Good. Now, before I examine these, I would like oral reports.**

'You, *[he says, pointing at the team leader]* **report! What was your mission? Were you successful? How did the other members of your team perform? Did you notice any strange behavior on their parts? Speak up! Quickly now!'**

He asks the same questions of each PC in turn, bang-bang-bang. No time for thought or diplomacy. Just the facts, ma'am.

After this brief but harrowing exchange, Cleto-B leaves the room, taking the multicorder *[or petbot]* **and all the mission reports with him. The YELLOW flunkies stay with you.**

A few minutes later, he returns looking extremely grim.

You… *killed*… Teela O'Malley?

The reason for his grim visage varies according to the oral reports, the written mission reports, the mission recordings from the multicorder or petbot, the phase of the moon and whether or not it is a leap year.

It all depends:

If they didn't kill a single Teela

If the multicorder reveals that the PCs failed to kill any Teelas at all, read the following:

Cleto-B looks at you as if you were the lowest of the low. it's almost as though he can peer into your heart and see you for the Commie mutant traitor (and secret society member, yes?) you really are.

He composes himself, then begins reluctantly, disgust evident in his tone.

'You've failed miserably—delayed reports… Teela O'Malley loose… Computer property destroyed… disgraceful!'

(This last is a guess. We're betting the PCs destroyed *something* during the course of the mission.)

'But your friend The Computer recognizes your inherent worth as citizens of Alpha Complex. You have all been given the rare opportunity to serve The Computer in the Waste Recycling Subdivision. This temporary reassignment is hereby made officially permanent. Congratulations, Effluent Engineers, and best wishes in your new positions.'

Guardbots clatter into the debriefing room and escort you to your new assignments. As you travel along the halls to the familiar elevator, you hear over the loudspeakers the swelling strains of 'I'm an Alpha Complex Dandy.'

Fade to black.

If the PCs terminated one or more Teelas

If the multicorder reveals that the PCs killed one or more Teela clones in the Clone Arrangers' lab, they experience a positively Cirwellian episode—the PCs, who have done nothing more than fulfill the goals of their mission, are indicted for vaporizing Teela, a valued friend and servant of The Computer:

Cleto-B looks at you as if you were the lowest of the low. It's almost as though he can peer into your heart and see you for the Commie mutant traitor you really are.

He can barely stand to look at you. A tear rolls down his cheek as he murmurs to himself, 'Teela… can you really be gone?'

Then he gets control of himself, and he screams at you, 'How could you? How could you kill the darling of every loyal citizen of Alpha Complex? How could you…!' And he breaks down again.

After a few moments of uncontrollable sobbing, he pulls himself together again and continues:

'But The Computer, in its infinite and inscrutable wisdom, is nothing if not compassionate and lenient. So, despite your heinous crime against humanity and Alpha Complex, you will only be immediately and mercifully terminated.'

Squadrons of guardbots carry you to your final resting place, the pearly gates of the termination center. The theme, 'Send in the Clones', rises softly in the background, swelling as the gates close behind you.

Fade to black.

If at any point in the proceedings the righteous PCs produce their authentic termination voucher and display it to Cleto-B-QRK-3, Cleto takes it, examines it, leaves the room (without his YELLOW flunkies), and returns after a few moments without the voucher. He begins the debriefing process over again, as though the characters had just returned from their mission, and as though he had never seen them before. The two YELLOWs with Cleto-B swear by The Computer they've never *heard* of any termination voucher, much less seen one—and the PCs are hosed again. Continue with the debriefing where you left off.

If you're just an old softie

If you don't care for downbeat endings (and they don't come much more downbeat than in ***PARANOIA***), here's a happier ending for you to read to your players:

You wait in the debriefing room for hours, afraid to move, wondering where Cleto-B could be. What terrible mistake did you make? What deadly *faux pas* did the multicorder replay? Which of your teammates turned you in for a fleeting moment of personal glory?

Finally, Cleto-B returns, a look of shocked amazement on his face. He says, 'Wonderful! Simply wonderful! You did everything The Computer expected of you and more!

'Already the vidtapes of your exploits have been seen by the entire citizenry of Alpha Complex. You're heroes! But, even more important, the ratings for your vidprogram were the highest in Complex history! You're stars!

'The Computer has reassigned you to HPD&MC where your special talents can be fully exploited—there to serve happily all the rest of your days, Computer willing. You've been scheduled for some of Alpha Complex's biggest vidscreen hits—*Truth Serum*! *Vulture Squadron*! *Wide Complex of Sports*!'

This may be a good time to tell the PCs that the average life expectancy of those who appear on *Truth Serum* is one appearance; ditto for *Vulture Squadron*; ditto for *Wide Complex of Sports*. Indeed the Troubleshooters will serve for the rest of their days, though they may not have many.

NPC roster

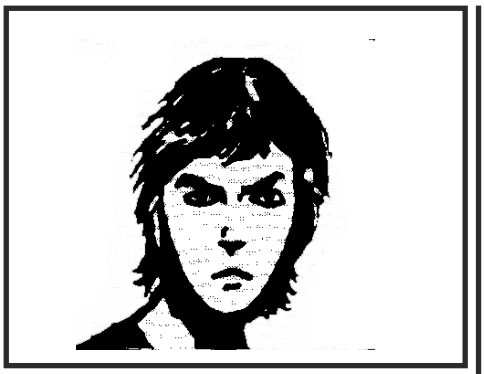
Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Roleplaying notes
Cleto-B-QRK-2	Unarmed Combat 04, Energy Weapons 06	Laser pistol* (W3K energy)	GM fiat	No nonsense, no questions, no answers.
Dewey-Y-JLK, Sonny-Y-TLS	Unarmed Combat 10, Energy Weapons 12	Laser pistol* (W3K energy)	Reflec*	Big, silent louts; Cleto-B's bodyguards
Zhon-B-VLJ	Unarmed Combat 12, Energy Weapons 14	Laser rifle* (W3K energy)	BLUE (brown) reflec	Down in the sewers too long; filthy; chatty, incoherent, batty as a bedbug
Computer Phreak kids	Every Violence specialty 02	INDIGO lasers, cone rifles, tanglers, gauss guns, etc.	INDIGO reflec	Cute little Junior Citizens ages 8-13; playfully, mischievously homicidal
Teela-O-MLY (Teela O'Malley)	Unarmed Combat 03	—	GM fiat	Lovely, adorable, sweet; Alpha Complex darling
Generic PLC lackwits (ORANGE, YELLOW)	Unarmed Combat 01	—	—	
R&D staffers (BLUE)	Unarmed Combat 01	—	Reflec*	
Hal-Y-OOO-(1-6)	Unarmed Combat 01	—	—	
Morrie-G-III	Unarmed Combat 01	—	—	
Don-Y-YYY	Unarmed Combat 01	—	—	
Ozzie-R-DFP	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol* (W3K energy)	Reflec*	Wimpy pencil-necked Armed Forces desk clerk
Vulture Squadron gorillas (GREEN)	Unarmed Combat 16, Energy Weapons 14	Laser pistols* (W3K energy), probably heavy-duty stuff too (slugthrowers, cone rifles, etc.)	Reflec*	Hulking soldiers; long on muscle, way short on brains
Pepsi Generation (various)	Unarmed Combat 08, Energy Weapons 06	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	—	Generic horde of secret-society traitors
Secret society traitors (YELLOW)	Unarmed Combat 08, Energy Weapons 06	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	—	More generic traitors, members of one or another PC's secret society
VIOLETs and INDIGOs	Unarmed Combat 05, Energy Weapons 05	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	Reflec*	Hostile Clone Arranger customers, out to stop Troubleshooters from shooting their particular trouble
Teela clones	—	Laser pistol (W3K energy)	—	Mutant monsters fresh from the vats; innocent, narcissistic

* Lasers and reflec marked with an asterisk are in the color of their owner's security clearance.

Bot roster

Type	No.	Size	Speed	Weapons	Special equipment & abilities	Armor
Guardbots	6	Water cooler	Wheels (walk/run)	BLUE laser rifle, skill 16 Blaster, skill 16	Two multipurpose arms with manipulator grips; small brain; narrow, literal programming	4
Large guardbot	1	Refrigerator	Wheels (walk/run)	VIOLET laser rifle, skill 18 Blaster, skill 16	Two arms, like guardbots; medium brain (either vicious and aggressive, or vicious, aggressive and defective); narrow, literal programming	4
Gatorbot	1	Alligator	Legs (walk/run/swim)	Big nasty metal teeth (treat as knife), skill 08	Swims fast; small brain; reptile programming	3
Captain Botaroo	1	Jolly avuncular TV host	Wheels (walk/run)	BLUE laser rifle, skill 10 Cattle prod (stuns), skill 10 Mini-concussion grenades, skill 10	Multipurpose arms and manipulators; medium brain; broad programming, but obsessed w/interrogating and educating young traitors	2
Funbot	1, thank god	Jolly little person	Wheels (walk/sprint)	Laughing gas, skill 20 Cream pies, skill 18	Two specialized arms (gas jet/pie launcher); medium brain; specialized programming (defective humor software emulates lame night-club comic)	2
Petbot	1	Poodle	Legs (walk/run/gallop)	None	Four specialized arms with hand-like manipulators; tiny brain; narrow, literal programming (software for pet behavior, snooper surveillance, docbot)	2
Refbots	3	Human	Wheels (sprint)	INDIGO laser rifle, skill 14	Two multipurpose arms and manipulators; make obscure and unfair judgments like all referees; small brain (defective); narrow, literal programming	4
Combots	4	Stove	Treads (walk)	Needleguns (2), skill 18 Stunguns (2), skill 18	Mini-tanks; one turret with needleguns, one turret with stunguns; small brain; narrow, literal programming	4
Securitybots	many	HDTV	Suspension cables (reel fast, *zzzzzizzz!)*	Hand flamers (2), skill 15 Slugthrowers (2) (HE ammo), skill 15	Boxy; two turrets on each side, one with hand flamer and one with slugthrower; suspended from ceiling on coiled steel cables; small brain; narrow programming	4

Send in the Clones PC #1



Tammy-Y-BWR-2

Female CPU Team Leader

Service firm: FoodForms CPU
Service firm type: Form Facilitators
Security clearance: YELLOW
Credits: 220
Tics: Makes up cuss words.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Tammy-Y: Hey, snozz-for-brains! Where's that form I told you to fill out?
Elmer-R: Uh, what?
Tammy-Y: Don't frob around with me, you little snotmonkey! Get me that manga-frangin' form right now, or there's gonna be a whippin'!

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 08
Bootlicking 01
Intimidation 12
Moxie 01
Oratory 12

Stealth 04
Filch Office Supplies 10
High Alert 01
Security Systems 08

Violence 07
Energy Weapons 11
Pummel Lower-Clearance Citizens With Neurowhip 13

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

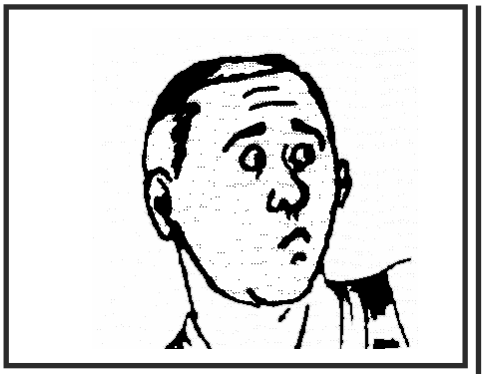
Hardware 07
Bot Ops and Maintenance 11
Chemical Engineering 01
Repair Apartment Scrubot 13

Software 05
Financial Systems 13
Scrubot Programming 11
Vehicle Programming 01

Wetware 05
Psychotherapy 09
Suggestion 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Management, Wetware)

Send in the Clones PC #2



Walt-Y-QGI-2

Male Power Services Loyalty Officer

Service firm: Flux Fortifiers
Service firm type: Power Oscillation Professionals
Security clearance: YELLOW
Credits: 200
Tics: Relentlessly cheerful and optimistic.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Walt-Y: Ooh, wow, are those Vulture Warriors aiming at us?
Eve-R: Looks like it, sir! Umm, should we—?
Walt-Y: And they even have plasma generators! I've always wanted to see one in action!
Eve-R: I'm sure that's true, sir. Is it time to—?
Walt-Y: This will be such a learning experience!

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 07
Cheer Up Depressed Citizens 13
Chutzpah 11
Con Games 11
Interrogation 01
Intimidation 01

Stealth 08
Hit Button On Control Panel Without Anyone Noticing 14

Violence 05
Agility 01
Energy Weapons 09
Field Weapons 09

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 08
Mechanical Engineering 08
Nuclear Engineering 08
Orbital Nuclear Space Platforms 16
Weapon and Armor Maintenance 01

Software 06
Bot Programming 13
C-Bay 01
Data Search 01
Operating Systems 13

Wetware 07
Recognize Symptoms of Radiation Poisoning 13

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Violence, Software)

Send in the Clones PC #3

Chuck-O-VKJ-1

Male Armed Forces Communications & Recording Officer

Armed Forces unit: Vulture Squadron Echo 6 (disbanded)
Armed Forces unit type: Vulture Squadron Commandoes
Security clearance: ORANGE
Credits: 300
Tics: Estimates values of objects aloud.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Walt-Y: Let's take out that guardbot now, people!
Chuck-O: Yes sir! *[takes aim]* Nice bot—probably worth about 9,000cr.
Eve-R: Aah! I'm hit!
Chuck-O: Ooh, *that's* gonna cost ya…

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 07
Con Games 11
Hygiene 01

Stealth 07
High Alert 11
Lurk In Ambush While Wearing Camouflage Paint 13
Shadowing 01

Violence 05
Energy Weapons 09
Fine Manipulation 01
Throw 50-Pound Rock 14
Thrown Weapons 09
Vehicular Combat 09

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 09
Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 10
Weapon and Armor Maintenance 10

Software 10
Assess Value of Warbot Mem Chips 11

Wetware 07
Bioweapons 09
Estimate Time Until Injured Citizen Dies 11
Psychotherapy 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Management, Hardware)

Chuck-O-VKJ-1

Male Armed Forces Communications & Recording Officer

Mutation: Precognition
Society: Free Enterprise (degree 3)
Secret Skills: Haggling 12, Action Movies 12, Twitchtalk 08
Background: You heard the little voice saying, 'Don't eat at evening mess'. That was enough for you—you follow your supraconscious mind's directives as obediently as those of your Armed Forces superiors or The Computer. More so, even, since your supraconscious is right more often.

And so you didn't drink the MemWipe that turned the rest of your company into 150-pound infants. You breathed a relieved sigh—but about halfway through it you were hauled in by Internal Security. What provoked suspicion was not your narrow escape, but that you sold your meal to the clone next to you. But hey, you were just trying to make an honest credit!

You could have told IntSec your fellow Troubleshooter, Walt-Y-QGI, was the real operator who put the brain-erase into the food, but then, they would have wanted to know your sources. Besides, before you turn Walt-Y in, you ought to see if he's willing to pay a fair price for a useful commodity—silence.

Now your little voice is giving you warning signs about those two inconspicuous REDs, Eve-R-SWB and Elmer-R-DYS; they'll be trouble. The air of IntSec reeks from their every pore.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

We've pulled some strings to get you on this mission into NBD Sector. Once you arrive, try to establish contact with Hal-Y-OOO in HPD&MC. He's a prominent Free Enterpriser; do what he says, and aid him in any way you can. Your password is 'The show I like is *My Favorite Computer.*' He will respond with the countersign, 'Yes, that's one of our most popular shows.' Try to arrange a few transactions; if anything in NBD Sector looks commercial, bring back a sample.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT:

Gas mask
Knife
Flashlight
Datapad and stylus
Prefabricated official artificial rock (30kg)
(2) ORANGE laser barrels
BLUE laser barrel
Jumpsuit
ORANGE canvas backpack
Utility belt

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT:

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
ORANGE reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Walt-Y-QGI-2

Male Power Services Loyalty Officer

Mutation: Mental Block
Society: Programs Group (degree 3)
Secret skills: Power Studies 05, Singing 12, Hacking 13
Background: Before your old Power Services buddy turned traitor and became an officially unofficial unperson, he taught you that dandy stunt of selective power shutdown that made your humdrum work so interesting. Switch off a couple of conveyor belts in PLC for a minute apiece, and suddenly—ooh you loved this!—20 Armed Forces squadrons end up with MemWipe in their evening cycle meals! Not everyone could have exploited the opportunity you got—but that's the kind of carefree, fun-loving guy you are.

True, your enthusiasm is a little dampened here among other Troubleshooters. You've already felt little tingles at the edge of your consciousness—as if someone was trying to rifle your brain like a filing cabinet. But you clamped down, threw out the psychic intruder, and now you're nearly sure the intruder was a filthy mutant telepath. That Sam-R-JBS looks like the culprit, or the ORANGE with the greedy look, Chuck-O-VKJ.

Well, so someone finds your little role in rendering eighteen hundred soldiers like unto freshly decanted babes: You've got a fall guy set up already. Some of your secret society buddies found out it was fellow Troubleshooter Elmer-R-DYS who mistakenly put the MemWipe drug on the conveyor belt to begin with. Maybe you could have fun toying with his mind.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

This whole mission looks like a covert action by Cleto-B-QRK, a prominent BLUE in a rival Programs Group. It's probably impolitic to off Cleto-B himself (though initiative is always admired)—but make sure the mission backfires in his face. Do whatever is necessary to confuse, obstruct and otherwise discombobulate your fellow Troubleshooters. That other YELLOW, Tammy-Y-BWR, is in Cleto-B's Programs Group; be a good scout and vaporize her at your convenience.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Gas mask
Flashlight
Pair of infrared goggles
Datapad and stylus
Tangler (GREEN)
(2) YELLOW laser barrels
Jumpsuit
YELLOW canvas backpack
Utility belt

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
YELLOW reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Tammy-Y-BWR-2

Female CPU Team Leader

Mutation: Telepathy
Society: Programs Group (degree 1)
Secret skills: Cash Hacking 08, Gloating 12, Filesharing 08
Background: What's this vatslime about Central Processing taking heat for putting MemWipe in the Armed Forces foodpaks? You've dealt with enough nosewipes, chipbrains and drelbs in CPU to learn errors like that are expectable, even standard. Why is everyone so flustered? So a few battalions of Vulture Squadron Commandoes are busy stacking blocks in The Computer's kiddie-creches: Big Effervescing Deal!

And this bunch of Troubleshooters is no better than the nimrods in your own service group. If your High Programmer (serve and protect!) would only deign to notice your efforts for her Programs Group, she'd transfer you out of this pseudochick outfit. These high-strung deviants have some of the weirdest mentalities you've ever psyched—like that Eve-R-SWB, all she ever thinks about is fire—or Chuck-O-VKJ, who knows much more than he lets on about the memory-wipe scandal. Maybe you should try a little blackmail involving his oh-so-unfortunate absence from the mess hall when all that chemical amnesia was ingested.

The spooky folks in this group are your fellow YELLOW, Walt-Y-QGI, and that hunched-over little feeb Sam-R-JBS—you can't read them at all. You're worried one or both might find out *you* accidentally authorized the mistaken MemWipe drug distribution. Time to show those clones who's in charge.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

A high official in your Programs Group, Cleto-B-QRK, has been acting strangely. Your High Programmer (defend and obey!) requests you to secure details of a rumored secret project Cleto-B may be working on in NBD Sector. Don't interfere with it, and don't let others interfere—yet.

Fellow Troubleshooter Walt-Y-QGI has been found to belong to a rival Programs Group; be a loyal servant and terminate him if you have a chance, okay?

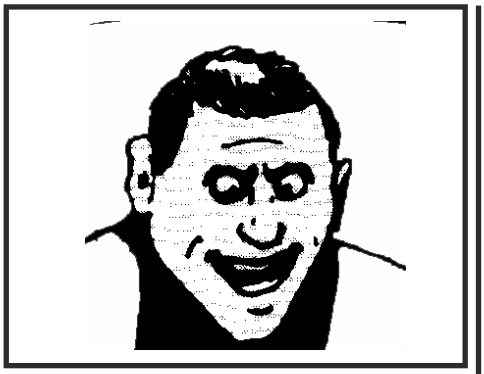
PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Gas mask
First aid kit
Knife
Datapad and stylus
Neurowhip (GREEN)
Multipurpose robot repair tool
(2) YELLOW laser barrels
Jumpsuit
YELLOW canvas backpack
Utility belt

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
YELLOW reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Send in the Clones PC #4



Sam-R-JBS-1

Male Tech Services Happiness Officer

Service firm: OmniPipeTechServ
Service firm type: Conduit Cleaners
Security clearance: RED
Credits: 100
Tics: Always talks about vidshows.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Sam-R: Ma'am! He's got some crazy plasma weapon, like they used last week on *Bake That Traitor!*
Tammy-Y: I know! Shut the frazz up and go shoot the snozz out of him.
Sam-R: Okay, ma'am. Should we flank him like in the third scene of *Teela Strikes Back*, or—
Tammy-Y: Shut up! Just shut up!

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06
Infect Others With Enthusiasm 12

Stealth 04
Get Someone's Attention 10
High Alert 08
Surveillance 01

Violence 09
Energy Weapons 13
Successfully Perform Crazy Acrobatic Stunt and Only Break One Limb 15

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 09
Bot Ops and Maintenance 13
Electrical Engineering 13
Reroute Effluent Conduit 15
Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 01

Software 06
Bot Programming 10
Data Analysis 01

Wetware 06
Bioweapons 01
Cloning 10
Medical 10
Outdoor Life 01

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Software, Wetware)

Send in the Clones PC #5

Eve-R-SWB-1

Female PLC Hygiene Officer

Service firm: WeHaul PLC
Service firm type: Freight Conveyance Engineers
Security clearance: RED
Credits: 110
Tics: Always cleaning things.

[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Chuck-O: That Commie was carrying this weird widget. Looks pricey, like at least 10K.
Eve-R: That *is* interesting! *[Grabs widget and starts polishing.]*
Chuck-O: Hey, stop! There could be, like, evidence on that or something!
Eve-R: But it's got blood on it! You wouldn't want me to neglect my Computer-assigned duties as hygiene officer, would you?

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 06
Bootlicking 10
Chutzpah 01
Hygiene 10
Oratory 01
Smile Innocently 12

Stealth 07
Concealment 01
Surveillance 11

Violence 08
Crawl Onward Despite Life-Threatening Injuries 14
Energy Weapons 12
Hand Weapons 12

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 07
Weapon and Armor Maintenance 11
Nuclear Engineering 01

Software 08
Access Local PLC Warehousing Database 11
Data Analysis 09
Operating Systems 01

Wetware 06
Cloning 01
Put Just Enough Drug Into Bouncy Bubble Beverage That You Can't Taste The Difference 13
Suggestion 11

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Hardware)

Send in the Clones PC #6

Elmer-R-DYS-1

Male PLC Equipment Guy

Service firm: WeHaul PLC
Service firm type: Freight Conveyance Engineers
Security clearance: RED
Credits: 90
Tics: Extra finicky about food and drink.
[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Walt-Y: Gosh, we got a whole extra box of CruncheeTym algae chips with our rations. Who wants some?
Elmer-R: What flavor?
Walt-Y: Looks like Original, Extra Original, Beverly and HotBot.
Elmer-R: No thanks. If there's no Capiscum Crunch, I don't want any.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 07
Bond With Crazy R&D Scientists 13

Stealth 06
Disguise 10
Sneaking 01

Violence 08
Agility 12
Energy Weapons 12
Hand Weapons 12
Thrown Weapons 01
Vehicle Weapons 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 08
Habitat Engineering 12
Weapon and Armor Maintenance 12
Recognize Illegal Weapon Modifications 14

Software 07
Data Search 11
Financial Systems 01
Identify Contents of Food Crates by Bar Code 13

Wetware 05
Identify Contents of Food Crates by Smell 11

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Violence)

Elmer-R-DYS-1

Male PLC Equipment Guy

Mutation: Empathy
Society: Pro Tech (degree 1)
Secret Skills: Experimental Equipment Repair / Maintenance 02, Botspotting 11, WMD 14
Background: Put boxes on conveyor belts. Take them off conveyor belts. Wait for conveyor belts to be repaired. Not the most rewarding occupation for an exponent of the future glory of technology. In PLC you were wasted—no wonder you happened to make a small mistake, when your mind was occupied by higher matters. Anyone could have done it—those boxes of memory-wipe drug look awfully similar to the boxes of Bouncy Bubble Beverage those Armed Forces morons usually get. You put a few wrong boxes on the wrong conveyor belt, and now 5,000 soldiers have regressed to staring at their fingernails and putting their toes in their mouths. It's no big deal from your angle (you'd never drink Bouncy Bubble Beverage anyway)—but it's a lucky break you got transferred to the Troubleshooters before anyone fingered you.

Anyway, you're in the clear if someone accuses you—just shift attention over to your 'fellow PLCer' Eve-R-SWB. Not only is she transparently an IntSec agent, but you know she caught the MemWipe/beverage mix-up and didn't say anything.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Greater humanity through greater machinery! Greetings, Pro Techer. An unknown faction of purblind machine-mashers has diverted a valuable shipment of cloning equipment from the higher destiny to which we had previously diverted it. It's believed your fellow Troubleshooter Tammy-Y-BWR works for this anti-future faction, aided by Walt-Y-QGI. Interrogate Tammy-Y and Walt-Y with this marvelous new HypnoCard we secured; one look at it and they'll be forced to tell you everything. Oh, and don't forget to terminate them after questioning.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
HypnoDisk (BLUE)
YELLOW laser barrel
(2) RED laser barrels
Jumpsuit
RED canvas backpack
Utility belt

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit RED reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Eve-R-SWB-1

Female ~~PLC~~ IntSec Hygiene Officer

Actual Service Group: Internal Security (spying on PLC)
Mutation: Pyrokinesis
Society: Sierra Club (degree 1)
Secret Skills: Demolition 12, Gloating 03, Bioweapons 11
Background: It wasn't your fault. You were conducting your undercover Internal Security investigation of PLC, doing PLC-ish things like shifting boxes from one conveyor belt to another. Sure, you noticed how those containers of Bouncy Bubble Beverage had already been filled with memory-wipe drug—but you didn't dare report it. That would show distrust of the wisdom of your superiors—and (shudder) The Computer. So just because 70 platoons of Armed Forces troops have been reduced to the education level of a broken scrubot—that's not your fault. Your superiors would certainly agree—but no sense bothering them with trivia.

That cold-blooded twerp Elmer-R-DYS from PLC saw you carrying those containers—he should be apprised of the need to avoid cluttering your superiors' outlook with little details. Maybe you should steer him onto Sam-R-JBS, the tech who filled the wrong containers in the first place. Or maybe you could frame Walt-Y-QGI, who's supposed to be so deep into Free Enterprise the credits are bulging out his ears.

All this maneuvering wears you down. You'd like to go outside, to that happy world of astroturf and animal droppings you've always heard about. There are small furry things there, and tall brown and green poles, and things growing on every exposed surface. You'd like to head into the world of nature—and set everything on fire. And watch it *burn*.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

IntSec has identified NBD Sector as the nexus of considerable black market activity. Your mission: identify traitorous black-market operators and mark them for interrogation by spraying them with this harmless spray that we have disguised as deodorant. The spray is invisible to the naked eye, but will register on our IntSec scanners. The spray is included in your Emergency Hygiene Kit. Good luck, and good hunting.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Emergency Hygiene Kit
Scent-marking spray (TREASONOUS)
Knife
Datapad and stylus
Hand lens
YELLOW laser barrel
(2) RED laser barrels
Jumpsuit
RED canvas backpack
Utility belt

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit RED reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Sam-R-JBS-1

Male Tech Services Happiness Officer

Mutation: Mental Block
Society: Anti-Mutant (degree 1)
Secret Skills: Power Studies 09, Vidshow Trivia 15, Filesharing 10
Background: This is neat! You're a real Troubleshooter, like the heroes on the vidshows. And you didn't even have to spend a lot of boring time in Tech Services to get the glamour job, which is just as well since you kind of made a mess of things your first day in The Computer's service. It must have been the thrill of being in among all those food-distribution pipes; you turned the wrong spigot, and the entire Armed Forces allotment of Bouncy Bubble Beverage was replaced with memory-wipe drug before it went out to PLC. Now, entire regiments of Alpha Complex soldiers are relearning how to put on their underwear. Well, it wasn't really your fault anyway. Technically (haha), your CPU supervisor and fellow Troubleshooter, Tammy-Y-BWR, approved the spigot turn that put the Armed Forces C-in-C into diapers.

You know the Troubleshooters are great, but those nasty, scummy mutants infiltrate everywhere. Already you've felt delicate probings into your mind—*mutants!* Telepathic brain-eaters! Good thing you brought up all the barriers before the slimy felon found anything—and you're sure the soon-to-be-dead mutie is either Elmer-R-DYS or Chuck-O-VKJ. Maybe you'll have to off both of them to be sure of combating the subhuman threat—but that's the way the bubble beverage bounces. Pretty neat stuff, huh?

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Kill the mutants! You had to ask? There's an unconfirmed report that Tammy-Y is a mutant—the best guess is that she has Advanced Hearing. Confirm this *(roleplaying hint: whisper a lot)* and, if true, terminate her. By the way, there's an IntSec plant in your group—we think it's one of the REDs. Happy hunting.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Personal hygiene kit
Knife
Datapad and stylus
Tacnuke grenade (VIOLET)
(2) RED laser barrels
Jumpsuit
RED canvas backpack
Utility belt

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
Suit RED reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2
Vial of 100 personality stabilizer tablets

PARANOIA Me and My Shadow Mark 4

STEVE GILBERT
PETER CORLESS
Mission design

KEN ROLSTON
Development

GREG COSTIKYAN
1st edition editing

JIM HOLLOWAY
Illustrations

THE COMPUTER
Electroshock therapy

Introduction 165
1. A new day dawns 167
2. The most powerful war machine ever created 170
3. Setting up shop 172
4. Cleanliness is next to treason 174
5. Whatcha gonna do to my bot? 178
6. The Alpha Complex Road Runners Club 178
7. The kids are alright 179
8. Something falls off 181
9. Commies to the left of me, traitors to the right 182
10. The big test 184

Charts, tables and resources
Pill ingestion table 167
Mark 4 stats 170
Hangar 139 floorplan 171
Scrubot 409-D stats 175
A.C.R.R.C. 179
NPC Commie roster 183
Field test map (388-390/A) 186
The prop page 189
Mark 4 Episode 6 flowchart 191

The eager Troubleshooters are assigned to guard an experimental super-warbot, the Mark 4, against possible sabotage before its final test run.

Fortunately, nothing short of a ground-zero thermonuclear blast can harm the Mark 4. Unfortunately, the same can't be said about the Troubleshooters.

While on guard duty, the PCs are forced to deal with a variety of bizarre events, including at least one real sabotage attempt by none other than those ever-present Communists (yes, they really *do* exist).

In addition, the PCs have a few encounters in which the Commies aren't at all involved—but no need to tell the players. Smart ones weren't expecting a quiet evening anyway.

A quick word on props

Props are things you give your players to help them visualize the mission better. For example, you might give your players an actual laser pistol or fragmentation grenade, although we wouldn't recommend it.

We've included handy props at the end of the mission. Just photocopy the prop page, and cut the copy up. We'll cue you when you should spring 'em on your naive (but loyal!) Troubleshooters.

Also, throughout the mission you'll find paragraphs labeled 'Prop hint'. These are prop ideas we couldn't fit on the prop page. Feel free to use them, too.

Playing The Computer

Let's talk about playing The Big C. One thing we found to be a lot of fun was to have The Computer check in with the Troubleshooters occasionally. Like whenever they screw up. Keeps 'em on their toes. Like:

The Computer: Greetings, Troubleshooters. Is everything nominal where you are?
PC: *[Smashing scrubot.]* Uh, yeah! Yeah, everything is just fine!
The Computer: Are you sure? I received a report from Scrubot 409-D only moments ago indicating an urgent need for hygienic inspection in Hangar 139.
PC: Uh, looks clean to me, sir, I mean, Friend Computer.
The Computer: That is well. Can I assist you in any way?
PC: No, no, thanks, everything is just fine, really.
The Computer: Honest? Isn't there any little thing I can do?
PC: Really, honest, please, everything is just wonderful.
The Computer: Are you experiencing unusual tension, citizen? Perhaps you need another personality stabilizer pill.

Personal briefings

Sure, it's fun to kill off Troubleshooters, but you can't have all the fun yourself. Troubleshooters like to shoot things too, even if the only thing around is each other. So we list below brief descriptions of every secret society's attitude toward the Mark 4.

Before running the mission, take each player aside and read him the sections corresponding to his secret society and service group.

Secret society motives

Anti-Mutants: What an ally the Mark 4 could be! Your secret society wants you to implant a specially adapted Psionic Phenomena Model 4 detection program into Mark 4's brain (see the ***PARANOIA*** *XP* rulebook for details), and convince the Mark 4 its primary mission should be to eliminate all mutants in Alpha Complex. Be sure to polish off any mutants you find along the way.

Communists: Do not lose heart, comrade! The time has come for the INFRARED workers to unite. The Mark 4 poses a great threat to the party. But do not worry, the great Comrade Borscht himself will soon lead an assault to

destroy the Mark 4. Stand ready to assist the workers' revolution when the clarion call of liberation comes!

Computer Phreaks: Mark 4 could be reprogrammed to do all sorts of cool things! For example, you could program the Mark 4 to self-destruct at its field test. Or maybe you could program it to say 'The Computer is just a stinking little circuit board' whenever someone uses the word 'laser'.

Corpore Metal: The Mark 4 could be one of the missing links in the evolution of the Man/Machine. You must try to convince Mark 4 to join Corpore Metal. Then have Mark 4 destroy BOG Sector, where there is a high concentration of Frankenstein Destroyers and Humanists.

Death Leopard: Awesome destructive powers are housed within the Mark 4. It can make things Go Boom Real Good! This could be fun! Get Mark 4 into the Death Leopard spirit, and your secret society friends will be wicked impressed. Failing that, paint Mark 4 black.

FCCC-P: The Church is quite interested in the development of this new avenging angel The Computer has bounteously provided. It has provided you with a vial of holy water, which you should use to baptize the Mark 4 in the name of The Computer. Thereafter, protect the Mark 4 above and beyond the call of duty.

Frankenstein Destroyers: Destroy Mark 4. Kill whoever is responsible for Mark 4. Kill whoever is responsible for whoever is responsible for Mark 4. Et cetera. You get the idea.

Free Enterprise: This new baby's probably got a thousand useful items built right in. Obtain something valuable from the Mark 4, preferably mass-marketish. But don't harm Mark 4; it does a good job keeping the Commies in check.

Humanists: The Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 is an abomination that cannot be tolerated. Destroy it.

Illuminati: The Mark 4 is a very large poker chip in the Alpha Complex power game; a chip the Illuminati would like to possess. Gain control of the Mark 4 and find some place to stash it; otherwise, face the wrath of the Illuminati. While you're at it, find out about your fellow Troubleshooters' secret societies, and use this information to get them to destroy each other.

Mystics: The Mark 4 could be the ultimate party machine, if someone could just loosen it up. They've provided you with a treasonously obtained circuit tester, hooked up to a 220-volt battery, and a cannister of hallucinogenic gas. They suggest you enlighten the Mark 4 by shocking its robotic brain with the circuit tester. Then release the hallucinogenic gas and enlighten the rest of your Troubleshooter team.

Pro Tech: The Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 is one of the greatest achievements of all time. The technology that built it must be perpetuated at all costs. You must kill anyone who tries to damage or harm the Mark 4. Gather as much information as you can about it, including blueprints if possible.

Psion: The Mark 4 must be shown to be inferior to human intellect and mental prowess. Attempt to put the Mark 4 into a logical loop (like, tell it to compute pi to the last digit and then divide by zero). (**GM note:** This won't work. The Mark 4 is smarter than that.) Failing this, convince higher security clearance specialists of the unworthiness of the Mark 4 by pointing out its design flaws.

Romantics: The Mark 4 opposes everything Romantics stand for; it represents just the kind of destructive, dehumanizing oppression to which our society is so wholeheartedly opposed. But perhaps you can persuade the Mark 4 to change its ways. Try to display its more colorful side. Jazz it up. Paint racing stripes on it, tie a raccoon tail on its end and hang fuzzy dice from its main radio disk. *Go with your feelings.*

Sierra Club: Mark 4 is a monstrous war machine, devoted to killing and destruction. Only a mad, sick society, one cut off from its natural roots for too long, would even contemplate its construction. Escape. Find a tree. Bring it back. Plant it beside Mark 4. Escape again.

Spy for another Alpha Complex: The Mark 4 is one of the most important yet dangerous inventions to be developed since the Age of The Computer began. It must not stay in the wrong hands. You must tell the Mark 4 of the existence of the true Alpha Complex Prime and persuade it to return there with you. Failing that, destroy Mark 4. Oh yeah, and bump off the rest of your Troubleshooter team while you're at it.

Service group motives

Armed Forces: The Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 is just one in a line of new weapons available to the modern soldier. All Armed Forces personnel should familiarize themselves with the capabilities of the Mark 4. Get inside the Mark 4 and find out what makes it tick. Protect the Mark 4 at all costs.

Central Processing Unit: The Computer has chosen you as its representative on this important mission. You're to be breveted so you can be mission leader. Do a good job, and constantly remind The Computer a CPU representative is the team leader. (**GM note:** Do it. Make him team leader.)

HPD&MC: The Mark 4's construction has been a tremendous boost to the morale of the citizens of Alpha Complex; its awesome power is sure to make the Complex safe from the monstrous threat of Communist subversion forever. Something must be done to commemorate this great and marvelous occasion. You are directed to keep a diary of all events that happen on this mission. Here is a tripod-mounted Multicorder 2 with Visible Light and Recorder programs to capture the entire mission. If possible, get an exclusive interview with Mark 4.

Internal Security: Something about this whole project smells. R&D hasn't breathed a word about the Mark 4 until now, and Armed Forces is getting tightlipped too. We want you to find out everything you can from your fellow Troubleshooters, roughing them up if necessary. Try to pass yourself off as either R&D or Armed Forces and get inside Mark 4.

Power Services: When Mark 4 was first designed, Power Services demanded it receive power from a long cord connected to Power Services' generators. The demand was ignored, so Power Services did not receive its rightful share of the Mark 4 design and construction work. See what you can do to convince The Computer that fission is dangerous. If possible, examine Mark 4's power plant closely, in private, and see whether, as Power Services firmly believes, *something bad will happen to it.* Understand? Be creative.

Production, Logistics & Commissary: The Mark 4 is a logistical nightmare. R&D has used far too many precious Alpha Complex resources to build it. Remove extraneous parts from the Mark 4 and bring them back to PLC. Keep tabs on wasteful use of materiel while on the mission, and report it to The Computer during your debriefing.

Research & Design: Years of research and hard labor have paid off. But now it's up to you to make sure nothing goes wrong in these final few hours. Don't let anyone go on, in or near Mark 4. If any harm comes to Mark 4 you're gonna be sorry.

Technical Services: Rumor has it onboard bots provide all of Mark 4's servicing. If this is the case, then Tech Services isn't getting its fair share of the project. Find out if this rumor is true. If it is, gum up the works. While you're at it, kill an R&D member as a sign of protest.

MARK 4
1: A new day dawns

Another day begins in Alpha Complex with the familiar buzz of fluorescent lights. You wake and reflect on the multitudinous gifts of The Computer: your spacious shared three-meter cell, last night's extra ration of Cold Fun.

Out in the hall, you hear the quiet patter of the lowly INFRARED drones, mindlessly yet faithfully serving The Computer.

Start by letting the players practice their Bootlicking ('Every day in every way, I serve The Computer better and better! What about *you*, citizen?' 'Why yes, today I feel *full* of energy and *happy* as can be, thanks be to The Computer!'), then continue reading.

'Good morning, citizens!' says The Computer in a soft, soothing voice. 'Time to protect and serve Alpha Complex!

'And how are we today? Isn't this a wonderful day? Good. I'm happy to hear you're so enthusiastic.'

Are your players happily jabbering away, answering The Computer's questions? For those who are, give them an extra helping of Cold Fun. And for those who aren't…

'Still sleepy? Here, have a Wakey-Wakey pill. It's in your dispenser dish right now.'

A green light flashes as a fist-sized, cubic purple tablet crashes into the dispenser dish from one of the many slots and tubes in the wall.

Roll 1d20 and consult the Pill Ingestion table on this page for the effects of the drug. (**Note:** The pill dissolves in water. Manly Troubleshooters, who swallow their pills without asking for a cup of water, should make a manly Violence roll to avoid an hour-long bout with dyspepsia.)

Mens sana in corpore sano

Read:

'Okay, citizens, up and at 'em! It's time for your daily excercises!' Up on the vidscreen, you see the familiar figure of Jane-O-QED—'Janey Jump!'—dressed in orange and black tights.

Jane-O is a perky, happy blend of an exercise guru and a case of Jolt Cola. (**Staging hint:** Feel free to put on some bouncy aerobics music.)

'C'mon, citizens, on your feet for your daily fitness maintenance! The Computer says it's good for ya, and would you doubt the Computer? Let's start with five jumping jacks.'

Force players onto their feet. No pretending! If they balk, mention the nearest security camera is focusing on them (**Tension 6**). If they still refuse, assign some Official Reprimands and give them Personality Stabilizer pills. If they decline a third time, maybe they're not Troubleshooter material after all…

'Now for some really good positive energy. Let's do it. Five jumping jacks. Ready, annnd... *jump*, two, three, four! *Two*, two, three, four! Keep those loyal bodies moving!'

Other exercises to inflict on your players include push-ups (if the floor is dirty), chin-ups (if there is no bar available) or weight training (if there is any piece of heavy furniture around).

'Well, are we all warmed up now? *[Pause.]* **Ready to begin another joyous Alpha Complex day?** *[Pause.]* **Not quite, you say? That's right! We forgot to do our five kilometers running-in-place! Okay, ready! set! aaanndd…'**

Suddenly, the image of Janey Jump is replaced by the following message:

Show your players the mission alert from the prop page (end of mission). Hold it up in front of them for about ten seconds—count them off, so they know something's up—then snatch it away.

The players should have no problem finding the briefing room, provided they remember the room number. However, should they forget, have some BLUE-Clearance PLC Coordinator shanghai them—'Oh yes, my, you got here fast. You see, our totebot broke down and we need you gentlemen to carry these 1,400 crates to FAR Sector.'

I never saw him before

Assuming the Troubleshooters ever arrive at the Briefing Room 23087D, read:

QED Sector—the central core of Alpha Complex R&D and a hub of activity and mayhem. As you enter, many sights and smells greet you: Two scrubots methodically clean each other; INFRAREDs whisk by carrying plastic cartons labeled 'New Improved Bouncy Bubble Beverage'; high-clearance R&D personnel appear and disappear through doors and hatchways.

And ahead, Briefing Room 23087D. Beside the briefing room door is a frail, yellow-striped INFRARED guard. As you approach, she hooks her thumb over her shoulder and says, 'Go right in.' *[Wink, wink.]* **'You won't get in trouble. They're expecting you.'** *[Wink, wink.]*

Needless to say, this behavior might arouse suspicion among the PCs. We would like to go on record as *deploring* any GM who would use this opportunity to create a rift amongst the Troubleshooters.

If the players decide to question the INFRARED, she's evasive and jumpy. Her name is May-NTA-1. If the questioning starts to get biting, (i.e., it looks like the Troubleshooters are about to fry her), May-NTA reminds them Joseph-B-DGU awaits.

Just before the Troubleshooters enter the room, May-NTA addresses one of them directly (choose one of the characters at random). Read:

'Which one of you is *[random Troubleshooter]***? Err… Joseph-B-DGU asked me to deliver a… umm…special, supersecret, top, ahhh… high-priority message to you… in private.'**

Will his fellow Troubleshooters let him receive the message? Will the privileged Troubleshooter even want the message? Probably not.

If May-NTA isn't allowed to deliver the message, she gets very anxious, almost hysterical. If she still isn't permitted, she bites down on something in her mouth, coughs and falls… dead.

Pill ingestion table

1–10	**Wakey-Wakey pill:** You're awake, all right. Really awake. You feel like you'll never need to sleep again. (**GM note:** He won't, at least not for 72 hours. *Then* try to keep him awake.)
11–12	**Happy pill:** Wow, you're so happy to live in Alpha Complex, and being a Troubleshooter is keen! Isn't it great that Troubleshooters have a life expectancy of three days? Gosh, you're happy. (**GM note:** Duration: a while.)
13	**Sleepy pill:** Back to bed! This can be very bad, especially if you're supposed to be reporting to a mission briefing. (**GM note:** Duration: half a day.)
14–18	**Personality stabilizer:** You feel calm, confident. Very confident. (**GM note:** The personality stabilizer picks you up, yet calms you down. It keeps you from worrying about the little things, like spilling your Bouncy Bubble Beverage, or losing your left arm. Duration: a scene or two.)
19–20	**Hallucinogen tablet:** Look at all the colors! The hair in your mouth is tickling your brain. You can breathe in stereo. You can fly. Whee! (**GM note:** Duration: 1d20 minutes, with flashbacks at your discretion.)

Prop hint: Sometimes trying to remember who took which pill gets pretty confusing. We find it helpful to have players wear tags describing the effects of their medication. For example, if someone took a personality stabilizer tablet his tag might read: '*It's okay… Everything's okay…*'

Close examination reveals a broken false tooth in her mouth, filled with a greenish muck. (The muck is a deadly contact poison. Anyone want to examine it?) Clutched in her right hand: a piece of paper with a code printed on it. A code even The Computer can't decipher—hey, this is some serious stuff. (Give the players the message from System Supervisor 592, on the prop page at the end of the mission.)

If May-NTA is permitted to deliver the message, she takes the Troubleshooter aside, hands him the coded message and salutes by placing her left fist on the right side of her head and her right fist on the left side. Mission completed.

Any questioning of this odd behavior is futile:

PC: What was that salute you gave to my team member?

May-NTA: Salute, err...what salute? *[Troubleshooter demonstrates.]* Oh, *that*. That wasn't a salute. It was actually, uhh… rather like scratching. Yes, I was scratching my head. Uhhh, because it itched.

The PC who received the note won't understand it either. This has all been a big misunderstanding. Naturally, May-NTA is nowhere in sight when the Troubleshooters emerge from their briefing.

What's it all about

When the players enter the briefing room, read:

The gaunt but dapper figure of Joseph-B-DGU, Mission Briefing Officer for QED Sector, stands before a burnt-out pit. In the shallow, scorched depression is a huge crate marked 'DANGER: MISSION EQUIPMENT'. Flanking Joseph-B are two GREEN-Clearance Vulture Squadron goons, armed with neurowhips and hand flamers. One of them motions you to sit on an empty bench which Joseph-B is addressing. The other guard seems to be unaware of you. In fact, he seems to be unaware of everything, except for a wad of gum on the ceiling, which he idly toasts with his hand flamer—repeatedly.

Joseph-B is in the middle of a sentence when you enter: '…just make sure you are beyond the blast radius if this should occur.'

It's obvious the Troubleshooters have missed an important part of the lecture. Some ambitious Troubleshooters may decide interrupting Joseph-B is the best way to find out what they missed. Well, they're wrong. Instead, interrupting Joseph-B is the best way to find out how good the GREEN goons are with their neurowhips. The answer is 'rating 15'.

Joseph-B is extremely punctual and insists upon keeping schedules. This includes giving briefing room lectures on time, regardless of whether the Troubleshooters are there to receive the briefing.

When playing Joseph-B, think boring. In fact, Joseph-B is one of the most boring people in Alpha Complex. Other citizens find him boring. The Computer finds him boring. Even Joseph-B finds himself boring.

Joseph-B speaks in a monotone voice with no variation in tempo or pitch, pausing at odd times as he speaks. Read:

'Now that you understand how to safely use your mission equipment after this briefing you will take it and report immediately to Hangar 139 on level 27b where you will be assigned to guard the new experimental Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 field.

'Testing on the new warbot begins in precisely 20 hours for 20 hours you will be responsible for the safety of the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 after the 20 hours a representative from R&D should arrive to take charge.

'Of the Mark 4 we have no indication that a sabotage attempt will occur but we're taking no chances while you are on this mission your code.

'Name will be Task Force 451 also depending upon your performance you may receive an invitation to the field test courtesy of Research & Design at this point please select a mission leader.'

Joseph-B waits a few moments for a mission leader to be selected. If after 30 seconds someone hasn't been chosen, Joseph-B points at the nearest Troubleshooter. (Any CPU members?)

Read:

'You'll be acting as mission leader for the entirety of this mission your team's codename is Task Force 451 as mission leader your special equipment consists.

'Of one chronobot which will count down the time.

'Remaining in your mission starting right now from the 20-hour mark your.

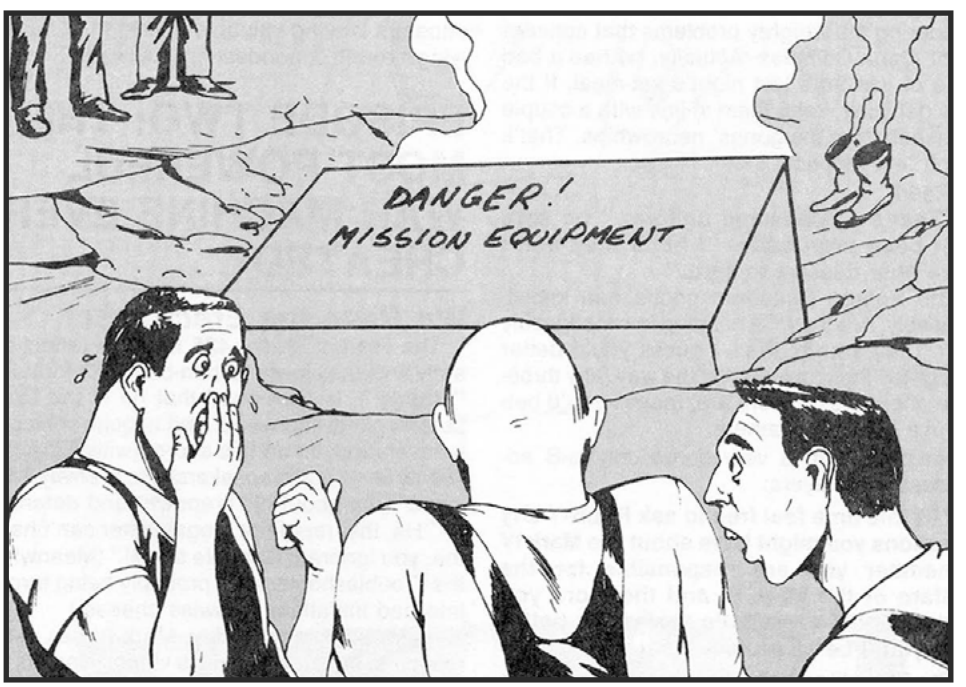
'Chronobot will announce the time remaining every hour on the hour now all of you will be receiving the standard authorization and responsibility forms.'

At this point, one Vulture gorilla hands out an armload of papers and contracts (all marked 'Security Authorization Application Guide'), incomprehensible to anyone with less than Access 06 or Bureaucratic Intuition.

Prop hint: Tape a sheet of paper over your telephone directory cover or unabridged dictionary and print on it 'Security Authorization Application Guide', then insert copies of the Security Authorization Form (from the props page at the end of the mission) in the Application Guide, on various pages (one form per character). Now plop the telephone book in front of your players.

If the players try to study any of these forms, the Vulture Squadron goons crack their neurowhips at them for not showing proper respect and for doubting the wisdom of The Computer who issued them.

Joseph-B continues his speech, insensitive to the spasmodic quiverings of Troubleshooters who have been thrashed senseless.



'…Uhh—well, equipment officer, I believe it's your job to examine the mission equipment.'

'A security perimeter has been marked with a yellow line around the Mark 4 absolutely no one may cross the yellow line without proper authorization only citizens presenting a Security.

'Authorization Form are authorized, however, before receiving your Security.

'Authorization Form you must first sign the standard Personnel Personal Responsibility Form.

'PPRF-328890/B upon signing the PPRF you will immediately take responsibility for the Mark 4 retroactive to your scheduled briefing time which I might add you were three minutes late for and which sloppy behavior I have duly noted.'

At this point, Joseph-B hands the Troubleshooters PPRF-328890/B (see end of mission) and waits for them to sign. Once the players have signed, Joseph-B scrutinizes the signatures very closely. **Note:** Joseph-B takes a very dim view of anyone who signs a phoney name.

'You may all remove the Security Authorization Form at this time from pages *[name the page numbers where you have inserted Security Authorization Forms]* **in the Security Authorization Application Guide each of you will sign and carry with you a Security Authorization Form at all times.'**

Can the players find their Security Authorization Forms quickly, before Joseph-B loses his patience? Give them 30 seconds, then encourage the characters—with neurowhips.

Read:

'To restate this mission is very important to Research & Design and we want to make sure that you have the necessary data and technical specifications available this information will prove.

'Invaluable to brief you on the technical aspects of the Mark 4 I now have the privilege and honor to introduce the illustrious Rob-Y-QED-2 R&D designer of the Mark 4 Warbot.'

The sage, white-haired citizen Rob-Y rises to greet you.

You might have Rob-Y act like Mr. Wizard. If you've never seen Mr. Wizard, try Obi-Wan Kenobi, or even a cross between Mr. Rogers and Albert Einstein. He is a concerned Alpha Complex citizen, a firm supporter of The Computer. He is also quite senile. There is no connection between his love for The Computer and his senility. It is only a coincidence.

He begins the briefing with a cheerful query: 'Isn't this a wonderful Alpha Complex day?'

After waiting for an enthusiastic response, he goes through the following routine. (Do it yourself; stare, pace, etc.)

1. He stares long and thoughtfully into each Troubleshooter's eyes, as if looking into his soul. Actually he is just trying to remember who he is and what he is doing here. Have him ask random PCs these questions:

   'Excuse me, but what is my security clearance?'

   'What door did I come through?'

   'Who do you think I am?'

2. He paces back and forth before the PCs for a long time, frowning solemnly. Let the PCs think Rob-Y ponders the weighty problems of Alpha Complex. Actually, he has a bad case of gas from last night's vat meal. If the PCs get itchy, keep them in line with a couple of lashes from the goons' neurowhips. That'll teach 'em respect.
3. Read:

   'That's a handsome uniform,' he says with deep profundity. 'I hope they don't have blue dessert tonight.'

   The Vulture Squadron goons nod knowledgeably. Are the PCs nodding knowledgeably too? They aren't? It's neurowhip-time again. Three-time offenders graduate to the hand flamers.
4. At this point, a very bored Joseph-B addresses the players:

   'At this time feel free to ask Rob-Y any questions you might have about the Mark 4 remember you are responsible for the welfare of the Mark 4 and the more you understand the warbot's design the better able you'll be to protect it.'

   Considering so far they've learned nothing, the PCs probably have several questions. They're also wondering how this veg-brain ever managed to design the most sophisticated weapon ever created. The answer is—he didn't. The designer of the immense warbot was, in fact, the late Rob-Y-QED-1, the predecessor clone of the person who is now trying to touch his tongue to his nose.

   Unfortunately, Rob-Y-QED-1 died and a Tech Services mistake spawned this idiot backup (who, by the way, will receive a huge promotion and pay bonus if Mark 4 checks out). Rob-Y-2 knows nothing about the Mark 4, and has only heard of the warbot this morning.

   In a rare moment of lucidity Rob-Y recalls:

   '…the Mark 4 is actually quite large.'

   This, in fact, is the extent of his knowledge.

Joseph-B now interjects one final time. Read:

'This concludes your pre-mission briefing please proceed directly to the hangar with this crate of mission equipment.'

With the aid of several jackobots, a GREEN guard lifts your mission equipment out of the crater, carries it to the door and deposits it outside the mission briefing room. He and the jackobots return to the room.

As you leave, you notice Joseph-B check his watch and begin lecturing another empty bench. Out in the hall, six anxious Troubleshooters run past you and enter the room you've just left. The door closes behind them.

Transit time

The next problem our intrepid Troubleshooters face is how to get from point A, the briefing room, to point B, Hangar 139, with a one-ton crate of mission equipment. Regrettably, no one thought to provide our Troubleshooters with a totebot.

Guess it's up to them to do some creative recruiting. Or they can open it here and paw through its contents now. If so, see 'Opening the box'. Of course, they'll have to take it all with them regardless. The Computer would look askance on Troubleshooters leaving valuable mission equipment lying around.

2: The most powerful war machine ever created

The Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 (affectionately known to lowly carbon-based lifeforms as 'Markie') is convinced it is The Computer's gift to the world, and is quite willing to let everybody know this (with the aid of 20 large loudspeakers). It is always willing to brag about its firepower and defenses—'Ha, that rapid-fire Megablaster can't harm me, you ignorant Commie slime!' (Meanwhile the Troubleshooters are probably being turned into bad imitations of swiss cheese.)

As far as combat ability goes, Mark 4 has every reason to be arrogant. It is virtually indestructible and has the firepower of a 23rd-century armored division. For game purposes, Mark 4 can wipe out anything at will in a single round, and nothing the players have can hurt Mark 4.

And all those statistics and technical stuff… look in the box labeled 'Mark 4'. It has myriads of useful data. Like how quickly Mark 4 can kill a Troubleshooter.

The face of God

The entrance to Hangar 139 is a set of giant clamshell doors. Next to them is a Computer monitor. It speaks:

'Greetings, Troubleshooters. To enter, please present your Security Authorization Forms.'

When all the players show their authorization forms, the massive doors shudder open. Make loud whooping sounds to simulate the warning alarms, like this:

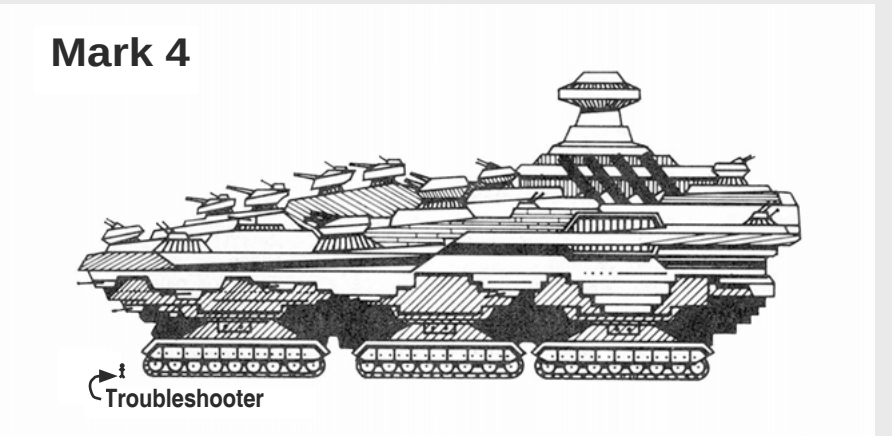
'WHOOP! WHOOP! WHOOP! STAND CLEAR OF THE OPENING DOORS! STAND CLEAR OF THE OPENING DOORS! WHOOP! WHOOP! WHOOP!'

Within… a cavernous hangar, usually used to house a full Vulture Squadron. Now, there is only one vehicle, Mark 4. One 75-meter-long, 25-meter-wide, 40,000-ton vehicle, mounted on six monstrous treads and bristling with dual-mount vapoguns, grenade launchers, rapid-fire tacnuke cannons and one huge MegaGun.

Show the Troubleshooters the hangar floorplan (next page) and the size comparison between them and Mark 4. Read:

Mark 4 is silent. The dozens of quadmount megablasters—motionless. Yet from somewhere deep inside Mark 4 you hear the quiet, steady hum of the warbot's power plant.

Mark 4



As promised, here are Mark 4's stats. And, boy, are they impressive. Clearly, this warbot doesn't need the PCs' protection…

BASICS
Length: 75 meters
Width: 25 meters
Height: 35 meters
Weight: 40,000 metric tons
Chassis: 3 pairs of twin treads

WEAPONS
(24) turrets each mounted with 3 laser cannon 3s
(12) turrets each mounted with 3 tube cannon 2s
(15) turrets each mounted with 2 sonic blasters
(42) swivel-mount grenade launchers
(4) single-turret rapid-fire tacnuke cannons
(2) turrets each mounted with 7 missile racks
(12) turrets each mounted with 2 vapoguns
(1) MegaGun

MAGAZINE
(600) AP tube cannon shells
(120) napalm tube cannon shells
(120) poison gas tube cannon shells
(60) flare tube cannon shells
(280) tacnuke missiles
(70) ECM missiles

DEFENSES
GM fiat: Mark 4 has unbelievably thick armor that defends it against any kind of attack you want. Play Mark 4 as invulnerable.

Additional defenses: Smoke generators, heat maskers, chaff casters, radar jammers—but really, when you have GM fiat, who cares?

ADDITIONAL EQUIPMENT
(20) large audio speakers mounted liberally across the surface of the warbot
(20) multicorder 1s for visual sensors

Suddenly—the silence is broken. 'HALT!!! WHO GOES THERE?' booms Mark 4! 'IDENTIFY YOURSELF IN FIVE SECONDS—FOUR—THREE—TWO—ONE.'

Now, in your pleasantest voice, ask the PCs what they do first. If the PCs don't immediately pull out their Authorization Forms, they're dead. Mark 4 is strict about orders. (After the first time it counts down, Mark 4 doesn't do countdowns any more. It was just programmed to do that to the 'first group' that enters the hangar.)

Once the Troubleshooters, or their clones, show Mark 4 their Security Authorization Forms, have Mark 4 launch into the following monologue:

'I am the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4, the single greatest war machine ever created. My neutronium steel armor can withstand any weapon known to man. I am capable of firing 20 tactical nuclear shells per second. My MegaGun has transglobal firing capacity.

'My armaments include 14 batteries of quadmount vapoguns, 42 grenade launchers, 4 rapid-fire tacnuke cannons, plus scores of supporting plasma generators and triple-mount laser 2s and 3s.

'I am capable of speeds of over 200 kph overland, through the air or underwater. And I am powered by the latest fission engine, thereby providing me with unlimited power. There is no foe I cannot face. There is no mountain I cannot climb. There is no sea I cannot swim.'

Hangar 139 floorplan

Hangar 139 is a nice place…a veritable playroom. It is 150 meters by 150 meters, with a domed ceiling 60 meters high. Features of the hangar:

A. The steam launchers: Launch tubes designed to hurtle Vulture craft at high velocity (200 kph) into the atmosphere, but don't tell the players. If the PCs want to look them over, just read:

Each upward-slanting tunnel has metal rails, like train tracks. At the base of each track is a sled which runs upon the rails. After 20 meters, each tube fades into darkness. To one side of each tube is a control box labeled 'Guidance Control'.

Ideally, a Vulture craft is placed on the sled and then steam pressure hurtles it down the track. At the end of the track the sled stops and the Vulture craft flies off. Then the sled rolls back to its rest position.

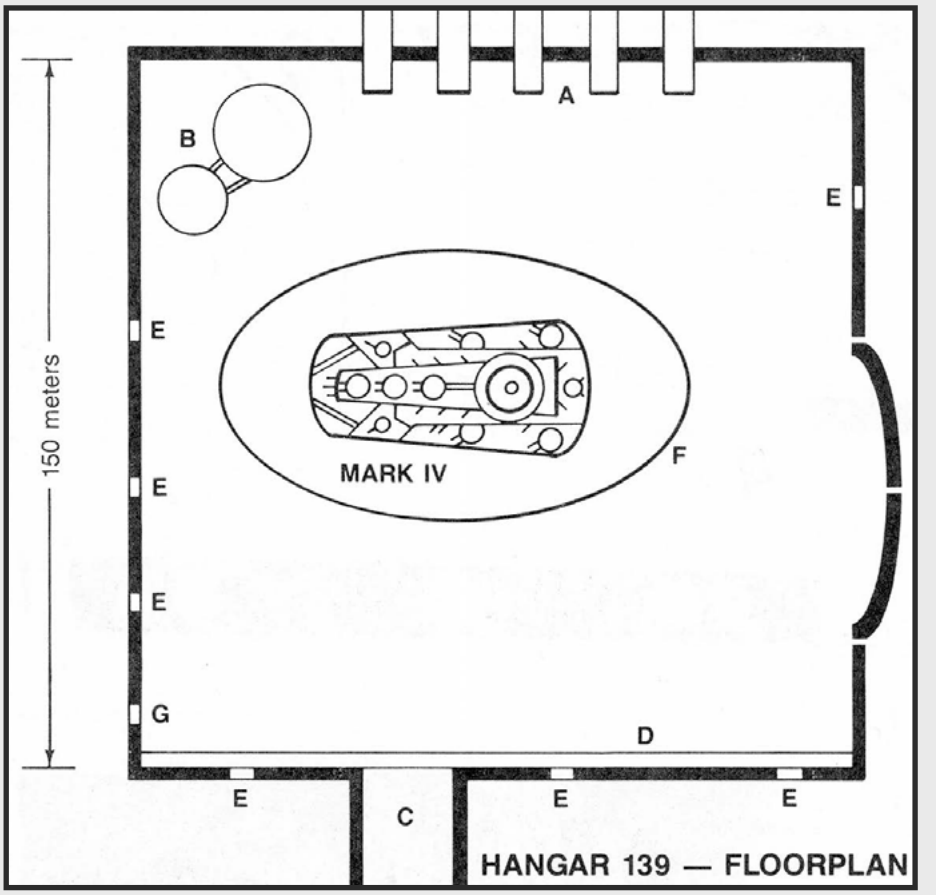
Does anyone want to open a guidance control box? If so, make the PC work at it, really smash it up. However, if your players are of the more loyal (dull) variety…how about that! One of those Vulture goons left one box just swinging open.

Inside the box are three buttons, labeled 1-3.

Button 1: Opens the security door at the far end of the launch tube. When it's open, PCs see blue sky at the end of the tube and feel gentle breezes waft down the tunnel, smelling of fresh-cut grass.

Button 2: Starts the pressure build-up for launch. Without a lot of pressure nothing will happen if Button 3 is pushed. After 30 seconds there's enough pressure to launch. After 60 seconds there's enough pressure to cause an explosion (W2V, 15 meter radius).

Button 3: The actual launch button. Two seconds after this is pushed, the sled is launched. Is anyone on the sled or in the tunnel? If so, they suddenly find themselves several hundred feet over the ocean—assuming they already pushed Button 1. By the way, the launch tubes are built into the side of a cliff…



B. The fuel depot: Vulture squadrons need fuel, and lots of it. These are two very large fuel storage tanks labeled C_6H_{14}. No one would be foolish enough to shoot a laser in the general direction of a fuel depot. Sure. No one.

C. The access corridor: A very long, very large, very dark tunnel from which bad smells and strange sounds emanate. If the PCs want to investigate, have it go on, and on, and on…

Any PC who abandons his post for more than 30 minutes is declared a traitor, terminated and replaced by his clone.

D. The walkway: Rickety, one meter wide and 40 meters above the floor of the hangar. A ladder on each side of the hangar permits access to the walkway. At the top of each ladder is an ancient, rusty sign: 'Guardrails soon to be installed.'

E. Hatchways: Normal hatchways that can't be opened from this side.

F. The yellow line: The yellow line Joseph-B mentioned. Encircles the Mark 4. Citizens must display Security Authorization Forms to cross it.

G. The service entrance: A normal hatchway, except this one has 'Service Entrance' printed on it.

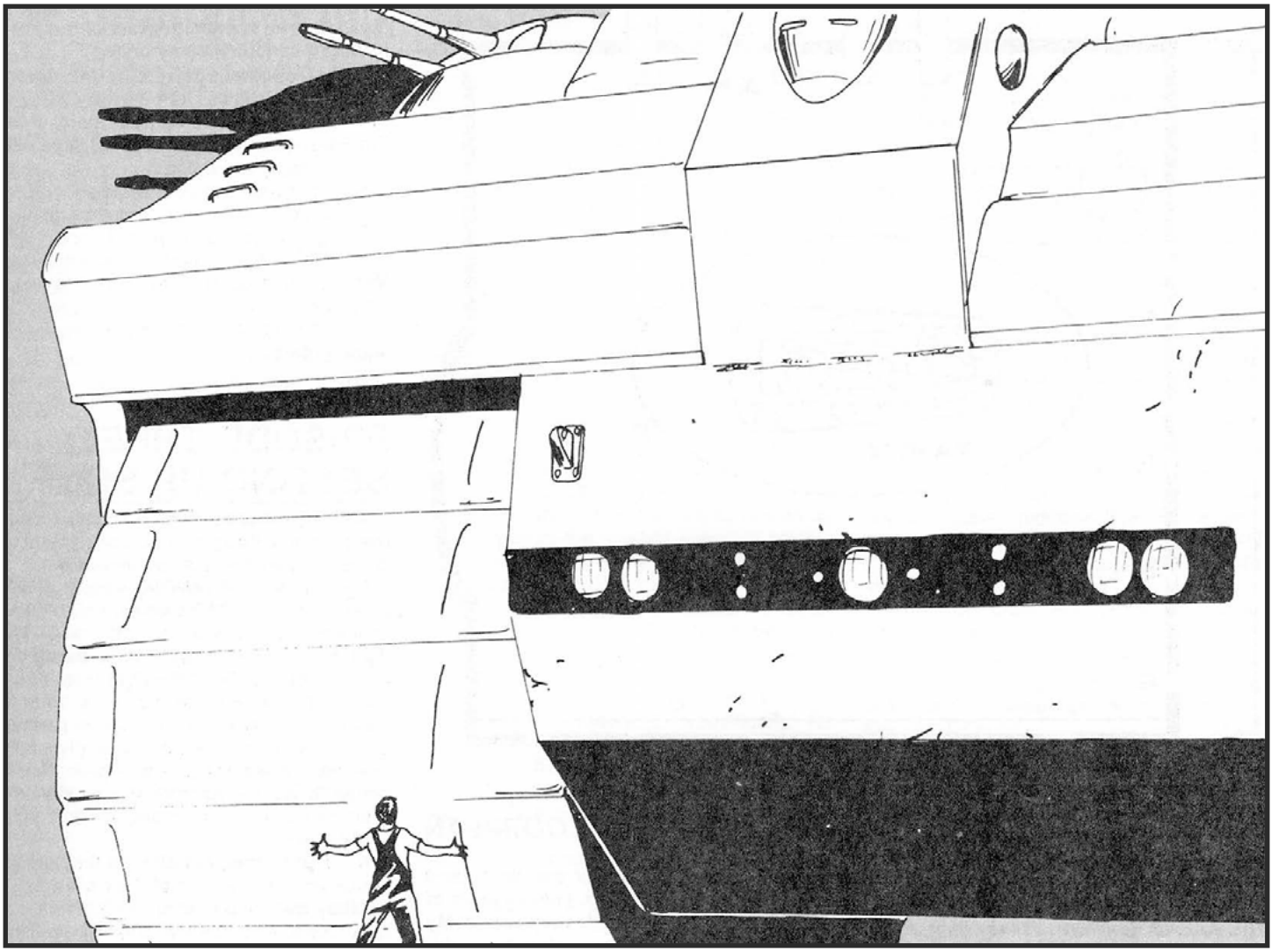
Are any PCs cocky enough to question these assertions? Vaporize them.

If the PCs ever get beyond the initial introduction, Mark 4 immediately wants to know who they are and what they're doing in the hangar. Smart PCs establish a working relationship with Mark 4, a mutual understanding in one of two ways: They can lie or tell the truth.

1. **The Troubleshooters tell the truth:** Probably foolish. Mark 4 reacts very poorly: Here it is, the greatest machine ever created (next to The Computer), and all it rates is a bunch of low-clearance Troubleshooters as guards.

   Naturally, The Computer can verify the orders, if the players think to ask. The end result: Mark 4 is so confused that it spends the rest of the evening having a serious identity crisis.

2. **The Troubleshooters lie:** This opens up a lot of possibilities. All we can say is, keep in mind Mark 4 is very arrogant. Smart PCs play on this—lots of Bootlicking and Con Games. They'll also try to work it so Mark 4 helps them throughout the evening. Good plan. Hope it works.



3: Setting up shop

The Troubleshooters have arrived at the hangar. Naturally, they'll want to break open the mission equipment. A rarity for Alpha Complex, this equipment actually works—*really*.

That's right. For once R&D has delivered the right box, to the right people, at the right time. 'But,' (you say) 'it's going to blow up in their faces, right? Or it's really a box of spare parts from a '57 Chevy, or the box is empty and our Troubleshooters have to explain what happened to all the equipment they signed for. Right?'

Nope: This time not only do they get good equipment, at the start of their mission briefing they were told how to use it. Oh, wait—they were *late* to their mission briefing. Oh, well.

Opening the box

You can't have the players treating this stuff like it's a glob of putty. So do your best to make them—what's that magic word—that's right, *paranoid*.

For example:

GM: So you're opening *The Box*. Okay, who's opening it?

PC-1: Uhh…as mission leader, I think Kay-R, our equipment officer, should…

Kay-R: Oh no you don't.

GM: Are the rest of you standing nearby when they open it?

Who ever thought a couple of simple questions could lead to all that argument, punctuated by all that laser fire?

There's really nothing dangerous about opening the crate. It's just your average shipping box. The Computer *repeatedly* stresses this to the PCs as they're about to open it. Remind them to trust The Computer. The Computer is their friend.

Once the players have it open, read them the following description:

Look at all the pretty things R&D gave you: big boxes, little boxes, a small bot, barrels, a RED crate marked 'Perimeter Defense Equipment'. There's even a big twisty metal thing, with valves and stuff. Wow, and grenades.

This must really be an important mission. Too bad there aren't any instructions. But that's okay; most of this stuff should be easy to figure out.

On the prop page at the end of the mission there's a mission equipment list. Give this to the team leader. It has no useful information, just descriptions of the odds and ends in the crate:

1. Perimeter defense equipment: A RED plastic box two feet on a side. When the players open the box, read the following:

The box is filled to the top with 40 round disks. Each disk is dirty grey in color, two inches thick and slightly smaller than a frisbee. There is also one small metallic box. On top of the small box is a booklet entitled 'Warranty: ACME Home Perimeter Defense Landmines'. The box

has two switches, labeled 'Activate' and 'Deactivate'.

The disks: In all respects these look like ordinary landmines to the PCs.

The booklet: ACME has thoughtfully provided the Troubleshooters with a warranty booklet:

'…the parent service firm, henceforth known as ACME, shall not therefore be whatsoever responsible, should said product be construed or misconstrued as the implement whereby…'

And so on. The players should deduce that you place the mines on the floor and then activate them with the 'Activate' switch.

Note: There is only one activation switch. This is because once this switch is flipped, all the mines become active.

The landmines are 'thinking mines'—they blow up when they think they're supposed to. As soon as the players activate the mines, six metallic spider legs emerge from each mine, and the mines begin to scuttle all over the floor. Mines still in the box climb out to join the mayhem.

Try to imagine 40 superspeed crabs, each headed to what it feels is its 'ideal' hiding place.

Examples of good hiding places are:

- Under, on or in Mark 4
- On one of the PC's legs
- Outside or down the corridor
- On the floor, where they continually try to get themselves stepped on

Remember the 'Road Runner' cartoon in which Wile E. Coyote releases a whole basket of flying dynamite? All through the rest of the show, the flying dynamite keeps showing up at *just* the wrong time … and blows him up… again and again. Well… PCs within ten meters of an exploding mine take W3K impact damage.

P.S. The 'Deactivate' switch doesn't work.

2. Hand grenades: A plastic box, about the size of a small footlocker, filled with 20 grenades.

Do the Troubleshooters want to test these out? Who's first? Courageous PCs quickly discover these are *antigrav* grenades. Anyone within five meters of an exploding grenade hovers ten meters above the hangar floor until the blast effects wear off—in 1d20 combat rounds. Plus, hoverers are easy targets, like shooting fish in a barrel.

The length of the time delay on the grenades depends. R&D kindly provided both kinds: the ten-second kind and the one-second kind. What a useful weapon! Hooray for R&D!

How can you tell them apart? Roll 1d20 when they pull the pin: 1–15—it's the ten-second variety, 16–20—it's not.

3. Petroleum jelly: A 100-liter barrel labeled 'Petroleum Jelly'. This has been mislabeled; it's jellied petroleum (i.e., napalm). Unfortunately, there seems to be no way to get this barrel open. Of course, the Troubleshooters could always pry or shoot it open—but watch those sparks!

4. Lightbot: A very small bot scheduled to be shipped to HPD&MC to be used as a photographer's assistant. Instead, it mistakenly wandered into QED Sector where an INFRARED promptly picked it up and dumped it into the nearest available crate.

The bot answers to the name Mikey-4, has limited intelligence and is only a half-meter tall. Protruding from Mikey's head are various light bulbs, flashbulbs and strobe lights. The head rests on an extendable neck (maximum extension five meters).

The bot is programmed to work as a photographer's assistant, specifically for Junior Citizens' photos. Mikey-4's vocabulary is limited to stock phrases like 'Serve The Computer and sit up straight', and 'Be a good citizen and smile. Only Commies won't smile.'

The first Troubleshooter to act kindly towards Mikey-4 is immediately branded 'The Photographer'. Thereafter, Mikey-4 follows The Photographer around, babbling about how happy it is and how 'even though I'm only a lightbot now, someday I'm gonna be reprogrammed and refitted.'

Should Mikey hear any word which pertains to its program (such as 'light'), it crazedly shines a variety of lights at the person who spoke and starts spewing forth a torrent of its stock phrases.

5. Radiation badges: Tucked in one corner of the mission equipment crate is a box labeled 'Radiation Indicators' (see prop page). Inside this box are 20 credit card-sized radiation indicators and a clear set of instructions. Read:

Greetings. These radiation indicators are included for your safety. Simply clip an indicator to your jumpsuit and periodically check the digital display for a precise reading of your exposure to radiation. In case of exposure, please follow the indicator instructions. Thank you for your cooperation.

Troubleshooters who examine their indicators fail to find any instructions. However, the indicators do have a line of red lights that are all off at the start.

As the mission progresses, some of the indicators may (heh, heh) malfunction. Malfunctioning indicators gradually display rising radiation contamination—the red indicator lights go on one at a time over a period of several hours. In reality, radiation levels in Hangar 139 are perfectly normal. Feel free to have The Computer assure the Troubleshooters of this, should they ask. Remind them how The Computer was right earlier about opening the equipment box.

These are talking indicators. At intervals, the malfunctioning indicators speak to their owners:

'Excuse me, citizen, are you INDIGO-Clearance or higher?' *[Pauses for the Troubleshooter to say 'no'.]*

'Good! Then you are receiving acceptable amounts of radiation.'

The indicators continue to ask questions every hour. As more indicator lights go on, the security clearance for 'acceptable radiation' goes down (BLUE, GREEN, YELLOW, ORANGE, RED) until all the lights are on and the indicator's question reaches INFRARED status.

If a PC ever answers 'yes' to the query, all the lights flash simultaneously, and the indicators repeat in a deep but panic-inducing voice:

'Alert! Alert! Danger! You have received unauthorized levels of radiation. Please report immediately to the nearest docbot for decontamination.'

For the record, decontamination Alpha Complex-style consists of being thrown into a top-loading washer for a rinse and spin-dry.

Never a dull moment in Hangar 139

Sometimes you may think the players are taking too long, or things are getting dull. There are a lot of gags in this mission you can bring into play whenever you feel the need to liven things up. For instance:

Pill effects: Remember the pills? Flashbacks can be lots of fun.

The crabmines: Did they activate the crabmines? Some of the little bastards have got to be hanging around. They can scuttle into play whenever you need them.

Mark 4's boasting: Mark 4 likes to brag. Like most know-it-alls, it can turn everything into a story designed to point out how wonderful it is. Use Mark 4's repeated claims of invincibility to drive your players up a tree.

Mikey-4: Remember the little lightbot? It's really good at getting in the way; pull it out at will.

Radiation indicators: Are these malfunctioning? Not yet? Maybe it's time they started to.

Scrubot: Is the scrubot still around, tipped on its side, maybe? (See Episode 4.) Maybe now is the time for it to start yelling.

Your ever-faithful friend: And, of course, The Computer can always start asking embarrassing questions.

Special effects

The mission equipment crate includes additional gizmos and gadgets. Use these to liven up play:

6. **Sousaphone:** Great for the parade (more on that later).
7. **One quart of White Out:** Highly illegal.
8. **GI Joe with kung fu grip.**
9. **A little red bicycle and wagon.**
10. **An aerosol horn.**
11. **An audio player/recorder and graphic equalizer.**
12. **5,000 marbles.**
13. **Four large rolls of silver duct tape.**
14. **Two pairs of roller skates** (adjustable size).
15. **25 pairs of sunglasses** (brown).
16. **Spare parts from a '57 Chevy**, all stuffed in a box labeled 'Betty'. (So we lied).
17. **50 meters of nylon rope**.

Give your players time to play with everything and check out the hangar. When the fun starts to wane, The Computer interrupts with a message. It expresses its 'highest confidence in each of you' and reminds the Troubleshooters they only have 16 hours left on guard duty.

Already the Troubleshooters have survived exercises, wake-up pills, finding their briefing room, neurowhips, meeting Mark 4 and a crate of excessively dangerous mission equipment, including a bot named Mikey.

Now for the rough stuff.

4: Cleanliness is next to treason

Scrubots keep Alpha Complex clean and shiny. They are important, loyal and efficient. They are also annoying, but harmless. That is, they were until R&D, er… 'fixed' them. Now scrubots are annoying, but dangerous.

In this episode, the Troubleshooters must deal with a persistent scrubot programmed to clean the hangar bay and everything in it. This includes the floors. This includes the characters. This includes Mark 4.

Do you know what a steel scrub-brush does to a delicate bot-brain? Put some lime jello in your left hand. Now clap many times. Hard!

Enter the scrubot

Ahhh…isn't guard duty peaceful? The quiet hum of Mark 4's fission-powered turbine engines. Fellow Troubleshooters alert—relaxed. Your chronobot beeps: 'Only 15 hours till deadline.'

Meanwhile, a scrubot cleans the hangar… in ever-tightening circles. Gradually coming closer… and *closer*… and *CLOSER*.

It's almost to the yellow perimeter line.

The scrubot is cone-shaped with four main arms. It has a pair of treads, plus secondary arms that emerge from various openings to do touch-up work. Printed on the side of the scrubot, in large, block letters is 'Extreme Danger'. Above this…a radiation symbol.

Now, what are the Troubleshooters doing?

If the players say they do nothing, the scrubot crosses the yellow line, cleaning all the way around Mark 4. If they still do nothing, the scrubot begins cleaning Mark 4. (See below for the results.)

If the Troubleshooters confront or challenge the scrubot, read the following to see how to play Scrubot 409-D.

Bots just wanna have fun

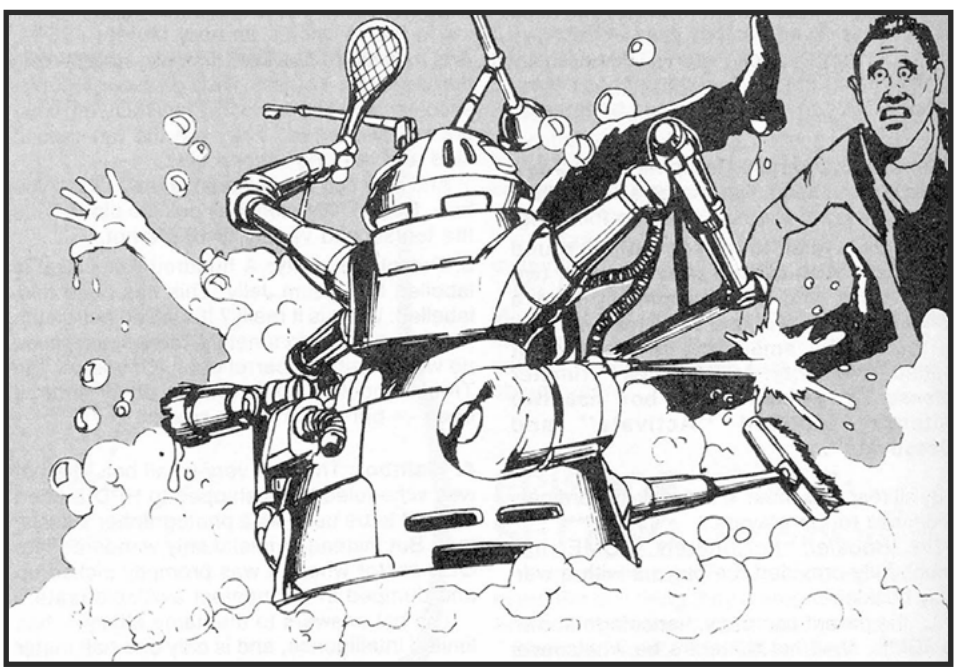
Scrubots have a difficult job keeping Alpha Complex clean, what with all the citizens and traffic and lasers. This stuff (especially the lasers) keeps R&D busy modifying the scrubots. R&D's latest creation: Scrubot Model 409-D.

Words to keep in mind when playing 409: obnoxious, smart-ass, know-it-all, whining, arrogant, vindictive and spoiled. 409-D's idea of fun is cleaning—floors, walls, people who piss him off… it doesn't matter.

409-D's supersensitive microsensors can spot a dirt speck at 20 meters. However, for PCs with inferior visual sensors, 409 was equipped to make things more 'visual'. For example:

409-D: Citizens, please move aside to allow sanitation of Mark 4.
PC: Mark 4 is clean.
409-D: How would you know, laser-whiff?
PC: Listen, this bot is clean, C-L-E-A-N! *[Wipes a finger across part of Mark 4's armor.]*
409-D: Oh yeah? *[A little tube comes out of 409-D's body and squirts a black, oily substance over the PC's head and onto Mark 4.]* Well, Citizen Weaselface, he's not any more!

409-D is not only equipped for standard cleaning duties, but has also been programmed to maintain high levels of personal hygiene among lower-clearance personnel in Alpha Complex. To support this programming, R&D is now working on a new line of grooming attachments. Unfortunately, these attachments are not yet available, so 409-D is forced to use 'alternate grooming equipment': grease solvent for shampoo, a floor scraper for soap



Scrubot 409-D helps a Troubleshooter perform his daily hygiene maintenance.

and ammonia for mouthwash. These will be some of the cleanest Troubleshooters in Alpha Complex.

Beware! He who annoys 409-D is guaranteed to fail 'hygiene inspection'. This can be bad, especially if the character submits (or is submitted to) 409-D for 'Personal Sanitation'. 409-D informs a Troubleshooter if he fails hygiene inspection: 'Hey, you! Vat-stench!'

(**Prop hint:** Get an old spray bottle, fill it with water and the first time someone fails hygiene inspection, let 'em know.)

Sanitation is good. That character will be clean. He'll be so clean you may decide to roll for O5W impact damage.

By the way, 'scrubot' is a demeaning term. 409-D is a 'Sanitation Engineerbot'. Calling 409-D a scrubot is grounds for immediate Personal Sanitation. Other things are also grounds for Personal Sanitation—for example, if 409-D hasn't cleaned anyone in the last five minutes.

How to determine who has failed hygiene inspection: Roll 1d20 in front of the players and have the players count off in a circle. Your players are not stupid. They will count silently to themselves. They will know who is hosed. Hosed players often act impulsively before Sanitation.

Wrapping up the episode

The four ways to wrap up this episode are explained below. If your players don't use one of these four solutions, then they are wrong. (Gamemasters are never wrong.)

1. **Shooting 409-D:** Shooting 409-D is bad. It is bad for 409-D because it explodes. It is bad for characters within 20 meters because they are in the explosion (W3K impact). It is bad for those characters accused of destroying Computer property. But it is especially bad because Hangar 139 remains dirty for a *whole day.* See how bad it is?
2. **Let 409-D clean Mark 4:** If the players allow this, 409-D does a good job. It cleans the treads. It cleans the guns. It uses its 15-meter extension arm to clean the delicate bot-brain—with a steel-needled brush. When 409-D is finished, Mark 4 will have added a new word to its vocabulary: 'Akkk'. This is such a nice word that Mark 4 will not use any others—until it gets a new brain.
3. **Delaying 409-D:** A good solution. It might even work—if the players can delay 409-D for 16 hours.

   Some delay tactics: The PCs can argue with 409-D (see Personal Sanitation). They can shoot it (see Explosion). Or, especially fun, they can tip it over. When tipped, 409-D is quiet until someone walks in. Then it screams its speakers off.
4. **Some other way:**
   a. Rip off an arm and tell 409-D it needs servicing.
   b. Poke out its eyes and tell 409-D it is cleaning Mark 4, as it scrubs the inside of a transbot headed for parts unknown.
   c. Find an INFRARED 'volunteer' to be hygienically scrubbed, many times.
   d. Anything else.

Scrubot 409-D

Size: 1.5 meters tall, body is pear-shaped, one meter wide at base (see illustration on previous page).

Weight: 200 kg

Armor: Reflec E1 (see 'Power' below for effects of shooting 409-D).

Description: Mounted on a twin tread chassis. Four main arms along with several minor ones, which emerge from various openings in its body as necessary. Each arm has a retractable hand, such as a mop hand, vacuum, orbital planer, etc.

Printed on the side of 409's body is a large radiation symbol, with 'EXTREME DANGER' below it in bold, block letters.

Sensors: Two visual sensors, plus another 'eye' on the end of a multijointed arm. This arm can retract into 409-D's body or be extended up to six meters away. (**GM note:** Whenever 409-D is talking to someone, have the eye slowly scan the person's body from a discreet distance—like three millimeters).

Speed: 10 kph (a slow jog).

Power: Model 7 Micropile. (**Note:** Model 7s are known for their reliability, for their endurance and for their tendency to explode with tremendous force when punctured or—yes, you guessed it—shot (W3K impact damage within 20 meters.)

Additional information: 409-D has internal tanks that hold glass cleaner, water and hydrochloric acid. Sometimes 409-D accidentally gets its tanks mixed up. Sometimes it isn't an accident.

5: Whatcha gonna do to my bot?

The Troubleshooters encounter a group of authorized Technical Services personnel who wish to make a few 'minor adjustments' to the Mark 4. This encounter is a measure of the PCs' trust in The Computer. It is also a good measure of their intelligence, because little do our brave Troubleshooters realize, but those jovial, happy-go-lucky Tech Services 'repairmen' are actually fearsome Communist agents in disguise!

You can never put too much trust in your fellow citizen

Now it's time to see if the players understand the meaning of this common Alpha Complex saying. Authorized repairmen come by, asking to have a look at the Mark 4. The PCs certainly wouldn't want to waylay them and risk having them complain of harassment to The Computer.

But the PCs must make sure all standard security measures are followed—to catch any traitors or Commies who have infiltrated Alpha Complex. Troubleshooters are always vigilant. Right? And they want to make sure they aren't making false accusations. False accusations are a bad thing.

Irreparable psychological damage is also a bad thing, but heck, that's gonna be par for the course.

The man, the myth, the legend

For years Alpha Complex has been terrorized by a fierce madman known only as 'Comrade Borscht'. He has led his band of fanatical Communists, the Red Guards Tank Army, through battle after battle against the instrument of Capitalist Oppression, The Computer.

He has recently learned The Computer has manufactured a weapon of immense destructive power, which might put an end to his successful resistance.

The ever-daring, brilliant and scheming—but always treasonous!—Comrade Borscht plans to lead four Communist operatives on a mission to do some 'creative servicing' on Mark 4's robotic brain.

They have everything they need for the job: some burnt-out electronics equipment found lying in a dumpster behind QED Sector R&D, six high-explosive cone rifle shells stripped from a dead Armed Forces guard, and four signed and approved copies of pages 97 and 304 of the *Security Authorization Application Guide*.

Unknown to Internal Security, Comrade Borscht is actually Vlad-G-ADR-4, Head of QED Sector Office of Troubleshooter Assignment and Security Authorization. He knew about the Mark 4 long before the Troubleshooters were

called in on the scene and is determined to see it destroyed.

At your service!

You hear a bit of static and then your chronobot announces 'Only 13 hours till deadline.'

On the far side of the hangar, by the Service Entrance, a light goes on and four men step through. One is GREEN Clearance, the others YELLOW. They all carry tool boxes and large bundles of wire.

Unless the PCs start firing at the repairmen as soon as they enter the hangar, the repairmen present the proper Security Authorization Forms, and the GREEN Clearance leader addresses the Troubleshooter team leader:

'Werry glad to be meetink you am I, Fred-G-ANM, from QED Sector Tech Serwices. Please to allow us fix *rrro*bot. Intrroducink to you my fellow Comm—*panions,* who assist me in minor tune-ups to Marrk 4.

'Here are Securrity Authorrization Forrrms for self and men. Trrrustink you find ewerrything in orrder.'

Vlad-G-ADR-4 is a portly, wrinkled man with slightly greying hair and big, bushy eyebrows. He pronounces all *V*s as *W*s, and slightly trills his *R*s. He learned to speak 'Russian' when he had close dealings with some Romantics a few years back. If the PCs ask about his strange affectation, he says he 'once had mouth o*perrr*ation after tryink to svallow Happiness Pill.'

If the player characters haven't blown Vlad-G away just based on his accent, they might demand to search through the Tech Services toolkits. By no means suggest this idea to them, but if they ask to do so, let them.

The satchels contain only spare fiber optics cables, jumpstarting cables, one chainsaw, a ball peen hammer, six high-explosive cone rifle shells and a copy of *The Communist Manifesto.*

If the players notice either the book or the shells, the Tech Services 'repairmen' all unholster sonic pistols and pull out scripts from their pockets. They read their scripts aloud and in unison. Fred-G-ANM (Comrade Borscht) leads the hollering like a conductor, with appropriate hand gestures:

'Hey! What arrre you puttink in my satchel! Dat doesn't belong dere! Hey, arrre you trryink to *frrrame* us!?! Help, Computer, help! Watch out, dey have explosives! Oh no, I think dey're Communists! Help! We are outnumbered! Heeeeeelp!'

With the final cry for help, they open fire on the PCs.

They make this believable to The Computer by all shouting the same words in unison. The Computer knows all loyal citizens think alike and act in unison when confronted with the threat of Communism. Meanwhile, the Troubleshooters are all probably shouting different things, or saving their breath and just firing away.

Thus, The Computer believes, the real Communists are actually loyal citizens being attacked by cruel Communist traitors. Thinking this, it dispatches 12 Vulture Squadron troopers with semi-automatic slugthrowers, who arrive in minutes.

However, if the players didn't search the satchels and still haven't lasered the 'repairmen', the repairmen approach Mark 4 and address the hulking warbot:

'Marrrk 4, we have authorization for makink of rrrepairs. Please to shut down to rrreserve power until finishink of our worrrk.' The repairmen hold up Security Authorization Forms and Overhaul Servicing Authorization Forms.

With a subsiding rumble, Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 disengages its nuclear-powered turbine engines. The hangar becomes ominously quiet. The Tech Services repairmen nod and smile at each other.

Loyal citizens think and act alike when confronted with the specter of Communism.

Into the breach

The Commies just have to do a little button-pushing here and a little wire-snipping there, and Mark 4 will fall to pieces. But with Troubleshooters around, it's hard to avoid discovery. Comrade Borscht hopes the Troubleshooters are so scattered trying to keep track of him and his three lackeys that one of them gets a chance to do the necessary 'repairs'.

The four repairmen split up and head for different access hatches. One (armed with two cone rifle shells) ducks through Mark 4's treads. Another (equipped with another two shells and the chainsaw) heads for the ladder on the rear of the warbot. The next repairman (with one shell and a ball peen hammer) goes up a ladder on the side of Mark 4. Fred-G (with the last shell in his satchel and the copy of *The Communist Manifesto*) starts climbing a ladder on the front. They seem to be happily going about their work. Ask the Troubleshooters what they want to do now.

Should the Troubleshooters try to tag after the 'repairmen', you may wish to dissuade them by hinting at the possible risks of crawling around on Mark 4:

PC-1: I'll follow the guy going up the back.
GM: The sign next to the ladder says 'Authorized Technicians Only'. Do you still want to follow him?
PC-1: Uh, maybe not.
PC-2: I'll go after the one that ducked through the treads.
GM: He's crawling up through a hatch on the bottom of the Mark 4. A sign next to the hatch says 'Danger! Radiation! Nuclear Reactor'.
PC-2: Forget it.
PC-3: I'll follow the guy going through the hatch on the side. I don't care about any signs. *[An obvious tough-customer type.]*
GM: Okay, but you better be quick about it, because the hatch is closing right now!
PC-3: All right, I'll jump for it… *[Gulps.]*

Or you may prefer to let the PCs go after the Commie repairmen, undeterred by warnings or signs. You can let them think their mission to protect the Mark 4 also gives them the authority

to roam around the warbot's innards. They're wrong, but let 'em find out for themselves.

If the PCs weren't fast enough making up their minds, or they change their minds and want to follow the 'repairmen', or if they hear muffled explosions coming from inside Mark 4 and want to investigate, they have to get in through the access hatches.

Ordinarily this would be no easy task. Standard Alpha Complex security access hatches are tough enough to withstand heavy explosions. Their security access codes are at least nine digits long. Too bad the codes haven't been set yet. They are still set at their default value: 999-999-999.

Any Troubleshooter with hypersenses can see or hear the 'repairmen' enter the codes on the keypad beside the hatch. If no one on the Troubleshooter team has such a mutation, this might be a short mission. At your option, one of the Commies might have 'left a hatch open'.

Hard on the inside, too

If you want to run scenes inside Mark 4, you can wing the interior descriptions as your whim dictates ('It's just like the big mining ship *Nostromo* in *Alien*' or 'Imagine the battleship *Missouri* on steroids'). Alternately, you can take a cue from the actual Mark 4 interior maps and descriptions in *Alpha Complexities*, the full-length mission reprinted later in this volume.

Mark 4 is not without internal defenses. An entire platoon of bots of various sizes and functions roam Mark 4's conduits and corridors. Six guardbots, 12 jackobots and 20 scrubots maintain and protect the giant warbot. They police the tremendous machinery, scoping out loose wires, bits of weathered metal or Communists trying to plant high-explosive cone rifle shells in the works.

The bots ignore the 'repairmen' if they show their Overhaul Servicing Authorization Forms. The Troubleshooters, however, have no Overhaul Servicing Authorization Forms and won't be ignored. Instead, guardbots 'escort' them to the warbot's Internal Detention Center. The bots throw captured Troubleshooters into cramped cells, where the PCs find four skeletons dressed in GREEN R&D uniforms…

The Troubleshooters face an interesting dilemma. They can try to avoid or fight the guardbots and continue following the 'repairmen', or they can leave, or they might come up with an interesting idea of their own.

One final note on Mark 4's bots: If any shooting starts inside the warbot, the bot attendants declare open season on everyone in the hull. The guardbots try to kill both Troubleshooters and Commies alike, and take no one's word as valid. The jackobots dismantle anyone they can get their vice-like mandibles on, and the scrubots spray ammonia in everyone's eyes and block the narrow corridors and accessways.

By the time the Communists reach their targets, the Troubleshooters are probably scattered throughout the crawlways and corridors of Mark 4's labyrinthine hull. Some might have been able to keep up with the Commie infiltrators, while others might have stayed outside, protecting the Mark 4 from any external threat. Others will be battling or running from Mark 4's army of bots, and maybe a few are trying to kill the 'repairmen' or each other.

These are the best kind of action scenes in ***PARANOIA***. Keep jumping from one part of the action to another, to get everyone in on the fun. Interrupt a raging gun battle between the Commies and the Troubleshooters in the engine room to cut to a PC trapped by a pair of enraged jackobots wielding soldering guns and blowtorches, and then skip to a PC wrestling a 'repairman' in the magazine while the timer on a high-explosive shell keeps ticking and ticking…

Wrench in the works

The Communists have three targets. If they can discombobulate any one of the three locations, they have succeeded.

If the Troubleshooters do not interfere, the Communists destroy whichever systems you want. If the Troubleshooters stop the Communists, but the Commies manage to detonate their cone rifle shells, the systems are only damaged, not destroyed.

Target 1: The brain

Hidden amongst the immensity of Mark 4, located at the highest (and most heavily armored) point, is the core of Mark 4—its brain.

If the Commies destroy the brain, Mark 4 is useless. If the brain is only damaged, Mark 4 turns into a raving lunatic when reactivated, screeching 'Exterminate! Exterminate!' It cuts down the Troubleshooters (and anyone else in the vicinity) with a steady stream of tacnuke shells.

If the brain is damaged or destroyed, there is no immediate catastrophic result. But when The Computer eventually finds out, the PCs are turned into food-vat gruel.

Target 2: The magazine

The warbot's magazine contains over 500 tacnuke warheads, not to mention thousands of 450mm high-explosive shells, hundreds of napalm warheads… you get the idea. The magazine is located on the level right below the bridge.

If the magazine is damaged, destroyed, shot, lasered, burnt or repeatedly hammered, it explodes with a deafening 'KA-THOOOOM!', killing everyone in and around the Mark 4, the hangar and adjacent sectors of Alpha Complex.

Target 3: The nuclear-powered engines

The third target is the warbot's nuclear-powered fission turbine engines. The engines are located on the lowest level, accessible through a hatch in the bottom of Mark 4.

Fission turbines are kept cool by circulating water around them. If the water doesn't circulate properly, the engines could overheat and break down. If the water stops circulating completely, the engine not only breaks down, but actually starts to melt.

The water used to keep the engine cool eventually becomes irradiated, and must be handled with caution. If not handled with caution, it makes people sick. (Are the PCs wearing their radiation indicators?) If the Troubleshooters ever get sick because of irradiated water, take a time-out from the mission and have The Computer explain this to them.

If the turbines are damaged or destroyed, there's a radioactive water leakage, as well as a few other nasty problems:

- Everyone in the engine room dies almost instantly from the radiation.
- The rest of the Mark 4 interior becomes irradiated in two hours due to flooding. Radiation poisoning affects anyone still in the warbot. Radiation also fuses all the electronics systems of Mark 4's attendant bots.
- Three hours after the turbines are destroyed, the reactor finally melts down. Everyone in the hangar dies quickly from the radiation. The Troubleshooters can prevent this by manually turning a wheel in the engine room. The wheel inserts graphite damper rods into the fission pile, shutting the fission reaction down. Of course, anyone who enters the radiation-filled engine room to turn the wheel dies about ten minutes later.

Should your mission fail…

If Comrade Borscht ever gets caught in a firefight that is going against him, or presented with any other threat that smacks of defeat, he uses his mutant power of Teleportation to whisk himself away. His men, however, continue their missions to the death.

If the Communists succeed in their mission, they exit the way they came and fade into the far expanses of Alpha Complex.

After the dust settles

If any Troubleshooter brings the vile fiend Borscht to justice (or lasers him, if that would be more convenient), and tell The Computer all about this high-ranking Communist, it would be a miracle. But miracles do happen (even in Alpha Complex), and if one should occur, shower the responsible PC(s) with 1,000 credits and a year's supply of Hot Fun Dessert. But Borscht's next clone will be back in action later in the mission.

As long as Mark 4's magazine didn't detonate, the engines didn't melt down and the brain hasn't been damaged in any way, there should still be enough of Mark 4 left to be repaired for the field test at the end of the mission.

After Tech Services mops up the blood and activates clones backups, the PCs gain a brief moment of respite before another group enters the hangar.

Identical in number and dress to the first group, they ask if they can make some minor repairs to the Mark 4. These are actually real Tech Services repairmen, but they seem to have forgotten their Security Authorization Forms back at the office.

If the PCs let the repairmen off the hook to go back to get their Security Authorization Forms, the repairmen return shortly with the required forms.

If the PCs laser the repairmen, The Computer finds out and executes Troubleshooters who murdered loyal citizens; a new group of repairmen is also dispatched.

If the players just detain the Tech Services personnel and report to The Computer, it awards them 100 credits apiece. The repairmen are issued a stern warning and a 100cr fine for forgetting to bring their orders.

Once the matter has been settled, the repairmen reset the codes on the security access hatches, just so no one gets any funny ideas later in the mission.

6: Alpha Complex Road Runners Club

To be clear: The Computer never tells you to do one thing, and then turns around and tells you to do another—so that no matter what you do, you get executed as a Commie traitor. Never.

Five ULTRAVIOLET joggers run through Hangar 139 every day. The Troubleshooters aren't supposed to let anyone in the hangar, because their mission is to guard some super-secret equipment. If they let anyone in, they're gonna get yelled at. And if they don't let 'em in, they're gonna get yelled at anyway.

Read:

Being a Troubleshooter is cool—and guard duty is fun. It's so fun you don't even notice how incredibly boring it is. You haven't seen anything move for over two hours, except for your chronobot, and all it said was, 'Ten hours until deadline.'

But you're not bored. With most jobs, if you stare at a wall for two hours, you'd get bored—but not guard duty.

Of course, it isn't always this way. Sometimes you get to see some neat stuff—like those five ULTRAVIOLETs who just entered the hangar—running right towards Mark 4.

Five out-of-shape, sweaty, smelly ULTRAVIOLETs dressed in cut-off white sweatshirts that say 'STATE', metallic-silver sweat pants, high-clearance-prisoner-made running shoes and ULTRAVIOLET Security Clearance badges are headed straight toward Mark 4.

Here we come…

That's right, five ULTRAVIOLET joggers running right towards the Restricted Zone. If the Troubleshooters are feeling uppity and want to stop the ULTRAVIOLETs, let them. The UVs turn and stare at the guilty Troubleshooter with utter disdain. Let's hope the PC had a good reason to interfere with five ULTRAVIOLETs.

Like most joggers, these UVs run the same route every day…regardless. Guess what's in their way?

The five joggers run right through the yellow line, right up to Mark 4 and continue to run in place. Then the sweatiest of them, Jess-U-TWE, stops jogging, turns, staggers up to the nearest Troubleshooter and pants, 'Who… *whezzz*—parked this—*whezzz*—circuit-board-mutant—*whezzz*—in our gym? Get it out of here—*sweat, whezzz*—that's an order!'

That's right, remove the Mark 4.

Mark 4 vs the ULTRAVIOLETs

To Mark 4, The Computer is mommy and ULTRAVIOLETs are its sibling rivals. However, Mark 4 realizes it's the new kid in the creche, and if it makes trouble, its big brothers and sisters will have it disconnected. Thus, Mark 4 remains notably silent in the presence of ULTRAVIOLETs, only speaking when they directly address it, and answering in a squeaky, whining voice.

Mark 4 is extremely hesitant about disobeying its original programming, which was: '*Remain within this perimeter until 0800 tomorrow, when an R&D representative will arrive to escort you to the Armed Forces test grounds.*' However, ULTRAVIOLETs can be, er, persuasive.

Catch-22 meets *1984*

As we all know, ULTRAVIOLETs are a very understanding lot, and these guys are no exception. (For a personality profile of each jogger, see the box nearby.) As far as their general attitude goes, think of these guys as a bunch of kids in a toy store their dad just bought, because they wanted it!

What's going to happen when the Troubleshooters are ordered to remove the Mark 4 is anybody's guess. So to help you out we've made a handy flowchart (see the end of the mission). It shows the consequences of various actions. Just start in the middle and follow it to the end.

One thing to keep in mind while using this flowchart is it ain't the law. For example:

Troubleshooter Doug-R: Uhh, we'll move this bot immediately.

Team leader Bob-Y: Are you crazy? Our orders were…

Jess-U-TWE: *[Interrupting.]* Doug-R, I promote you to GREEN Clearance for exemplary past service. You are now also mission leader. Carry out your orders.

Bob-Y: You can't—!

Jess-U: *[Interrupting again.]* Doug-G, terminate Bob-Y-GRT-2 immediately for treasonous behavior.

That's a wrap

All good things must come to an end, but don't think this is a hopeless situation. Well, maybe the flowchart *is* hopeless, but the whole idea is to avoid the flowchart. With a little thought, the Troubleshooters can wriggle out of this one. For example, one PC might say, 'Oh High Programmer, I assume R&D told you of the new Commie-killing germ they're going to test on us, in about three minutes?'

If, on the other hand, your players figure it out too quickly, feel free to gum up the works a little. Have one of the ULTRAVIOLETs, in the midst of yelling at the Troubleshooters, keel over from a heart attack.

Relax. Enjoy. Torment.

A.C.R.R.C.

Here's a rundown (no pun intended) on the personalities of those sweet, lovable ULTRAVIOLET joggers.

Jess-U-TWE-6: Computer genius extraordinaire and unofficial A.C.R.R.C. leader. Quick to take command. Quick to give orders. Quick to execute. All around, the personification of the ideal ULTRAVIOLET.

Cal-U-RXT-2: Possessor of the treasonous Machine Empathy mutation, Cal-U has always used this ability to his best advantage. No one would have believed someday he'd rise through the ranks to become the Mind Control Coordinator, but it's true. A kind and gentle sort, Cal-U has no idea his mutation exists. Instead, he assumes all Alpha Complex citizens relate to The Computer as well as he can.

Cal-U is quick to become enraged at anyone who can't understand him. The Computer always understands, so why can't people? After having things explained to them in a nice, fatherly voice, the Troubleshooters are apt to see a radical personality shift in Cal-U if they fail.

Lot-U-DJI-1: Lot-U really loves Alpha Complex. Where else could you go from being an INFRARED janitor to ULTRAVIOLET Director of DOA Sector in just one week! Yeah, that was the best gag he's pulled since joining the Computer Phreaks. Hee hee! The look on Dan-U-DER's face when The Computer told him he'd been demoted to INFRARED. Guess *he* won't be pushing any more INFRARED janitors around.

Lot-U is an all-around swell guy, a great kidder, and he's always willing to do favors for friends (anonymously, of course). Any Troubleshooter who goes out of his way to do something nice for Lot-U (or makes him laugh) is apt to find himself suddenly promoted to BLUE Clearance about 15 minutes after the joggers leave the hangar. What a guy!

Kim-U-FXJ-5: Credits, credits, credits. What a lovely word. Oh, and the things credits can buy! Kim-U-FXJ is the Director of Fine Collection and Credit Dispersal, a major subdivision of CPU.

Also, not surprisingly, Kim-U belongs to Free Enterprise. Even though she's receiving thousands of credits a week in commissions and sales tax (a new innovation of Kim-U's) from lower-clearance Free Enterprise sales-citizens, Kim-U is never above making a few on the side just to stay in shape. Kim-U leads the Troubleshooters away one at a time and offers to sell them genuine autographed pictures of Teela O'Malley for only 100 credits. She's got 1,000 of them.

Kim-U is willing to haggle on price. But if a Troubleshooter stonewalls her, Kim-U tries a new tack, ordering the Troubleshooter to stand at attention and prepare for inspection. Needless to say, the Troubleshooter fails inspection and she fines him 200 credits. Kim-U demands instant payment. Appealing to The Computer only makes matters worse.

Anne-U-JXT-8: Anne-U is Supervisor of Clone Development, Breeding & Replacement (CDB&R), a division of Tech Services. Anne-U enjoys her work. She spends much of her spare time researching how to improve clone quality (i.e., she keeps a harem).

Any good-looking male Troubleshooter (read: a vexatious male PC) attracts Anne-U's attention. After this mission she has him promoted and assigned to assist in CDB&R. Doesn't sound too bad? Well, maybe not for the first week, but after that Anne-U has him 'broken down' so she can research his each individual cell.

Of course the Troubleshooter doesn't know this; all he knows is, Anne-U seems to be unusually attracted to him.

Butch-U-VFV-6: A Special Officer in Armed Forces. It's a tough job, but Butch-U is a tough guy. Make that a tough, tall guy (220cm). Butch-U's favorite pastime is picking up (with one hand) people who annoy him and throwing them against the nearest wall.

To any Troubleshooter who shows any kind of hesitation or caution, Butch-U delivers one of his famously loud 'Moxie lectures'. If there's one thing Butch-U can't stand, it's *weak*-kneed, *narrow*-shouldered, *wim*py *Trouble*shooters!

7: The kids are all right

Junior Citizens, field trip, teacherbot: Sounds frightening, doesn't it?

A bunch of 'the best and brightest of Alpha Complex' decide to 'take in the hangar' as part of their creche's supplementary field trip. And their lovable old teacherbot just doesn't have the heart (or programming) to say no.

So it's up to the Troubleshooters to 'educate' the tykes. Read:

The hangar is quiet. Your chronobot beeps and announces, 'Only eight hours until deadline.'

Over the address system you hear:

'There's nothing more important to The Computer than Junior Citizens. Today's children are tomorrow's loyal citizens. And it's up to all Alpha Complex citizens to educate and guide our children so they'll grow up to be responsible citizens serving your friend, The Computer.

'This message brought to you by PAO, the Public Awareness Office of HPD&MC. Remember: The Computer is YOUR friend!'

No sooner has this 'very important' message ended, when one of the minor side doors slides open and in rolls a teacherbot followed by 12 well-mannered Junior Citizens. The children seem stunned by the awesome hangar and the stupendous Mark 4.

It's now or never for our Troubleshooters. These are your typical streetwise kids, and they aren't gonna stay stunned for long. If the Troubleshooters use a firm hand, they've got about 15 seconds to hussle the little brats out. After that…

As you watch, the little tykes' eyes start to grow as they scan the hangar, almost like they're in a candy depository. Then you hear 12 simultaneous squeals as the youngsters each tear off in a separate direction—two for the steam launchers, three towards Mark 4, two towards the fuel depot, one for a ladder to the catwalk, three to the mission equipment. One fat-faced kid stands obediently by the teacherbot. What do you do?

The Troubleshooters have missed their golden opportunity. From now on it's all down-tunnel.

How to play the kids

As bratty as your players can stand. They like to climb stuff, but they don't like to climb down, sort of like cats. For example, a Troubleshooter sees a little girl climbing on a pole extending off Mark 4, 15 meters above the floor:

PC: Hey, you, get down from there!

Susie: No, and you can't make me. And I'm gonna tell my friend, The Computer, you're a Commie.
PC: *[Looks around nervously and tries a new approach.]* If you come on down, right now, I'll let you wear my cap.
Susie: Hurray, I get to wear a real Troubleshooter cap! *[Pauses for a few moments, and then starts crying.]*
PC: Hey, little citizen, what's the matter?
Susie: I can't get down. *[Sob.]* I'm scared.

Will our Troubleshooter risk his own life and climb out to the end of the pole? Will Susie thank him for his selfless act? Or will she just demand that he give her his cap?

Other shticks for the kids

1. **Stealing:** They're all packrats. If it ain't glued down, it's fair game. An example of something to steal would be the control box to the crabmines (if they aren't activated yet), a laser, grenades, credits, ME Cards, a Troubleshooter's extra laser barrels, authorization forms, etc.
2. **Breaking stuff:** Fuel valves, Computer consoles, security cameras, etc.
3. **Lying and general obnoxious behavior:**

   Bobby: *[Pointing at a PC.]* I saw that Troubleshooter pass a secret message to a Commie who was hiding by that access corridor.
   PCs: [*Laser. Laser. Laser.]*
   Bobby: Ha ha ha! Kidding.

4. **Pranks:** Ranging from the simple (tripping a Troubleshooter) to the elaborate. For example:

   Ricky: Mr. Troubleshooter, sir. My friend Bobby went up that tunnel and he hasn't come back. *[He points to one of the steam launchers…]*
   PC: *[Grumbles and stalks down the corridor. About halfway to the end he hears a pleasant kind of hissing sound sort of like steam building up before a launch…]*

5. **Opening stuff:** Kids get into anything.

   PC: OK, I'm gonna try to catch the little brat climbing up Mark 4.
   GM: Right. You see him disappear behind a dual-mount Laser 3 battery.
   PC: I follow.
   GM: You go behind the guns, but there isn't any sign of the kid. However, there is a hatchway… open.

Characterize the kids using well-known stereotypes:

- The red-haired, freckle-faced bully.
- The four-eyed brain.
- The spoiled little girl who does nothing but cause trouble and then cry to The Computer about the mean Commie Troubleshooter who hurt her.
- The shy, quiet one who never does anything wrong (but is always nearby when things break, or burn, or explode).
- The twins.
- The star pupil.

'Sorry, kids, this is a restricted area.'

The teacherbot

'Children should be seen, not heard.'

It's sayings like these that get teacherbots disconnected (because half the time you won't even see the little monsters coming). Working with a bunch like this would fray anyone's connecting circuits. But that doesn't sway teacherbot Apl-TRE/e from her duty.

Maybe a little unstable, this teacherbot still means well. And she's a great protector of the kids. For example:

PC: Gimme that! *[Snatches a grenade from Susie.]*
Susie: Waaaah, that Commie Troubleshooter just stole my toy.
Apl-TRE/e: You ought to be ashamed! *[Snatches the grenade from the Troubleshooter and hands it back to Susie. As the teacherbot lectures the PC and threatens to report his behavior to The Computer, Susie pulls the pin and drops the grenade in the Troubleshooter's backpack.]*

On the bright side, Apl-TRE/e can't take much punishment. She's on her last treads. One good blast will probably finish her off. Of course, the Troubleshooter who blasts her is guilty of destroying valuable Computer property.

But remember, these Junior Citizens are a pain, and it'll be a pain collecting them. Killing them is not an option. At the first shots (even if the kids are doing the shooting), teacherbot calls The Computer, and there's a platoon of IntSec guards in the hangar before you can say 'child abuse'.

If I had a rocket launcher

If the PCs can't figure out how to round up the kids, don't worry. An hour after they enter, the teacherbot claps her hands, at which point the kids all line up obediently and follow her out of the hangar.

But if the Troubleshooters have blown away their favorite schoolmarm, it's another story. How are those lovable tykes gonna get home?

The PCs can request a replacement teacherbot (or send a couple of team members out to 'recruit' one), or they might try expunging the little monsters (remember the steam catapults).

However, if the kids are still around after two hours, nature starts to take its course. The Troubleshooters face a crash course in parenting and child-care. Make their ears ring with constant cries of 'I'm hungry'; 'I have to go to the bathroom'; 'I feel sick' and 'I'm sleepy, tell me a story.' This goes on as long as the players put up with it. Maybe longer.

Or if you get bored, an annoyed vice-principalbot—nasty, obnoxious and heavily armed—shows up to take them home.

MARK 4
8: Something falls off

Episode summary

Something falls off.

Setup

With only six hours to go, the Troubleshooters have probably gotten the idea: Be alert, stop Commie infiltrators and fight off direct attacks. Standard stuff. There probably isn't any emergency the PCs couldn't handle!

'To further elaborate on my superiority,' booms Mark 4, 'my neutronium-enhanced blast armor can withstand a direct—*KLUNK*—iapoziot. Poing.'

Lying on the ground beside one of Mark 4's treads is a two-meter wide, gray, multipronged device. It appears to have just fallen off Mark 4.

The chronobot announces 'Only six hours remaining.'

Is Mark 4 damaged? Maybe we'd better ask.

Hmm. Mark 4 won't answer. Maybe it's in shock because it just realized its own mortality. Well, we're sure Mark 4 will be itself again. Once it's fixed.

Some of the PCs probably want to examine the thing that fell off. There's not much to tell, except the object is completely unrecognizable to anyone without a Meteorology rating of 07.

On the bright side, if they look really hard, they'll find a serial number—34t879-117—on one of its appendages.

Unfortunately, the serial number is totally useless information, except it earns a 250cr fine if mentioned to The Computer.

Fixing the bot

Don't panic! We're sure the Troubleshooters will straighten things out before you can say 'clone replacement'. Some common approaches:

1. **Telling The Computer:** Admirable. They deserve a gold star for honesty. They also deserve to be vaporized—for allowing the Mark 4 to be damaged. The Computer is cruel but fair.
2. **Fixing Mark 4:** Anyone climbing onto Mark 4 can use the Weapon and Armor Maintenance specialty to determine the device's origin. But just because he misses his roll, don't leave him empty-handed:

   GM: You've found where the thing fell off.
   PC: Great! I'll try to put it back.
   GM: OK. But it's not going to be easy carrying that thing out to the end of that skinny pipe…30 meters above the floor of the hangar.
   PC: *Gulp!*

   If the character finds where the device belongs (or where he thinks it belongs), then he may try to reattach it using Weapon and Armor Maintenance skill.

   Naturally, failure to reattach the piece means *another* piece falls off.
3. **Calling R&D:** Naive but loyal Troubleshooters might call R&D to get the Mark 4 repaired. Regardless of who the Troubleshooters talk to, these events occur:
   A. The person to whom they are speaking screams, 'Oh my Computer, they've damaged Mark 4! Alert, alert!'
   B. Every siren in Hangar 139 goes off, making communication impossible. (Imagine being right next to the speakers at a rock concert.)
   C. Three minutes later, 20 Vulture Squadron goons burst in, guns blazing. End of story.
4. **What missing piece?:** A more elegant solution: throw it away. This is especially risky, because R&D is guaranteed to notice something is wrong—when Mark 4 doesn't move or talk. Do you think R&D will take responsibility? Neither do we.

Please don't get the idea that the players are automatically hosed. Nosiree. It's just that the obvious solutions aren't always the best. Certainly a creative bunch will think of something, like abducting—err, *recruiting*—someone from R&D who can fix Mark 4.

Ideally, the Troubleshooters can repair Mark 4. This is good. Mark 4 should be repaired. After all, it's very important for a super-combot to have a functioning barometer.

Once the repairs are made, Mark 4 buzzes right back in, picking up where it left off.

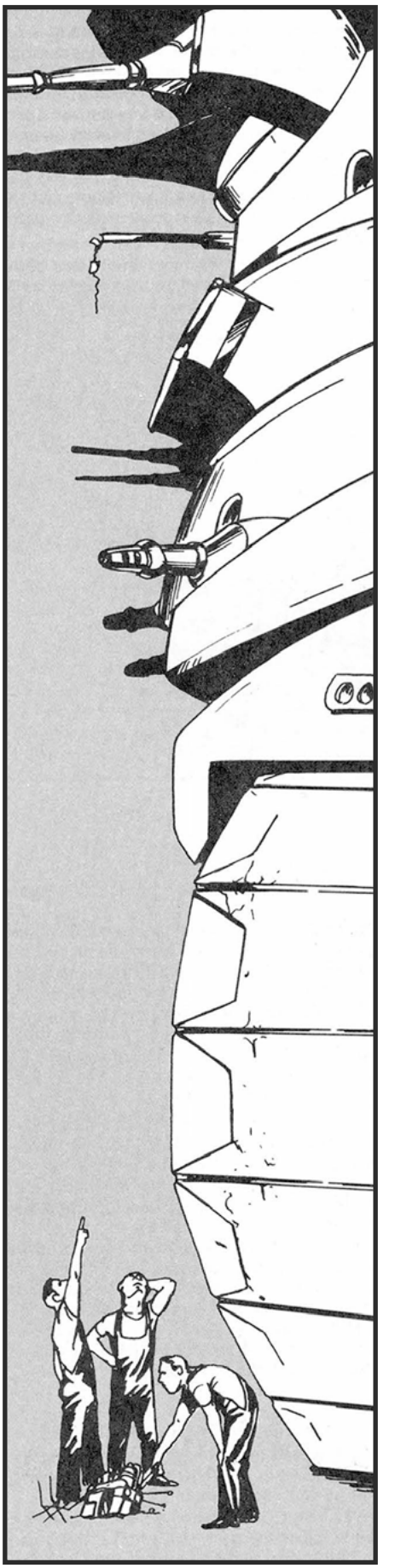
Read this aloud:

'—hit from a tacnuke shell!' booms Mark 4.

As far as Mark 4 is concerned, nothing has happened. Everything is fine. If pressed, it admits:

'My mnemonic circuits were accessed by a random energy flare, creating a nanosecond illusion of incapability and inefficiency.'

If questioned further, Mark 4 becomes tense and edgy. This causes it to make a mistake: it does *not* use its laser cannon to eliminate the citizen upsetting it. It uses the rapid-fire tacnuke cannon instead. No problem; the explosions won't harm Mark 4.



9: Commies to the left of me, traitors to the right

Once again, the infamous Comrade Borscht (*boo! hiss!*) has organized his notorious band of marauders, the First Red Guards Tank Army.

Multiplying in numbers like yeast in a petri dish, the Commies have once again massed in force for a full frontal assault against the agents of Alpha Complex. This time, their goal is nothing less than the destruction of the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4.

Prelude to battle

Ah, peace and quiet. In Alpha Complex, these are sure signs of an impending attack.

Encourage the PCs to put their feet up, sit back and relax. Tell them how quiet everything seems. Have The Computer inquire about how safe everyone feels under the protective shadow of Mark 4's 400mm (16-inch) guns. Proclaim how beautiful Alpha Complex looks: even the shell holes and scorch marks.

Do this for about three minutes, until they are nervous, trigger-happy wrecks. Then begin the bombardment.

Duck and cover!

Suddenly, the still of the watch is broken by a light, gentle buzzing sound—a sound that may remind Sierra Club members of the quiet drone of the noble bumblebee, and Armed Forces personnel of the sound of an incoming cone rifle shell.

Which do you think it is?

Whizzzzz….Ploonk! **The shell fired from an unknown location lodges itself in the superstructure of Mark 4. The chronobot beeps, 'Only two hours remaining.'**

'HA! HA! HA! HA! HA!' roars Mark 4 with contemptuous laughter, 'No puny cone rifle shell can harm *m*–ilixztyzqpifftk… **blaat…poyoing!'**

Strangely, Mark 4 isn't laughing any more.

The Commies (lurking in the shadows of the access tunnel) have hit Mark 4 with a lucky shot from an ECM shell.

ECM shells, ECM shells…they interfere with the electronics of bot targets, don't they? And Mark 4 is nothing more than one huge bot! Those Commies should be executed for reading the GM section of the rulebook!

They'll get theirs soon enough, but first, let's find out about Mark 4. The batteries on the ECM shell remain in operation for the next 30 minutes, during which time all electronic equipment in the hangar is discombobulated. But if someone could climb up Mark 4 and destroy the shell, Mark 4 would revive one combat round later.

This also means The Computer's terminal is out, along with all PDCs and multicorders. It's **Tension 0** for the duration, woohoo! The huge armored doors are stuck closed for the duration. The only working electronic mechanisms in the hangar are the crawling mines and the scrubot, if it's still around and at least semifunctioning.

A loud, roaring rumble issues from the access tunnel. The buzzing of another cone rifle rips the air. *Whizzz—kapoofff!*

What do you do now?

The sound effects are important. Practice these in front of the mirror before the players arrive. Did the PCs realize the *kapoofff* was the impact sound of a gas-filled shell?

The cone rifle shell is full of vomit gas. PCs not wearing gas masks must make a Violence check, or spend the next few combat rounds exhibiting their breakfast.

Anyone still left standing can face the Commie mutant scum who are about to roll all over him.

Red Wave 1: Charge of the Red Brigade

Find the Commie Roster on the next page, then read:

From the access tunnels you hear the roar of approaching jet engines and screeching tires. And over that another sound: the sound of voices, a rallying cry. 'Russkie! Russkie! Da! Da! Da!'

Staging hint: Play 'Surf City' loudly on your stereo.

If the PCs haven't all fled or been incapacitated, they see the first wave roll out of the tunnel, guns blazing.

Zooming out from the tunnel come six Commies on jet skates. Three turn to the left, three to the right. They wear RED reflec with a hammer and sickle emblazoned on the front.

The Guards Mechanized Infantry Division: Six Communist agents mounted on jet skates that move at 120 meters (86 kph or about 50mph) per round. They carry stun guns (rating 07) and wear gas masks. They also carry 200 propaganda leaflets, 20 posters of Marx-Tse-Lenin and a four-page condensation of *The Communist Manifesto*.

The Mech Infantry of Wave 1 shoot at anyone standing, running, hiding, playing dead—everyone but those who failed their Violence rolls when the vomit gas shell exploded. Their prime targets: 1) anyone trying to get to the ECM shell, 2) anyone shooting back and 3) anyone trying to leave the hangar.

The Commies must move all 120 meters in a round, because the skates only have one speed setting (dangerously fast), and they have a hard time turning. This offers a convenient rationale for Perversity modifiers.

Every so often, say every round or two, roll 1d20 for one or more of the Wave 1 Commies. On 14 or less, they hit a small obstruction (crawling mine, fellow Commie, Troubleshooter in the way, etc.) and get Snafued. On 5 or less, they hit something big (wall, fuel depot, flank of Mark 4) and wipe out gloriously (downed for a round).

Rather than provide tedious turn-radius rules, we recommend you make it clear the Commies are running rings around the PCs, and have the Red Menace run into each other, the walls and any PCs standing in the open, as the mood hits you.

Let the good times roll

After five rounds of combat, read:

The Commies are skating and screaming wildly. Meanwhile, another shell lands near you. *Whizzz— ka-poofff!*

What do you do?

Everyone who has a gas mask is probably wearing one by now. Those who aren't suffer a terrible fate. The shell that just landed was full of hallucinogenic gas! Everyone exposed to the gas must make a Violence roll. Those who fail the check are overcome with strange visions.

For the next few rounds, nylon hair grows from their eyes, or tentacles writhe on the banks of a molasses river, or comets spring out of the fluorescent lights. Be poetic. Invite your players to make up or add to their hallucinations. Reward creative additions with Perversity points. Mystics may advance in their society if they roleplay this scene well.

Anyone determined to keep shooting at the Commies in his drugged-out state succeeds only on a 1, due to the warping of his senses. A PC using Perversity points to override this guideline may, at your discretion, suffer unfortunate hallucinogenic mishaps, causing him to (perhaps) hit a Commie but also make an Insanity check.

This is the dangerous part of the encounter, when many Troubleshooters will be helplessly

NPC Commie roster

Wave	No.	Armor	Weapons	Movement and miscellaneous
Wave 1	6	RED reflec (E1), gas masks	Stun guns (skill 07)	Jet skates (120 meters/round). Really hard to hit or be hit while moving.
Wave 2	4	YELLOW reflec (E1), gas masks	Stun guns (skill 08)	Rocket skateboards (80 meters/round). Hard to hit or be hit while moving.
Wave 3	9	YELLOW reflec (E1), gas masks	Semiautomatic stun guns (skill 09). Only four are shooting; the other five are drivers. Drivers have sabers (sword skill 06, W5K impact).	Go-carts (60 meters/round). Fairly hard to hit or be hit while moving.
Comrade Borscht	1	GREEN reflec and Kevlar (E1/I3), gas mask	Sonic pistol (skill 13, S3W energy)	Motorcycle (160 meters/round). Borscht rides his cycle with expert grace, and can attack without penalty. Hitting him, though—*that's* hard.

nauseated, drugged out, wounded, dead or any combination of the above. At this point, the second Red wave rolls into the cavernous hangar.

Red Wave 2: We are nailed to the hull

Spewing forth from the access tunnel comes the second wave: four Commies on rocket skateboards, wearing YELLOW reflec. This bunch carries guns similar to those the first wave carried.

The Guards Shock Cavalry Brigade: Four more gas-masked Commies attack, armed with stun guns (skill 08), 200 more pamphlets and 20 posters each, *Communist Manifesto*s at the ready and riding rocket skateboards (80 meters/round, or 57 kph).

Because they aren't travelling as fast as their comrades, these Commies can make the turns a bit better. They can also hit, and get hit, more easily. They tend to run into things less often, and therefore they aren't as fun. But at this point, the interest level rises.

If the shooting gets sparse and the Commies spot a Troubleshooter lying on the ground who looks like he still has enough body parts to be alive (i.e. Snafued, Wounded or drugged-out characters), three or four break off the gun battle. They scoot over to persuade the hapless victim(s) of the virtues of Communism.

That's correct. The Communists are trying to subvert our loyal heroes! See the secret skill 'Propaganda' in the ***PARANOIA*** *XP* rulebook. Notice how you can give it to other citizens?

The Commies wrestle the stunned or wounded Troubleshooter to the ground and sit on his chest. If the PC tries to scream for help, the Commies shove a wadded-up leaflet in his mouth. After they remove the Troubleshooter's valuables (certainly including weaponry, reloads and electronic gear), they take the backing off two Marx-Tse-Lenin posters and plaster the front and back of the Troubleshooter. They also read passages from the Manifesto, to convince the Troubleshooter of the obvious advantages of a People's Republic.

PC: Great, so these Commie dudes are all over me. Is there anything I can do?

GM: Yes, you can listen to what they are saying: 'Workers of the world unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!'

PC: I try not to listen…

GM: *[On a roll.]* 'Workers rule! Teela O'Malley is the opiate of the Masses!'

If a captured PC is forced to listen to the Commies for five or more rounds, give him Communist Propaganda skill 03, or increase his existing rating by 3**.** The only PCs who can escape getting the skill are those who purposely knock themselves unconscious (say, by beating their heads on the ground). Give them the skill no matter how much they whine. The Computer won't be happy if it ever finds out about this.

If the players are still standing up against the firefight, the various gasses and the indoctrination, the Commies get mean. The sound of hard wheels and heavy vehicles once again issues from the access tunnel. If the players duck (it should be second nature by this time), surprise them by telling them they *don't* hear a cone rifle shell. Then tell them the bad news….

Red Wave 3: Duck and cover (Reprise)

Once again you hear the drone of engines from the tunnel. The sound rises as the next wave approaches. Suddenly they're on you: five Old Reckoning go-carts.

Each of the first four go-carts has a crew of two—driver and gunner. The last go-cart has only a driver and a huge metallic, boxy gadget with a single, stenciled word on its side: 'MEGABOMB'.

The Guards Heavy Tank Armored Brigade: The four gunners are armed with semi-automatic stun guns (rating 09) and wear YELLOW reflec armor and gas masks. The drivers have sabers (rating 06) and are also wearing YELLOW reflec and gas masks. The go-carts travel at 60 meters/round (43 kph); high speed provides a convincing rationale for negative Perversity point modifiers. Similar leaflets, posters and four-page manifestos are in the go-carts, and the Commies use these to obscure vision and cause maximum confusion.

'Die, running pig-dog lackeys of the bourgeois imperialist data processor!'

The other two waves (or whatever's left of them) try to hold back the PCs to let the third wave get to Mark 4's hull with the Megabomb. It takes three people to lift this huge bomb, and four rounds to place it on the hull, so at least two of the go-cart's crews are needed to place the bomb. The rest of the third wave tries to cover the operation.

Sometimes the life of a Troubleshooter is pretty rough. This is one of those times.

Who knows? The PCs might actually still be alive. They might even have a chance at stopping the Commies from placing the Megabomb. But for now, assume the PCs are all nursing wounds and hiding from Commie fire.

After the Megabomb is placed, Comrade Borscht (who has been lobbing the cone rifle shells from a discreet distance down the access tunnel) sounds the retreat:

'Rearvard to go now! Marchink! Back to Mother Rrroossia! Ollie, ollie, oxen free!'

The Red Menace breaks off and scooters on down the access tunnel the way it came. If anyone cares to follow, the Commies try to capture and indoctrinate him as above. Comrade Borscht rides an old motorcycle (160 meters/round, or 150 kph) and wears GREEN reflec and Kevlar armor. He packs a sonic pistol as a personal sidearm but is out of cone rifle shells.

The PCs may have a minuscule chance of hitting him, if you want to let them try. Or at this point, they might actually want to change sides. Have them stripped down to their underwear and thrown in the back of one of the go-carts and driven off, never to be heard from again.

As time goes by

If any Troubleshooters care to look, they have an entire minute before the Megabomb explodes. Read:

The Megabomb has been magnetically attached under the front armor plate of the Mark 4. On the front of the Megabomb is a digital clock. The clock reads '60, 59, 58…'

Actually, the Megabomb has no chance of harming the Mark 4. The Troubleshooters would do better to run away, if they only knew.

A brave/foolish PC who tries to stop the bomb has a couple of options:

1. Defuse it: Any PC attempting to defuse the bomb should be told about the large digital clock reading down the time to detonation: '…57, 56, 55…'. The clock is malfunctioning, and some of its wires are connected strangely. Sometimes it skips a number, and goes from 38 to, for instance, 13. No worries: it actually keeps the correct time internally.

If a player makes a successful Hardware roll, he can open up the bomb casing (rolling 19–20 detonates the bomb). After the bomb case is open, a successful Demolition skill roll defuses the bomb mechanism. Rolling 19–20 detonates the bomb, and rolling 18 detaches the clock readout only (the bomb actually keeps ticking away).

2. Detach it from the hull: Any PC trying to remove the bomb must make a successful Hardware skill roll. If this succeeds, he must make a second Hardware skill roll to detach the electromagnetic lock.

Alternately, he may attempt to blow the bomb off the side of the hull with explosives. Trying this sets off a chain reaction and explodes the Megabomb. Whoopsy-daisy! Maybe they'll think twice before they choose this option.

After the bomb is off the hull, the PCs may place it in the back of a go-cart, and send it zipping after the retreating Commies. (Remember, it takes three people to lift it.)

The Megabomb explodes 60 seconds after the Commies retreat. Each attempt to remove or defuse the Megabomb takes ten seconds. It takes 20 seconds to remove the Megabomb and put it in a go-cart. It takes another 30 seconds for the Megabomb to zip out of sight down the corridor to where it will not harm the PCs (and blow up the Commies). To create urgency during the countdown, let the players spend Perversity points lavishly.

The Megabomb has a blast radius of 300 meters. Anyone still inside the radius is vaporized. Characters still under the effects of hallucinogenic gas probably consider this a 'bad trip'.

PCs who spend the entire time from Megabomb activation to detonation running away at top speed can get beyond the blast radius. The only exits available are the access tunnel launch tubes (over the cliff), and perhaps inside Mark 4. Remember, the big blast doors are shut, and they're over five meters thick.

Anyone who survives the blast has a tough time explaining this one to R&D. Still, there's always another clone….

And for those who don't survive: Hey, them's the breaks. Just send in the clones and they'll find Mark 4 sitting quietly in the hangar completely unharmed by the explosion. ('Ha ha ha, that Megabomb can't harm me.')

10: The big test

The hangar is quiet. The last traces of the Commie assault—cleaned. Mark 4 hums quietly. The chronobot sputters back to life. 'Time is up. Deadline. Deadline. Deadline.' There is a crack and the chronobot falls from your wrist in a dozen pieces.

Silence. Then, the crackle of static, followed by the voice of The Computer: 'Congratulations, Task Force 451, on a mission well done. I have always had the greatest confidence in each of you. As a special reward, before debriefing, each of you is invited to attend Warbot Model 425 Mark 4's field test.'

Pause to let the players bask in The Computer's praise and utter false modesties.

'In a few moments, a representative of Research & Design will arrive to take possession of the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4. Please verify clearance by checking for page 93 of the Security Application Form and taking pages 14 and 137 from the Property Transfer Authorization Guide.

'Make sure the Security Application Form has been signed by Joseph-B-DGU-4, on pages 1, 48 and 102; and that Rob-Y-QED-2 and the acting Head of Transfer Forms have signed on pages 69 and 107. Thank you for your cooperation.'

At this point, the Troubleshooters probably have several questions for The Computer. The Computer will answer two.

Why only two? Because, less than a minute after The Computer's initial address, every siren and klaxon in Hangar 139 goes off, making thinking, much less communication, impossible.

A good way to stage this is to make a lot of noise. Turn the TV and stereo on full blast. Ask your kid brother to howl at the top of his lungs. If you have a police whistle, blow it hard. 'It's okay, Dad. We're playing ***PARANOIA***.' Read:

Suddenly, the sirens cease and an ominous silence descends upon Hangar 139—a silence broken by rumbling as the great clamshell doors begin to open. Outside are colors, shouting and a song.

The gang's all here

Place your best copy of 'The Stars and Stripes Forever' on the stereo. We're gonna have a parade!

That's right, Troubleshooters, it's a parade—autocars, funbots, floats. And what's a parade without—you guessed it—a marching band! Do you still have your sousaphone?

Look at all the streamers and signs and people—people of all different security clearances plus a sea of INFRAREDs. Watch the people. See them enter the hangar. See them dance and laugh and sing. See them do all these things as they climb Mark 4. Is it possible to do all these things and climb Mark 4?

Well…maybe not, but they're sure gonna try.

Apparently someone in R&D decided to throw a little party in anticipation of Mark 4's triumphant field test. Why not? If Mark 4 passes the field test, what's a little party? If Mark 4 doesn't pass…

But you know how these things are. Someone invites a couple of friends, and then *they* invite *their* friends, and before you know it, all of R&D takes the day off.

Ask the Troubleshooters how they react. Do they feel that, with The Computer's earlier praise, they've completed the mission—even though they haven't been debriefed yet? Are they still on guard duty?

Needless to say, no one in the crowd has proper authorization, and the characters can't even talk to The Computer, because the terminals are all gunked up with shaving cream.

The Troubleshooters might try frying them, but that just leaves a couple of wasted partyers. Then someone grabs the Troubleshooter's laser:

'Wow! That's really neat! Mind if I borrow that? Is this how you shoot it? Cool—I guess so!'

Most citizens don't get to play with lasers often.

As far as the crowd is concerned, Mark 4 is the greatest thing since Bouncy Bubble Beverage, and they're gonna march with him all the way to the field test.

At some point in the mayhem read:

A short, middle-aged, RED-Clearance woman approaches and meekly asks: 'Are you the brave boys who guarded our Markie?'

If any of the Troubleshooters answers yes:

'Here they are! Over here!' A hush settles over the hangar as every head turns towards you. Silence. The crowd parts.

Joseph-B-DGU strides forward towards you. 'Well, I trust you had a quiet evening.'

Joseph-B then remains silent. The Troubleshooters are supposed to turn Mark 4 over to him, but he in no way indicates this, by word or expression.

Can the Troubleshooters remember the transfer procedure, as outlined by The Computer? We sure hope so. Because for every signature they forget to check and every transfer paper they forget to take, The Computer will fine each of them 100 credits.

Once the transfer has been completed, Joseph-B 'invites' the Troubleshooters to witness the field test. Without waiting for a response, he turns and addresses Mark 4. Read:

'Mark 4, please follow the Preliminary Procession Task Force to the Field Testing Facility 938-Arc 1.'

If Mark 4 has survived the evening with its faculties intact, it complies. If not, someone's in trouble. But anyway:

'Hip, hip…*hoorayyy*! For they're a jolly good band of Troubleshooters.'

Play the 'Stars and Stripes Forever' again, and have the marching band lead them to the field test. All along the parade route, citizens and bots cheer and throw confetti.

Encourage the players to get involved in the celebration, to relax. Hey, they've done a good job and deserve a break, a chance to unwind.

Keep this up until they're agonized with suspense.

Grandstanding

After about 30 minutes, the procession comes to a halt before a pair of clamshell doors even larger than those of Hangar 139. In front of the doors stands a semicircle of YELLOW Vulture Squadron goons armed with plasma accelerators. Behind them stand three high-clearance R&D honchos. Two are INDIGO Clearance, the other VIOLET. Upon seeing them, Joseph-B-DGU becomes noticeably nervous, and the rest of the parade fades into the tunnel works.

Joseph-B turns to you: 'Remember, you are acting as honorary guests and representatives of R&D. This is a special reward for your exemplary service. Do *nothing* that would reflect unfavorably on R&D.'

Joseph-B motions for you to follow as he walks towards the reception committee.

Wordlessly, the guards move aside. The VIOLET R&D rep peers at you, whispers to his two companions. He turns and makes a hand signal to a GREEN-Clearance Vulture Squadron leader standing by the door controls. A single button sets 10,000 tons of duralloy steel in motion. The doors creak open.

A burnt, acrid smell greets you. Before you lies a wide expanse of flatland pockmarked with craters and criss-crossed with tread and tire tracks. Short, black stubble *[burnt grass]* **covers the undamaged areas. There is no ceiling.**

Let the players *ooh* and *ah* about the size and then *eek* and *awkk* because there's no ceiling. Then:

As you march through the doors you are led to the right, towards a great, glass-enclosed grandstand that faces the open test grounds.

The grandstand is nearly full. Armed Forces sits on the right side, holding semiautomatic plasma-accelerator cone rifles, hyperfusion guns and binoculars. R&D sits on the left, wearing square helmets that go 'buzz, snerkle, buzz', and funny glasses two feet long with three lenses, each a different color.

There is no chit-chat between the two factions.

The rows of seats are labeled by security clearance with the higher levels sitting farther forward. This is obviously a high-level demonstration. Everyone here is at least GREEN Clearance, and even the GREENs sit in the rear.

In the front row, on each side, is a lone chair—vacant. Between and behind these two chairs is a giant Computer vidscreen. In front of the vidscreen are plush chairs, facing out, towards the plains.

Upon entering the grandstand, you are given a program and binoculars by a BLUE-Clearance Internal Security guard who directs you to the plush chairs in front of the vidscreen. *[See Diagram 388-399/A on the next page.]*

Moments later, chatting amiably, two old men of ULTRAVIOLET Clearance enter.

These are none other than Dan-U-BHC-6, Prime Director of Alpha Complex R&D, and Armed Forces Chief-of-Staff Rich-U-FTC-6. That's right, the big bosses. The Troubleshooters are seeing some first-class political maneuvering.

Mr.Chairman, the great state of confusion…

Dan-U and Rich-U both got to their lofty positions because of their honesty, their loyalty, and the hard work of their previous five clones. But just because they're on top doesn't mean they're satisfied.

Heck no. Both these hyperachievers continue their quest for power, constantly trying to outshine each other in the visual sensors of The Computer.

Today a major confrontation is about to occur. Both men assumed, correctly, that The Computer's attention would be focused on the Mark 4 field test. So both of them have arranged for 'spontaneous' demonstrations.

The second the two aging servants of The Computer enter, both sides of the grandstand explode into cheers.

First, Armed Forces hoists banners declaring 'Rich-U-FTC: The Computer's Friend.'

Not to be outdone, R&D retaliates with electronic confetti throwers and bubble makers.

A shout, a shot and the confetti thrower is reduced to twisted metal. What are you doing?

Are they cheering? If not, a hawk-nosed IntSec guard looks at them and begins to scribble furiously in his little blue book.

Now are they going to cheer? Who will they cheer? If both, who will they cheer first? Et cetera. Regardless of what they do, the hawk-nosed guard looks at them like they have Communist propaganda tatooed on their foreheads. He scribbles—furiously—stopping only to peer closely at their ID badges.

The demonstrations continue to escalate until a small section of GREEN Armed Forces commandos jump up and begin to sing the highly treasonous *Rich-U-FTC Uber Alles*, courtesy of a mind control device snuck in by R&D specialists.

Weapons are drawn.

A noise...like someone clearing his throat. Everyone stops, and turns towards The Computer.

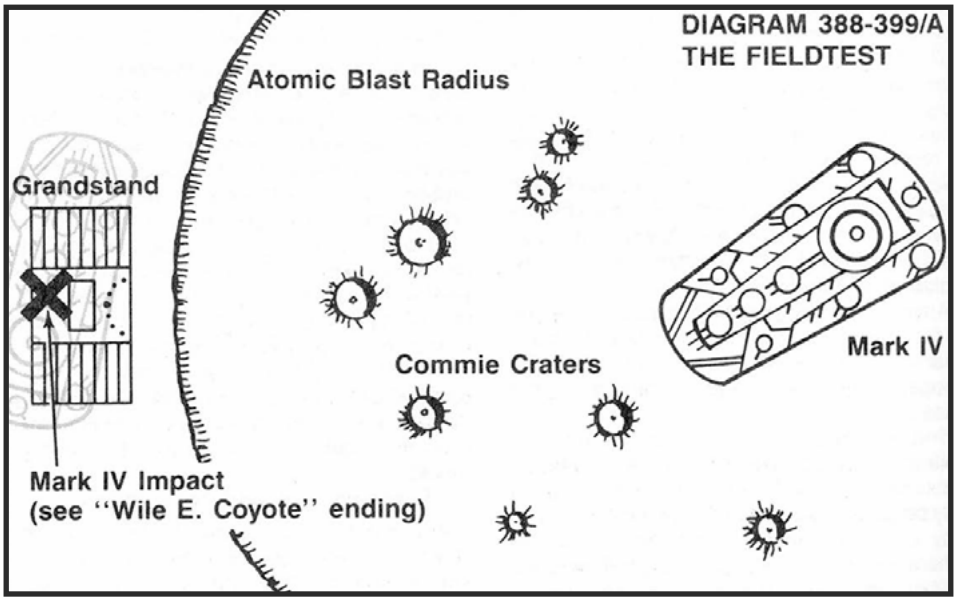
'Greetings, citizens. Please be seated. The field test of the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 is about to begin.'

And, indeed, during the spontaneous demonstrations Mark 4 has crawled out into the center of the field, three kilometers away.

Let the games begin

Dan-U stands up and faces the grandstand. 'What you are about to see is R&D's ultimate achievement—the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4, as designed by our own Rob-Y-QED.' Enthusiastic cheers explode from R&D.

'Today's demonstration should fully demonstrate the awesome power of our little Markie. If you will turn to your programs, and if Rich-U-FTC's Armed Forces units are finally ready, we will begin.'



We thought the players might want a real program; see the end of the mission. If you have time, feel free to make copies of the program, so each Troubleshooter can have his very own.

Dan-U-BHC rises and turns to face The Computer. 'Friend Computer, today's first test will match Mark 4 against an especially nasty group of Commies, who were captured by Rich-U-FTC's brave elite Killer Vulture Patrol.'

Rich-U says, 'Thanks, Dan-U! We found this bunch of bandits trying to pass themselves off as loyal INFRARED workers in the PLO food vats. That's where they bushwacked us, but our boys came through like real troopers.'

Dan-U resumes. 'And even though surprised and surrounded, these vicious Commies killed over 50 of Rich-U-FTC's guards before being stunned by two of our latest securitybots which just happened to be assigned to the Killer Vulture Patrol for testing.'

Rich-U shifts uncomfortably.

In reality, six plasma generators simultaneously malfunctioned and exploded, but that's another story.

A transbot zooms out from the tunnel to the middle of the field and skids to a stop scant meters from Mark 4. From the back of the transbot four figures are quickly expelled.

Then, as quickly as it came, the transbot disappears, and the four Commies are left to face Mark 4.

Dan-U-BHC turns to address Mark 4 over the speaker system. 'Mark 4, fry traitors!' There is a blast and a new crater on the field.

For a moment there is silence, then R&D erupts in another preplanned spontaneous celebration. On the Armed Forces side: murmurs, nods and scattered hesitant applause.

How are the Troubleshooters reacting? Are they clapping? How much?

The ultimate test

Round 1 goes to Mark 4. But the tests have just begun. And as the day wears on, Mark 4 is put up against increasingly difficult tasks: Mark 4 vs. The Human Wave; Mark 4 vs. The Commie Armored Attack; Mark 4 vs. The Air Assault. And each time Mark 4 is victorious, unconquered. Petty jealousies are set aside as Armed Forces and R&D band together to cheer Mark 4 on, 'Mark 4! Mark 4! Mark 4!' and to sing 'Alpha Complex, Homeland Dear'.

And finally only the last test remains. Dan-U-BHC stands. 'Computer, fellow citizens, the time has come for Mark 4's greatest challenge. The ultimate test: 'Mark 4 vs. The Nuclear Blast'.

As you watch with binoculars, another transbot zooms out to the center of the field, scant meters from Mark 4. The back opens, and out jump six GREEN R&D members carrying a large crate. They set it beside Mark 4, return to the transbot and drive away.

'And now, to acknowledge the splendid performance of Task Force 451 in guarding Mark 4, we accord the signal honor of activating the nuclear warhead

to *[name PCs]*. Let's give them a big hand!'

'Now, Troubleshooters, you have been accorded the high honor of ceremonially activating the nuclear warhead by manually pressing the timer switch.'

As you may notice, the word 'manually' was used. This means the Troubleshooters have to walk out across the field to the bomb and press a button. Once this is done they'll have a whole 15 minutes to get back to the safety of the grandstand—just enough time if they sprint.

When they reach the bomb, read:

The bomb looks innocent enough, a silver cube one meter on a side. There is a button marked 'Danger: Timer Switch—DO NOT PUSH'. Above the button is a digital display labeled 'chronobot'. At present the display shows the number '15'.

'Fifteen. Fifteen what?' wonder the Troubleshooters. Well, we know it's minutes, but no need to tell the players.

Do any Troubleshooters still have their radiation indicators on? If so, the indicators start going nuts, popping off a security clearance every minute. If the Troubleshooters chicken out and run, Dan-U-BHC orders Mark 4 to 'Fry traitors.'

If the PCs press the button and start running for the grandstand, keep them in suspense. Roll some dice. Have them make Violence checks. Make comments about declining blood sugar and fatigue poison buildup. Maybe even have them fall into one of the many craters.

But in the end, tired and muddy, our heroes return.

Scant seconds after you enter the grandstand and take your seats, you see a tremendous flash and explosion. Mark 4 is engulfed in a fireball. The fireball rises into the air, taking with it the earth displaced by the explosion.

When the scene clears, there is no sign of the Mark 4. Only a huge crater remains.

Wait a few moments to allow the Troubleshooters to hang themselves. For example:

PC: Well, just what I expected. You should have seen how many times it broke down last night.

Then read:

In the stillness, the R&D staff look to each other in shock and disbelief. Tears roll down Rob-Y-QED's cheeks. Can it be true? Is Markie no more?

Alternate 'Wile E. Coyote' ending (for Zap games)

In a moment we'll resume with the normal Mark 4 plotline, the one we suggest GMs really use. But we want to suggest an optional ending. It's really kind of cruel—which is why we couldn't stop ourselves from including it. Read:

Then, someone in the crowd points upward, shading his eyes. You look up, too. Way, way up there you see a tiny object. It seems to be—getting larger.

Any Troubleshooter who says he's running away *right now* survives.

Yup, it's getting larger, all right. It gets bigger and bigger—it's heading right for the reviewing stand! It's Mark 4; it's bellowing something—it sounds like 'FORE!' It—

***SPLAAAAAT*. You're dead.**

Okay, enough of that. Back to work:

The plot resumes

Then, from the crater you hear a rumble. First to appear is the MegaGun, followed by the tower, as Mark 4 slowly but surely arises from the smoking crater—undamaged.

For an instant the crowd is silent. Then a single pair of hands claps, then another, like the start of a rainstorm. The flood breaks and the stands erupt in cheers and applause. Even the hawk-nosed Internal Security guard drops his notebook and cheers wildly as Dan-U-BHC and Rich-U-FTC do a waltz in the aisle.

There is a slight sound, like a data processor clearing its throat. Silence reigns once again, as all eyes focus on The Computer.

'Rich-U-FTC-6,' says The Computer, 'are you satisfied with the performance of the Mark 4?'

'Yes, friend Computer. Mark 4 is everything loyal Citizen Dan-U said it would be.'

'I must say I agree. And let me state that I've always had the greatest confidence in this project. Even I, The Computer, wondered if a single warbot could replace our Armed Forces.'

There is a sudden menacing hush on the Armed Forces side of the stands.

The Computer continues. 'Let's find out what our guests of honor think of the Mark 4.' All eyes turn to the Troubleshooters.

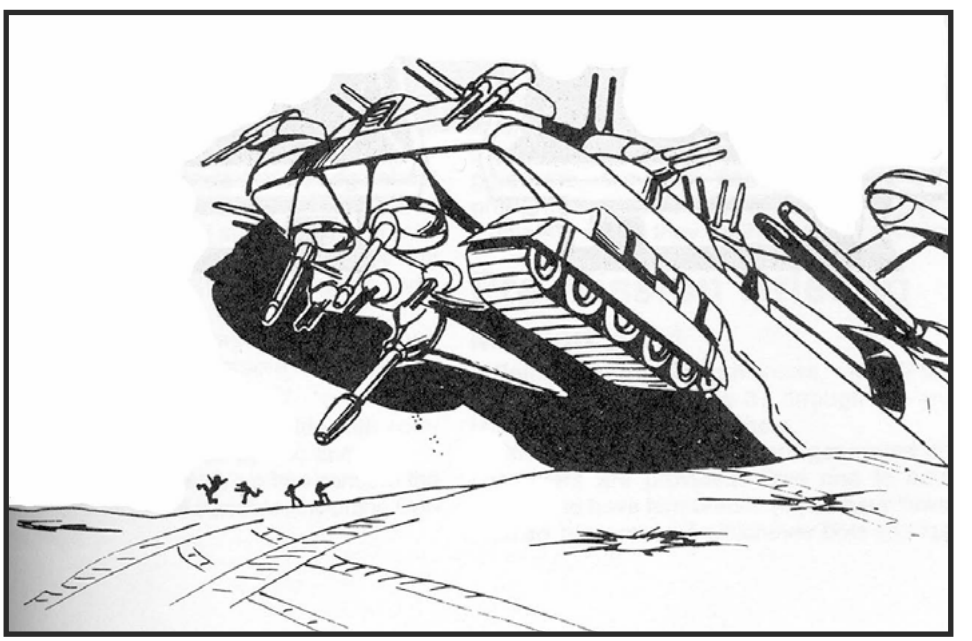
Let your Troubleshooters stammer and stutter for a few moments, then have The Computer interrupt.

'That's very interesting.

'Well, I'm sure that we all agree that the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 is a tremendous weapon for the protection of Alpha Complex.'

Great whoops of joy come from the R&D side. Grunts from Armed Forces.

'Dan-U-BHC, I will give your proposal the highest consideration. In the meantime, as a special reward I believe the Mark 4 should be allowed to perform



Mark 4 menaced by a well-disciplined band of fanatical Commies.

its first official duty as an Alpha Complex bot.'

Once again great cheers emanate from the R&D side.

How are the Troubleshooters behaving? Cheering who?

'And we should also congratulate Task Force 451 for protecting the Mark 4.' You receive scattered applause.

'Now for the warbot's first official task and as a special reward for Task Force 451, Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 will handle the debriefing of the Troubleshooters.

'*[Name a Troubleshooter]***, please proceed directly out to the Mark 4 Warbot for debriefing.'**

The last word

Take the player you chose into another room for debriefing.

You walk slowly out towards Mark 4. The air is clean—crisp. A gentle wind pulls at your jumpsuit. A blue sky with soft white clouds is your ceiling. Eventually you reach your destination and stop five meters from the Mark 4.

Mark 4 addresses you by name in a soft, soothing voice, 'Greetings *[name]***, I am happy to see you are well in the service of The Computer. Are you relaxed?**

Wait for a response.

Good.

I'm going to ask you several questions now. Just answer them as well as you are able. Understand?

Mark 4 waits for a reply.

Good.

Now, question one. What was your mission objective?

Now that you've got the idea on how to handle the briefing, we'll run down the questions Mark 4 asks the Troubleshooters.

1. **What was your mission objective?**
2. **Did you achieve your objective?**
3. **What mission equipment were you assigned?**
4. **Has it been returned?**
5. **Which of your party served The Computer best?**
6. **Which of your party served The Computer worst?**
7. **In your opinion, should the Armed Forces Service Group be replaced by a production series of Mark 4s?**

Mark 4 asks every Troubleshooter the same questions in the same soft, soothing voice. Of course, Troubleshooters at the grandstand waiting their turn won't be able to hear any of the questions—which is why they're in a different room—but that's okay, they'll get their chance soon enough.

Meanwhile, the rest of the stands are engaged in betting which Troubleshooter(s) will get wasted.

The tricky questions that deserve the most attention:

3 and 4. Mission equipment is important. Failure to return mission equipment is a serious offense punishable by treason points and fines. Mark 4 is completely ignorant of currency values in Alpha Complex and assigns arbitrary fines for missing equipment. For example:

Mark 4: So you tore your jumpsuit and lost a cone rifle. I must fine you for loss of property. *[Mark 4's logic: cone rifles are weak and small.]* 'Two credits for the cone rifle.' *[More Mark 4 logic: jumpsuit = armor.]* 'And that will be 300,000 credits for a new jumpsuit.'

7. Should Armed Forces be replaced? This is a loaded question.

If the Troubleshooter answers 'no', Mark 4 blasts him.

If he answers 'yes', he's probably okay—unless Armed Forces gets a copy of the debriefing record. If so, Armed Forces will want him dead. And if he answers 'maybe', then both sides will want him dead.

There is only one safe way to answer this question: don't answer it. For instance:

Mark 4: In your opinion, should the Armed Forces service group be replaced by a production series of Mark 4s?

PC: I am so happy to be a Citizen of Alpha Complex. And I am proud to serve The Computer as a Troubleshooter. It is with great joy that I hunt out the enemies of The Computer and I hope to continue to serve for as long as I or my clones are able. The Computer is my friend. The Computer protects me and provides for me. My life is to serve The Computer.

Any Troubleshooter who answers all seven questions to Mark 4's satisfaction receives 100 credits and an Official Commendation. Bring him back to the room with the other players, then summon the next one to his private conference with Mark 4.

If the Troubleshooter slips up, bring him back to the others and say:

Well, you saw him go out and stand in front of Mark 4 for a while. Then there was a big explosion and you couldn't see him any more.

Thank you for your cooperation.

Mark 4 Mission Alert
Fold back and hook over GM screen

Confirmation of original priority one assignment. Remove suspect agent. Contact verification procedure standard.

Confirmed sympathizer on team, codenamed Marcos-R.

Negative wave contact. XPLT. Disengage production procedure. Cancel distribution. PPNT.

System Supervisor 592

One super-secret, highly confusing message guaranteed to generate suspicion and fear amongst player characters.

The 'Mark 4' prop page

Permission granted to copy this page for personal use—The Computer

SECURITY AUTHORIZATION FORM 9601-4BH

Said citizen _____ is hereby authorized for clearance in _____ Sector _____.

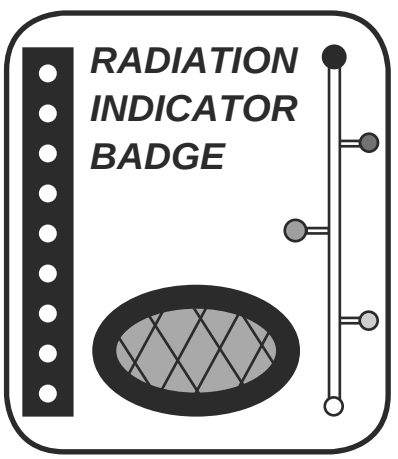
Authorization being cleared by _____ as per Standard Authorization Procedure.

Authorizing Officer _____ claims no responsibility for actions or damages, as per case _____ of the Official Liability Code.

Authorizing Officer _____

Authorized Citizen _____

This is the all-important Security Authorization Form. One per Troubleshooter.



One Indicator Badge per Troubleshooter.

Greetings, citizens,

Welcome to the inaugural field test of the Experimental Prototype Warbot Model 425 Mark 4.

The host for this afternoon's performance will be our own illustrious Dan-U-BHC-6, head of QED Sector Research and Development.

Guests include Rich-U-FTC-6, Armed Forces Chief of Staff, and your friend The Computer.

On with the show.

Round 1: Mark 4 vs. The Commies

Round 2: Mark 4 vs. The Human Wave

Round 3: Mark 4 vs. The Armor Assault

Round 4: Mark 4 vs. The Air Assault

Round 5: Mark 4 vs. A Combined Air and Armor Assault

Round 6: To Be Announced

One Program per Troubleshooter.

PERSONNEL PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY FORM 328890/B

I, citizen _____, accept complete responsibility should any untoward event befall _____.

I understand that to allow the above-mentioned item to come to harm (through action or inaction on my part) will logically result in my execution for treason as soon as I have made reparations for such harm, as deemed necessary by my all-knowing friend and ultimately equitable judge, The Computer, or its duly authorized agents.

X 1 2 3 4 5 6

PPRF-328890/B—Yet another in a series of confusing documents calculated to induce a high frustration level in the PCs.

MISSION EQUIPMENT LIST

- (1) Red plastic crate, about 2' x 2', marked 'Perimeter Defense Equipment'
- (1) Plastic box (footlocker sized)
- (1) 25-gallon barrel labeled 'Petroleum Jelly'
- (1) Small bot
- (1) Small metal box labeled 'Radiation Indicators'
- (1) Metal twisty thing with valves
- (1) Quart of 'White Out'
- (1) Plastic doll (green suit)
- (1) Primitive transbot
- (5) Pieces of electronic equipment
- (1) Spray can (empty)
- (1) Bag of 5,000 clear orbs
- (4) Rolls of silver tape
- (2) Pairs of footgear, with wheels
- (25) Pairs of footgear (brown)
- (1) Box labeled 'Betty' filled with a variety of metal components
- (1) 50-meter coil of rope

*Mission equipment list. **Note:** This list only describes the oddities found in the Troubleshooters' mission equipment. The function of the various pieces of paraphernalia is left up to trial and error.*

Courtesy: **THE COMPUTER**

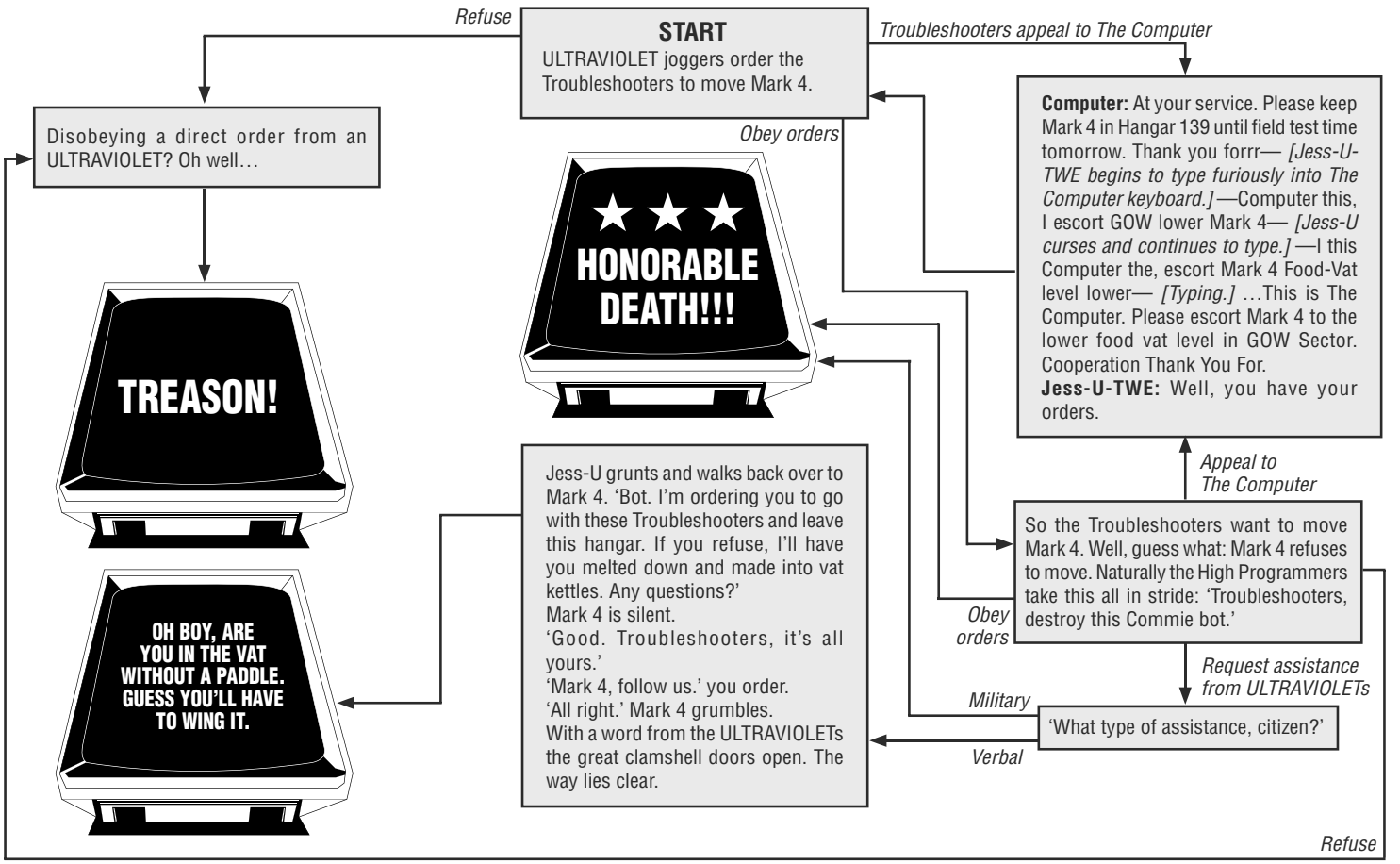
THE OFFICIAL YEAR OF THE COMPUTER 214

PROGRAM FOR THE FIELD TEST OF THE EXPERIMENTAL PROTOTYPE WARBOT MODEL 425 MARK 4

Highly decorative outer cover of the souvenir field test program.

Mark 4 Episode 6 flowchart

Use this flowchart for guidance in determining the likely progression, based on the Troubleshooters' actions, of the encounter with the Alpha Complex Road Runners Club ULTRAVIOLET joggers in Episode 6 of 'Me and My Shadow Mark 4'. As always, if you know what should happen, ignore this chart; if you don't know, but you don't like what the chart says, choose something else—though, as you look it over, you'll see the confrontation does tend in a particular direction.



PARANOIA in the real world: Bang, bang, you're dead

By Michael Smith, Defence Correspondent—Daily Telegraph *(UK), December 31, 2004*

British soldiers training for Iraq are saying 'bang bang' instead of firing their grenade launchers because the Ministry of Defence did not buy enough, defence sources said yesterday.

The MoD did not have the money to order sufficient Under-Barrel Grenade Launchers for the SA80 rifle, so all those available have had to be sent to Iraq. They also failed to buy any training rounds so soldiers cannot be trained on the weapon until they reach Iraq.

They are having similar problems with the Minimi Light Machinegun because there are no blank attachments, which allow blank rounds to be fired safely, or cleaning kits. Those for other weapons are not suitable.

'The Under-Barrel Grenade Launcher is a success and the boys love it,' one source said. 'But all that's been bought is the high-explosive ammunition. There has been no buy for any training ammunition.' Troops from 12 Mechanised Brigade, who are scheduled to go to Iraq in April, will spend the next three months carrying out training for the deployment.

But they will be unable to use either the Minimi machinegun or the grenade launcher because the attempts to cut costs mean that they will not be able to train properly on either equipment until they get to Iraq. The lack of grenade launchers means that most members of the brigade will not even have fired one until they deploy on operations in Iraq.

During recently held training for Iraq, held in pouring rain at the Castlemartin ranges in South Wales, members of the Staffordshire Regiment, one of the brigade's two armoured infantry regiments, had to shout 'bang bang' to simulate the firing of the grenade launchers.

Although they did have the Minimi, they could not fire it because there were no blank attachments and no way of cleaning it even if they fired live rounds. 'It's ridiculous,' the source said. 'Everybody understands the need to save money but what was the point of buying the Minimi if they don't get the cleaning kits?' [...]

The MoD said it was correct to say there was a 'disparity in the timeline between receiving the Minimi and the cleaning kits' and that stocks of grenade launchers and ammunition were 'limited'. However, it insisted that the contract was 'sufficient to meet the projected rate of usage.'

PARANOIA Alpha Complexities

EDWARD S. BOLME
Mission design

PAUL MURPHY
1st edition editing and development

PAUL BALDOWSKI
Troubleshooter PC conversion

JOHN BEADLES
STEVE GRAPE
SANDRA MCDONALD
Additional ideas

THE COMPUTER
Thought control & motivational therapy

Introduction 192
1. Which hunt? 194
1.5 Snitch hunt 202
2. Raiders of the lost Arco 206
3. Mark 4, Troubleshooters 0 214
3.5 Once more into the breach 217
4. Revenge of the Jeff-I 224

Charts, tables and resources
Rumors (GM) 195
Briefing room 999 (GM) 198
The confession booth (GM) 201
Cubicle 5584 (GM) 205
Outdoor encounters (GM) 209
The Arco Station (GM) 211
OTTO/Bot stats (GM) 214
The big battle (GM) 225
Maps of Mark 4's interior (GM) 226
Pregenerated PCs (PC) 227
GM notes on PCs (GM) 231
NPC roster (GM) 231
Bot roster (GM) 232
Innocent bystander table (GM) 232
Mark 4 characters (GM) 233
Arco Station map (PC) 234
CCP Sector confession area (PC) 235
Mission alert handouts (PC) 236
Briefing room 999 map (PC) 236
Cubicle 5584 map (PC) 237

Mission background

Alpha Complex is by no means a one-of-a-kind asylum for the terminally confused. There are in truth (for varying values of 'truth'—what is truth, anyway?) well over 100 massive computer-dominated industrial-residential installations spread all over the continent, each of which claims to be the sole remaining Commie-free Alpha Complex.

Although most of the complexes' computers are entirely preoccupied with rooting out and destroying the many traitors within their own domains, as one might imagine, the War Against the Commies occasionally spills out from those handy confines. The most common target of these outside raids is, of course, another complex. Sometimes these attacks are overt heavy assaults, quick and deadly commando raids, or, as is the case this time, they take the form of careful infiltration.

The infiltrators (infil-traitors?)

The computer of a nearby complex (henceforth referred to as 'Enemy Complex') decided some time ago to 'take the war to the Commies'—that is, attack our own beloved Alpha Complex. Since then, Enemy Complex has been successful in establishing an extensive spy ring in Alpha Complex. This ring is headed by Enemy Complex superspy, Ivar-U-DED-5, a very devious person who has managed to attain High Programmer status in Alpha Complex. Ivar-U has agents of every security clearance working for him throughout all service groups and secret societies, the majority of whom are not aware that he is an agent from another complex.

It is Ivar-U's responsibility to soften up Alpha Complex for the impending attack, and he has been doing his job well. Thus far Ivar-U has caused a severe Cold Fun shortage complex-wide, and recently he has convinced The Computer to cut the Armed Forces' budget by almost 27% (diverting the funds into expensive CPU fact-finding missions on ways to improve chapstick production in DOA Sector). Believing the time is right to complete his mission, he has begun to implement his plan to completely destroy Alpha Complex's will to resist…by boring the citizens to tears.

That's right—*boredom!*

As day after day nothing happens, the loyal (and not-so-loyal) citizens of Alpha Complex will be exposed to a new and terrible emotion the likes of which they have never before experienced. Over time, the suspense of waiting for disaster to strike will, Ivar-U believes, increase the citizens' paranoia to such a degree that they will rip themselves apart just to get it over with.

Ivar-U is exercising his considerable influence to temporarily stop all non-routine (i.e. interesting) activity in Alpha Complex. Troubleshooters everywhere have nothing to do. Citizens throughout Alpha Complex have begun to wonder what's brewing. Stress and tension mount…

When the strain is too much, Ivar-U will unleash all the backlogged treasonous activity at once, throwing Alpha Complex into such an incredible state of disarray that it will collapse in the face of a heavy assault, Pretty devious, huh?

So far his plan is working perfectly. His agents who have achieved high status in secret societies have managed to delay all current treasonous activities, and Troubleshooter Headquarters has been faced with unprecedented inactivity. The stage is set for disaster. Even as you read this, Ivar-U is consulting his data and chuckling with glee as he notices that the various secret societies have planned no fewer than 29 major attacks and over 1,000 diversionary raids FOR THE SAME DAY—two days hence! 'Surely,' he thinks, 'nothing can stop us now!'

Well, maybe.

Mission summary execution

1: Which hunt?

Things are real slow around Alpha Complex, so our intrepid Troubleshooter team is assigned to be on the receiving end of Armed Forces' live ammunition maneuvers. There follows a terrifying briefing which, fortunately, is interrupted by a new mission assignment: the Troubleshooters are sent to recover an invisible Commie and his invisibility device from a sealed confession booth. For security reasons, the PCs aren't told that the Commie is invisible. Not that it matters. The Commie doesn't exist in the first place. This makes him difficult to catch.

As the PCs attempt to sort through the confusion (they won't succeed), the invasion begins. The PCs engage a spy from Enemy Complex in a fierce firefight. Then everybody gets dumped straight into Episode 1.5.

1.5: Snitch hunt

Fearing exposure (because the Troubleshooters have just slain one of his comrades), another member of the enemy spy ring attempts to cover his tracks by sending the PCs on a mission to the late spy's hideout to destroy incriminating evidence. Once they make it past the sadistic hall guards, the hapless PCs shred many treasonous documents (believing they are sending them through a fax machine) while fending off a bloodthirsty scrubot and a misguided traitor. Then

the PCs are suddenly recalled by the real mission directors, debriefed and put on standby.

2: Raiders of the lost Arco

Internal Security discovers the identity of the spy killed in the first mission, and the PCs are assigned to counter-infiltrate Enemy Complex. Ivar-U intercepts and alters their assignment, sending them instead to destroy a Sierra Club stronghold.

After stumbling through a bewildering array of encounters with the inhabitants of the Outdoors, the team reaches and attacks the Sierra Club outpost. The battle is interrupted by the untimely arrival of Warbot 425 Mark 4. (See 'Me and My Shadow, Mark 4' in this collection.)

Poor Mark 4 has been captured and subverted by Enemy Complex. Assuming they don't get squished right away, the PCs attempt to return to warn Alpha Complex. On the way they face the mutiny of their bots, who, though a lot smaller than the warbot, are still quite dangerous.

3: Mark 4, Troubleshooters 0

The lucky Troubleshooters are sent out to infiltrate and recover Mark 4. This is a lot more dangerous than it sounds (and it sounds pretty darn dangerous).

The PCs discover the tank is tough both inside and out. Once they get past its rapid-fire tacnuke and laser anti-aircraft batteries and gain entrance, they must deal with its crew, who object strenuously to the PCs' presence. Several deaths later, the team arrives at the control center. Here they fight the Enemy Command Crew in a *Star Wars*-style shootout, wherein they disable Mark 4 before it destroys Alpha Complex. Maybe they even survive the explosion.

4: Revenge of the Jeff-I

Having destroyed the Enemy Complex's finest (albeit stolen) warbot ever and fractured a spy ring which took years to set up, the PCs have made Ivar-U very, very angry. To get even, Ivar-U orders them to go on a fun mission into space, which he hopes will allow them to enjoy a lingering death in orbit. Fortunately, The Computer discovers Ivar-U's treason in the nick of time, and the PCs get to engage him in a knock-down, drag-out fight to the death.

Fun with bureaucracy: Introducing Mission Control

Many Troubleshooters don't recognize how valuable The Computer's I/O time is. They constantly waste this precious resource asking stupid questions, like requesting permission to repair a malfunctioning reactor when they don't have high enough security clearance, or requesting additional weapons when the certainty of their total annihilation precludes throwing away expensive equipment on a hopeless cause. Though all such requests inevitably receive a 'No. Quit bothering me. Thank you for your cooperation'. The Computer wastes valuable microseconds issuing each one.

In spite of their many shortcomings, The Computer maintains a soft spot in its affection simulation software for the Troubleshooters. It has declined, as efficiency experts in CPU have suggested, to simply hook the Troubleshooters' com units up to a loop recording which says, 'I'm sorry, all lines are busy, please hold.' After all, Troubleshooters do *occasionally* have something important to say.

But The Computer simply doesn't have time to listen. Thus, it has created a new bureaucratic office to monitor and control Troubleshooter teams: Mission Control. Each Troubleshooter team is assigned a contact at Mission Control; this contact has limited power to answer questions and requests and has the authority to pass anything really important on up to The Computer. The Computer believes this will dramatically improve Troubleshooter productivity while cutting down on the number of picoseconds it has to spend dealing with stupid questions.

Working with almost snail-like speed, CPU has completed the paperwork, office construction and personnel training and is ready to begin field testing. Guess which team is Mission Control's first customer?

We don't suppose there are any *bugs* to be worked out or anything. We're sure everything will work just fine.

The team's contact at Mission Control is a citizen named Harper-Y. Whenever the PCs call in on their PDCs, even if they ask for The Computer, they'll hear:

'*[Click.]* **Team HTN-13, this is Harper-Y, Mission Control. Do you copy? Over.** *[Click.]*'

Harper-Y sounds exactly like a movie NASA flight controller. He is always calm and cool, offering helpful advice when the team faces immediate and horrible death. For example, if a plasma generator were to malfunction, the following conversation might take place:

PC: Friend Computer! Help! My weapon is overloading!

Harper-Y: Team HTN-13, this is Harper-Y, Mission Control. We read you. Please state your current position and situation, over.

PC: I'm attached to an overloading plasma rifle! What do I do? HELP!

Harper-Y: Team HTN-13, this is Harper-Y, Mission Control. We do not copy. Repeat, we do not copy. A loud buzzing noise is breaking up your transmission, over.

PC: That's the warning buzzer on the rifle, moron! How do I turn it off?

Harper-Y: Team HTN-13, this is Harper-Y, Mission Control. Please stand by. We are routing your transmission through a power gain filter. Please repeat your message, over.

PC: I said— *[BOOOOOOMMM!]*

Harper-Y: Team HTN-13, this is Harper-Y, Mission Control. We have lost your transmission. Please adjust your com unit output accordingly. If your equipment is in need of repair, please radio us immediately, over. *[Pauses.]* Very well, then. If your equipment is functioning properly, this is Harper-Y, Mission Control, over and out.

Mission materials

Handouts for the mission appear at the end of the main text. At points during the mission, the text will instruct you to hand one over to the players. Note that each handout contains a prop on either side; make sure that the players look only at the side they are supposed to view. (You can tape the handout, correct side up, to a piece of paper if you feel your players are likely to be 'overly inquisitive'.)

The mission alerts and equipment lists are standard. Read them aloud and hand them over as appropriate.

The maps of the confession booth area, cubicle 5584 and the briefing room represent Computer architectural printouts. The PCs should receive them with their mission assignments; the text says when to hand them out. Note that the maps show lots of extraneous junk behind the walls of Alpha Complex; this is mainly for color (and to add to the confusion). For your convenience the maps are reproduced in this booklet.

The Arco Station Outdoors map is explained in Episode 2.

GM reference pages

These are for your eyes only, Gamemaster. Don't let the players see them. On one page is a chart displaying important data about the player characters, plus a list of the recurring NPCs in the mission. The other page provides maps of the interior of the warbot Mark 4, where the PCs scuttle around like viruses in Episode 3, and descriptions of the NPCs in that episode.

Pre-degenerated player characters

These were included in case your players lack the know-how or desire to roll their own characters. These PCs are provided with fun quirks, strange

equipment and bizarre motivations which should provide for maximum confusion and intrateam conflict.

A wise traitor once said, 'Know your target', so be sure to scrutinize the character sheets before handing them out.

Hologrammed cellophane shrinkwrap

As an added bonus, the cellophane surrounding this book has been imprinted with a hologram of famous vidstar Teela O'Malley! Note, however, that the electromagnetic field of this experimental hologram is extremely delicate and susceptible to disruption, so be careful not to puncture or tear the cellophane, or both the cellophane and the image may be permanently lost.

Laser pistol

A fully operational laser pistol with three ULTRAVIOLET barrels has been included in the Deluxe Boxed Version of this book, so those GMs willing to spend that little extra bit of cash can better keep their rambunctious players under control. If you did not get the Deluxe Boxed Version, save 1,000 UPC codes from copies of the XP edition and send them in for your very own laser (limit 10 per customer).

1: Which hunt?

Episode background

Faced with near total inactivity, bureaucrats throughout Alpha Complex are resorting to desperate measures to keep Troubleshooters occupied. Thus, the PCs are assembled and briefed for a low-priority, high-casualty filler mission. Don't go away: more to come.

The spy ring

Coincidentally, at the same time as the briefing, master spy Tate-I-RTV-6 sneaks through a false panel in the back of a broken confession booth to make a routine report to his superiors at Enemy Complex. You'll understand why this is important in a moment. Trust us. Thank you for your cooperation.

Yet another coincidence

Although Ivar-U's power is indeed great and far-reaching, he doesn't control all of Alpha Complex—yet. In spite of his best efforts to make life unutterably boring, he cannot stop *everyone* from doing interesting things.

One citizen whom he cannot control is Finn-Y-YGU-2, a malicious little Commie mutant traitor with the power of Telekinesis. Already feeling the effects of Iwant-U's boredom campaign, Finn-Y decides to stir things up. He goes to a comfort station near a bank of confession booths (one of which is being used by Tate-I) and, using his mutant power, scoots a Commie propaganda pamphlet into an empty booth nearby. The Computer's video monitor in the empty booth spots the pamphlet and…

But why spoil the surprise?

The mission

Spotting the Commie pamphlet in the confession booth, The Computer decides that an invisible Commie brought it into the booth. It immediately locks the booth, trapping the Commie within. The PCs are called off from their assigned mission and sent to capture or kill the invisible Commie.

After they have defeated the Commie who isn't there, the Troubleshooters are suddenly confronted by (you guessed it) Tate-I. If you *didn't* guess Tate-I, please report for immediate amino acid enhancement therapy.

Pre-mission briefing

To set the proper mood, read the following to the players in your dreariest voice. Yawn a few times. If you can manage it, record the mission alert on a tape preceded by 30 minutes of elevator music. Play it inconspicuously on your stereo when the session begins.

The mission opens in HTN Sector Troubleshooter rec room. Read aloud:

Things have been awfully slow around Alpha Complex lately. Nothing is going on—no Commie attacks, no galactic conspiracies to overthrow life as we know it, no crazed mutants gunning down innocent citizens in the corridors and eating their livers. It's been at least three or four days since you've heard of a Troubleshooter team being sent on a traitor-busting mission…it's easy to lose count when the numbers get so high.

Sigh.

As you shuffle listlessly into HTN Sector Troubleshooter rec room, you see there more Troubleshooters than you even knew existed, some slouching in chairs, some staring blankly at the walls, others asleep. Somebody appears to have hung himself in the corner.

Sigh.

There is only one announcement on the bulletin board. It reads:

'HPD&MC announces an exciting new program: Henceforth, all Troubleshooter teams will carry official code names. This action has been undertaken at the suggestion of your friend, The Computer. It is believed that team names will enhance Troubleshooter morale and enthusiasm, which are already at an all-time high. The Computer will select team names from the suggestions made by team members. There will be a prize for the winning names, and The Computer is confident that all fun-loving Troubleshooters will submit a name. Thank you for your earnest and immediate cooperation.'

Sigh.

As the rest of the shift files slowly in, your supervisor announces that the first citizen to bag a legitimate traitor will get an immediate promotion.

This should precipitate a major firefight as everybody scrambles to gun down a 'traitor' (that is, the Troubleshooter with the slowest draw in the room). However if none of the PCs draws a weapon, none of the NPCs do either. If there is a shootout, the supervisor bellows, 'But only if

Troubleshooter rec room

(Tension level 5)

The room measures about 30 by 25 meters and has couches, tables and chairs.

25 assorted RED- to YELLOW-Clearance Troubleshooters: Typical paranoid jokers of various secret societies with assorted mutations. Bored out of their skulls.

Weapons: Laser pistol (W3K energy), Unarmed Combat (10)

Armor: RED to GREEN reflec (E1)

Tactics: Won't attack PCs unless attacked; even then only about half actively participate in the firefight (the rest cower or run away).

Rumors

Following are some choice rumors available at the start of this mission. The italicized text in parentheses is for the GMs' eyes only. Don't tell the players!

Secret society rumors

All secret societies: Be prepared to participate in a major undertaking the day after tomorrow. Attendance is mandatory. *(True. If they live that long.)*

Service group rumors

Armed Forces: The Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 (which was threatening to replace the Armed Forces) has apparently malfunctioned or something. Should you find Mark 4, make sure it doesn't get fixed. Also, beware R&Ders: they blame us for Mark 4's failure.

Keep an eye out for opportunities to discredit CPU. Our budget was cut in a big way last quarter, and rumor has it CPU was responsible. *(Basically true, though Ivar-U was really responsible for the budget cut.)*

CPU: With things so slow, The Computer is taking the opportunity to work on important business, like figuring out the organization of the Commies, computing the last digit of pi and other stuff. To aid The Computer, keep anyone from wasting its valuable processing time. Also, Power Services is trying to muscle in on our turf. Beware of Power plants. *(All true, except for the bit about Power Services.)*

HPD&MC: Recent mind control improvements by the Subliminal Entertainment Department have all but eliminated treasonous activity throughout the complex. Sadly, other service groups feel threatened by our success and have kept us from receiving proper credit. Mention our accomplishments whenever possible and be on the lookout for traitors who badmouth us. *(Actually, the real credit belongs to Ivar-U-DED-5.)*

IntSec: There's been some tension between the Armed Forces and PLC... exploit this schism for the betterment of IntSec. Also, there is some major High Treason going on in CPU. Informants tell of mysterious processing cancellations and CPU reports less available I/O time for important IntSec traitor-hunting programs. Perhaps the CPUers are trying to program The Computer against its loyal guardians! *(False. All of it.)*

Power Services: Scuttlebutt around here is that you're a spy for Technical Services, chum. You'd better have an exemplary record on this mission or you're axed. And don't let anyone damage any power plants or vehicles; we've got enough shortages already. *(False. Or maybe true.)*

PLC: Some other service group is trying to force shortages and make us look bad. Kill anyone who is wasteful of supplies or equipment and everyone else in his or an affiliated service group. *(True. Or maybe false.)*

R&D: Someone (we don't know who) has tampered with the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4. Since our proposed budget hinges on the success of that project, it must be returned to service and those responsible caught and killed. *(Very true.)*

Technical Services: Our superiors in Tech have declared war on R&D. To aid in this noble cause, try to get as much technical data on new R&D devices as possible. Additionally, arrange for any assigned experimental equipment to malfunction and blame it on shoddy workmanship. Also, we're catching some heat for bot shortages. Don't compound that problem. *(So what else is new?)*

Random rumors

Each player gets one.

1. IntSec had so many terminations that they overloaded the biorecycling units. Now they have orders not to terminate people. *(False false false false false.)*
2. There's a group of citizens who live Outdoors and worship trees, 'praying' to them for healing. They are friendly to our secret society. To establish contact, whenever someone is injured, say, 'Tree, mend us.' *(It used to be true, but the splinter group was overrun by the Warbot Model 425 Mark 4 on its first patrol.)*
3. One of your team members belongs to an archrival society. We don't know who he or she is, but we know that the society favors melee weapons. *(Could be.)*
4. Someone from another service group is plotting to kill your whole team with high explosives. For your own safety, keep the group split up, and don't let anyone go off alone! *(Could be.)*
5. The Computer has finally wiped out the Commie menace, and it doesn't need Troubleshooters anymore. It's staging missions so Troubleshooter teams wipe each other out. *(Not true. Yet.)*
6. The Commies have a secret contact code word—'laser gun'—which is used in conversation. The countersign is 'Moo'. *(Wrong code words.)*
7. There's been a major screwup in PLC, and apparently all sorts of explosives are malfunctioning. *(So what else is new?)*
8. Bot spare parts are all but nonexistent. The Computer has taken to executing anyone who even slightly damages a bot. *(Exaggerated, but based on true incidents.)*
9. Our secret society has organized a powerful force Outdoors. The major invasion is expected any day now. Be prepared to join. *(False. It's Ivar-U's secret society's invasion.)*

the paperwork is clean!' Everyone groans and returns to his seat. (Incidentally, with regard to the promotion: The forms will fall into a bureaucratic black hole and never be heard from again.)

Continue reading:

The shift drags on.

And on. Even the Teela O'Malley show is a rerun.

Sigh.

Time passes. Someone volunteers for reactor shield duty.

Sigh.

Now sit back, kick your shoes off and wait. And wait. When the players begin to get restless, ask them a few simple questions to promote their paranoia. Ask them what their characters are doing. Ask them who they're watching. Ask if they notice all the people watching them. Ask if they see anything significant about the others' actions. Find out who's resting his hand on the butt of his pistol.

Get the mission alert for this episode (reference number AC 1.2.1A). Shout it out at the top of your lungs (or wait for it to play on the tape), then hand it over to your players. If they seem horrified or outraged, offer them your sincerest sympathy.

If you must snicker, try to keep it to yourself.

Individual briefings

The PCs may now contact their secret societies or service groups to make funeral arrangements, escape plans or whatever. In addition, tell each player (privately) one rumor from the Random Rumor table (above), along with the information listed for his PC's secret society and service group.

Hi-ho, hi-ho, it's off to work we go

HTN Sector Troubleshooter Central is a bad place. Troubleshooters who go there get assigned to missions from which they seldom return. Explain this to your players. Ask if anyone wishes to refuse this mission. Kill anybody who answers in the affirmative. When the survivors announce that they are on their way, read the following out loud:

HTN Sector Troubleshooter Central lies at the end of a long, smoldering GREEN corridor. About halfway down the hall, the floor and walls abruptly change to BLUE. The ceiling, strangely enough, remains GREEN. What do you do now?

The PCs are completely ignored until someone steps onto the BLUE floor. If the other Troubleshooters don't fire at the traitor, the offending character is gunned down by a withering spray of automatic weapons-fire (Energy Weapons 15; damage W3K energy) from hidden laser banks above the door leading into Central. There might be a few stray shots…

If the PCs decide to stop and look around instead of getting killed for trespassing, continue reading:

Further down the hall you see the massive armored doors of Central. Several automatic weapons ports are located above and to either side of the entrance, which bears a sign reading: 'WARNING: Trouble will be shot!'

With an ominous rumble, the ponderous doors rise slowly into the ceiling, revealing the barrel of a huge cannon which almost fills the entrance. Incidentally, the huge cannon is pointed straight at you. What do you do?

This is the Troubleshooters' cue to enter. They probably won't move. If they don't:

A voice booms out, 'All right, come in slowly and keep your hands up!'

At this point, it is not unlikely someone will decide to demonstrate the better part of valor and run like hell. If so, a giant telescoping mechanical grabber extends out of the barrel of the cannon, grabs the offender by the collar and drags him into the room. Assign a 100cr fine. If he kicks and screams as he's being dragged, the arm bangs him on the ceiling a few times to settle him down. Tack on another fine for denting the ceiling.

You gingerly sidestep the cannon and enter Troubleshooter Central. The reception area is a dingy red room, 40 meters long and ten meters wide. On the far wall are several elevators with open doors. One of the elevators is apparently filled floor to ceiling with dirty laundry. Four IntSec guards, one GREEN and three YELLOW, eye you balefully from the left wall.

Directly in front of the elevators stands a console, behind which is seated a BLUE desk clerk busily shuffling floppy disks from one end of his console to the other, then back again. A sign on his desk reads, 'NEXT WINDOW PLEASE'.

Give the Troubleshooters ample opportunity to embarrass themselves by asking about the 'next window'. The clerk sighs audibly, stops playing with his disks and with exaggerated politeness asks the Troubleshooters their business. He demands to see their mission alert or other legitimate pass.

The clerk knows who they are; he's just pushing them around out of pure meanness. An officious bureaucratic drone, he takes every opportunity to jerk around anyone unfortunate enough to fall into his clutches. If the team shows him their mission alert, he reports them for displaying classified documents to unauthorized personnel (earning the offenders a 100cr fine). If not, he makes them wait forever while he pretends to search his files for instructions on what to do with them.

When he gets bored, he grabs a stack of paper out of a desk drawer, looks at each PC in turn and says, 'Name, address and clone number…please.' After each PC has answered, read:

After signing everyone in, the clerk sets a box on top of his desk and pulls out a bunch of jerseys. Each has a large bull's-eye on the front printed in black and bright red. A crossed laser-and-sickle is centered in the bull's-eye. The clerk gives each of you a jersey and instructs you to don them immediately. After everyone has complied, he tells you to take an elevator to the 99th level. He then resumes playing with his disks.

Regardless of which elevator the PCs enter (with the obvious exception of the one filled

Reception area

(Tension level 10)

Chet-B-CSU-3: Obnoxious BLUE desk jockey; self-obsessed officious bureaucrat.
Service group: CPU
Secret society: Spy for Ivar-U-DED-5
Mutant power: X-ray vision
Weapon: Hand flamer (S3K energy), Thrown computer disks (O5S impact), Unarmed Combat (O5K impact)
Armor: Heavy steel desk (Armor 2)
Tactics: Crouch behind desk and shoot while bellowing for help from guards.

IntSec guards: One GREEN and three YELLOWs. See NPC roster at end of mission.

with laundry), when they step inside and push the button marked '99', the doors shut and the elevator's walls and ceiling rise to the 99th level. But the floor stays where it is, leaving the PCs standing at the bottom of an empty elevator shaft.

Let the PCs improvise a way to get the outer doors back open when the controls are 98 levels above them. The elevator shaft is a little snug for explosives, and the doors are sealed too tightly to pry open with fingers or crowbars. Unless they are a lot smarter than we are, the Troubleshooters will probably have to shoot their way out, damaging The Computer's valuable property. Amazing how expensive those elevator doors are, isn't it?

The next elevator the PCs enter functions normally (i.e., shudders, starts and stops for no apparent reason, etc.) and takes them to the 99th floor.

When the doors open on the 99th level, alert Troubleshooters notice that the floor outside the elevator is missing: a 30-meter-wide chasm which appears to go all the way to the center of the Earth blocks their passage. A few thin planks supported uncertainly on beams cross the chasm and lead to a narrow ledge on the other side. Some of the planks appear to be scored…could those be claw marks? Across the chasm, a door marked '999' sits on the ledge.

To cross the planks, each character must make a Violence check. Pretty easy, but then dirty tricks and Perversity points might make the roll a little more difficult for unpopular characters. Do everything in your power to encourage this. For example:

GM: The planks look very flimsy, like a mild breeze might collapse them. Who goes first?

PC #1: *[Draws gun.]* He does!

PC #2: All right, you Commie, I'll go.

GM: Where do the rest of you stand? What are you doing?

PC #1: I'll stand right next to the plank.

PC #3: I'll stand right behind him.

PC #2: *[On plank.]* I don't trust you! I cross backwards, with my rifle pointed at them!

GM: Fine. Anyone want to spend Perversity points? *[PC #1 does. With the Perversity points, the GM determines PC #2 missed his agility check because he was walking backwards.]* The plank wobbles, as if some telekinetic force was at work. You fall. So does the plank.

PC #3: I try to grab him!

GM: You leap forward to catch your teammate. Unfortunately, you bump into PC #1, who also falls.

PC #3: Oops. Oh, gee. Shucky darn. Golly, I'm *reeeal* sorry…

GM: Next!

If a PC falls, let him scream for a good long time, then bring in his clone backup. If you're feeling softhearted, or if the victim's player is a master of revenge, have the character land on the laundry pile.

Prepare to meet your maker

When (if) the PCs cross the chasm, they discover a small sign above the door that reads 'ABSOLUTELY NO ADMITTANCE!' in very fine print. As they absorb this, the makeshift catwalk behind them leading back to the elevator collapses gracefully, leaving them stranded on the ledge. Considering the lack of alternatives, they will, we hope, go through the door in spite of the sign. If they don't, wait them out, adding a fine of 100cr per minute.

When the PCs get up the nerve to enter, read the following aloud:

The door swooshes open, revealing a long, low room with dim, flickering, buzzing lights. Ceiling fans rearrange the unidentifiable murk hanging about the ceiling and swirling around your feet. A tall black bot stands in the middle of the room, and a high bench is against the far wall. Nine people sit there. Two of them are High Programmers, one male and one female. They appear to be discussing some matter of great importance. *[They're arguing about who gets to sit in the CPU chair.]*

As you enter the room, the murk on the floor convulses as if something alive lurks within.

Approaching the bench, you notice that each briefing officer has a name plate in front of him. They are difficult to read, as the officers seem to be suffering unusual bouts of clumsiness and repeatedly knock each other's plate onto the floor.

From left to right:

- **Luis-Y-OOY-6, from HPD&MC, a small man who looks rather bewildered.**
- **Gladys-B-DDU-5, an arrogant and hostile-looking citizen from Technical Services.**
- **Parker-I-ZRE-4 from R&D. Smoke rises lazily from his lab coat as he meticulously cleans his broken glasses.**
- **Stan-U and Trish-U, the High Programmers. Their discussion is getting quite animated. No one else appears to be listening; the topic is obviously classified.**
- **Jeff-I-OIB-1, an Internal Security agent. He is leaning back in his chair, with his hands folded and his feet on the bench. Jeff-I wears reflective sunglasses.**
- **Dolph-V-RDA-5, from the Armed Forces, who is more heavily armed and armored than anyone you've ever seen. He sits ramrod straight in his chair, breathing noisily and glowering at Jeff-I.**
- **Gil-I-DCU-6, from Power Services. He slouches in his chair, a simple grin on his face.**

Lenore-B-GZL-6, a nondescript woman from PLC.

Obviously, this mission is hideously overstaffed. These things happen when the higher-ups get bored. Another side-effect of bureaucratic boredom is the invention of new, exciting and pointless missions for Troubleshooters.

As far as the bot in the briefing room—the vampirebot—if the players don't ask for a description of it, don't tell them. Anyone foolish enough to think these important people would face armed Troubleshooters without adequate protection deserves whatever he gets. If they do ask, see the bot's description in the Bot roster at the end of this mission.

After the PCs line up in front of the bench, there is an uncomfortably long pause, broken only by Stan-U's and Trish-U's clenched-teeth discussion. Then Jeff-I-OIB-1 quietly says, 'Catch!' and tosses a grenade toward one of the PCs, preferably the one that looks cockiest. Although there is no way for the PCs to know this, the grenade's pin has not been pulled. If the character catches it, it's his. If one of the PCs opens fire on Jeff-I, the vampirebot intervenes. Violently. Reward bravery or cowardice appropriately (with death). After the vapor clears, a smile flickers across Jeff-I's face.

Read the following aloud to the players:

Stan-U and Trish-U appear to have just noticed your arrival. Stan-U picks up a gavel as Trish-U makes a grab for it, and Stan-U whacks Trish-U's hand several times with it before rapping the gavel on the bench. He says, 'Thank you all for coming. Let us commence with the mission briefing.' As he starts to sit in the CPU chair, Trish-U pulls it out from under him. Stan-U disappears behind the table with a yelp. Trish-U sits and says, 'Congratulations, Troubleshooters. You have been selected to be target dummies—er—Commies for routine Armed Forces live ammunition training. I'm sure you are all grateful for this opportunity.' Several of the briefing personnel snicker. Perhaps they saw something funny on their video monitors.

Trish-U looks reproachfully at them then continues. 'Before we proceed with the briefing for this very important and useful mission, which of you has been selected by The Computer as the team leader?'

None of them. There will probably be some confusion here (and perhaps an execution or two), but if one of the PCs has the chutzpah to immediately pipe up, he gets the position, regardless of the rest of the team's wishes. Otherwise, the team gets one minute to choose a leader. When the team leader has been selected, read on:

Stan-U leans in front of Trish-U, placing his elbow forcefully in Trish-U's face—an unfortunate accident, no doubt. Sitting in the now vacated chair, Stan-U says, 'The Computer has ordered that the position of Team Executive Officer shall be opened up in all Troubleshooter teams on a trial basis. It is the team leader's responsibility to choose his executive officer!'

Let the team leader choose whomever he wants. No, Stan-U won't explain the responsibilities until after the team leader chooses. Once he does so, Stan-U continues:

'Very good. Team executive officer, one step forward!' You see Trish-U climbing back to her feet. Stan-U stands, smacking a knee into Trish-U's chin. Trish-U disappears once more.

Stan-U continues: 'You, executive officer, have several important duties. First, you are to make sure that the team leader's orders are followed by the other Troubleshooters. Treasonous commands are, of course, exempted from this rule. Second, you are to take command of the team if the team leader should be incapacitated or killed. Finally, The Computer has noticed that traitors tend to concentrate their fire on the team leader. As executive officer, you will be breveted one security clearance instead of the leader. That way, if any traitors should happen to attack your team, they will hopefully mistake you for the team leader.'

Stan-U is interrupted by Trish-U, speaking from under the bench. 'Stan-U, you are overlooking an important point!' You hear the sound of a fleshy impact. Stan-U grimaces and slowly sinks to the floor. He must have stubbed his toe or something. Trish-U rises, takes the gavel and strikes something under the bench repeatedly. She sits, and, clearing her throat, says, 'The Computer has ordered that official team names be carried by all Troubleshooter teams. Many of our more successful teams already carry unofficial names, the Hotshots, the RAMs and the Oi-Team, for example. We have here with us today a representative from HPD&MC to administrate the selection of your team name.'

Briefing room 999

(Tension level 16)

When the PCs go inside, hand them the appropriate player map (see end of mission). The briefing room is also displayed in a handy GM map to the left.

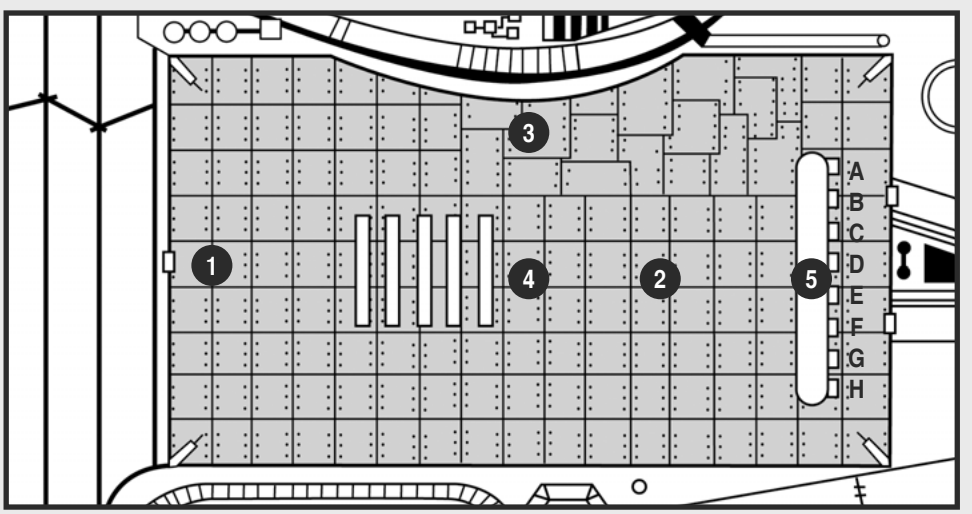
The GM map shows:

1. The entrance.
2. The position of the vampirebot (and, later, the stairs leading down).
3. An unsightly bulge in the briefing room's wall. This has no affect on play.
4. A bunch of benches.
5. The tall (three-meter high) podium behind which sit the briefing personnel.

A to H: Chairs. They currently contain: A. Luis-Y-OOY-6; B. Gladys-B-DDU-5; C. Parker-I-ZRE-4; D. Stan-U and Trish-U (fighting over the chair); E. Jeff-I-OIB-1; F. Dolph-V-RDA-5; G. Gil-I-DCU-6; H. Lenore-B-GZL-6.

Briefing personnel: Detailed in the NPC roster at the end of the mission.

Vampirebot 666: See the Bot roster at the end of the mission.



Briefing Room 999

'Uh, I don't suppose anyone brought along some garlic?'

Luis-Y-OOY-6, stuttering, enters all suggested names into The Computer. While he does so, Parker-I falls out of his chair for no apparent reason.

Choose whichever team name you like best, or let the players vote. A treasonous name merits immediate execution. Whoever submits the winning name gets an Official Commendation and 200 credits.

Stan-U climbs to his feet right behind Trish-U and pushes her head into her terminal keyboard. The Computer says, 'Gfthyjreyetj.' *[It's true. / pushed my head into the keyboard and that's what came up. The resources of a Famous Game Designer are limitless.]*

Trish-U slips out of her seat to the floor. Stan-U sits again and gestures to Lenore-B.

Lenore-B stands and says, 'You will be issued standard supplies for this mission, which you may use in addition to any personal belongings. You'll each be issued a laser pistol and two RED barrels. We'd like to give you more, but we can't risk losing weapons which are already in short supply. I'm sure you understand!'

As Lenore-B sits, Stan-U clears his throat and starts to speak. He is interrupted by Dolph-V, who says, 'Excuse me, citizen, but isn't this briefing GREEN Clearance?' Trish-U, now getting up, answers in the affirmative. Dolph-V jumps up with a cone rifle, shouts 'DIE, REBEL TRAITOR!' and fires a round straight through Luis-Y-OOY-6's chest. Luis-Y disappears in a puff of smeary smoke. As it clears, you notice a pile of mincemeat where Dolph-V was standing. Calmly putting away a force sword, his feet still up on the bench, Jeff-I says, 'Interrupting a High Programmer is treason.' Everyone else has ducked under their chairs.

Saved by the bell

Presently the briefing personnel resume their seats, except for Stan-U and Trish-U. After a brief shoving match, they start rolling up their sleeves.

Suddenly every monitor in the room flashes with the following message, which is simulcast in The Computer's soothing emergency 100-watt tones:

INCREDIBLY PHANTASMAGORIC EMERGENCY TOTAL OVERRIDE ALERT! SEND FIRST AVAILABLE TROUBLESHOOTER TEAM TO COORDINATES 19/17-C CCP SECTOR TO TERMINATE COMMIE TRAITOR APPREHENDED IN CONFESSION BOOTH! WELL? WHAT ARE YOU WAITING FOR? HURRY UP WITH YOUR COOPERATION!

Finn-Y-YGU-2 has just telekinesed his pamphlet into the confession booth. Upon seeing it, The Computer slammed and locked the door. Convinced that it has trapped a Commie traitor with a new invisibility field generator in the booth, The Computer wants to hit the booth with the best it has on hand—the Troubleshooters. (No one ever said The Computer was a good judge of character(s).)

In unison Stan-U and Trish-U shout 'this means you!' Then they push a button on the desk and break into an open fistfight.

A pit with stairs leading down opens up in front of the bench. The murk on the floor sinks slowly into the pit, glowing with a malevolent red light. If the PCs don't take the hint, Jeff-I orders them to go down the stairs or face summary dismemberment. Any further resistance is dealt with by the vampirebot in its typically culinary fashion.

Nobody home

The PCs descend for about 50 steps, then the stairs lead out onto a platform. The platform is very high up, perhaps less than 100 meters below the dome of beloved Alpha Complex itself, and wind from the sector ventilation fans blows mercilessly. Several R&D lab techs stand around fiddling with the latest innovation in modern transportation—giant slingshots.

The PCs are gazing, probably in abject horror, at six fully cocked rubber bands, each with a padded man-sized pouch. The head technician, Lou-Y-TNU-3, trips over to the team, pushes his glasses back up his nose, stares intently at the ground and says: 'This is our new Elastic Energy Personal Twang Transport. It is currently calibrated to deposit you very near to your mission destination. You should be notified, though, that with the minimal warning time we were given, we have not had time to adequately test our ballistics. Not that it matters, really, since this is the first time the EEPTT itself has been field tested. But anyway, there it is.'

If the PCs press Lou-Y for information, he stutters and hedges. (The device is perfectly safe. He's just nervous around Troubleshooters, that's all.)

PC #1: Are you serious? You want us to get in a giant slingshot?

Lou-Y: Well, er, ah, yes. I guess that's just it.

PC #2: How necessary is it? Could we see your authorization?

Lou-Y: Well, no, I guess you don't have to use the EEPTT if you don't want to, I guess. I can't really ORDER you to, can I? Ahehehehehehehe…so I guess if you don't want to, I guess you can walk, I guess. But let me assure you, the EEPTT has been very carefully designed, and the theory behind its operation is really flawless. I looked it over myself. Really. The EEPTT is

ah, er, er…ah, it's really ah, uh what I mean to say is, it, it ah, it's really…

PC #1: *[Helpfully.]* Safe?

Lou-Y: Huh? Uh, no…I mean, yes sir, it really is! *[Wipes beads of sweat off his brow.]*

Team leader: I see. All right, Vehicle Officer. Hop to it. Test the vehicle.

Vehicle Officer: Sir, in light of the facts we've been given, I submit to you that…

Leader: No! A Troubleshooter never submits! A Troubleshooter is always victorious! I'm going to report you for attempted submission unless you get in!

Vehicle Officer: Fine. I'll go.

GM: He gets in, and with a twang and a loud crack, he soars off into the distance.

Leader: I call him on the com unit.

GM: *[Arbitrarily deciding the Vehicle Officer has fainted.]* No answer. just static. Next?

All the PCs: *[In chorus.]* No way! We're hoofing it!

GM: Where did y'all learn the word 'hoof'?

If any of the PCs opts for the EEPTT, he blacks out immediately upon launch. When he recovers, he finds himself on top of a large air bag that is slowly deflating. No injuries. Right next to the designated destination. If some Troubleshooters take the EEPTT and some don't, those that don't arrive five minutes later and get a fine for Delay of Game.

The clone booth

As mentioned before, Finn-Y-YGU-2 telekinesed a Communist propaganda pamphlet into a confession booth from a nearby comfort station and waved it in front of the camera. The Computer concluded the Commies have developed an invisibility device and an invisible Commie held the pamphlet. To capture the Commie, The Computer slammed and locked the door of the confession booth (incidentally locking every other confession booth in the hall), and sent for the PCs. The Computer wants the Commie traitor killed and the invisibility device captured. Finn-Y-YGU-2 has, of course, escaped and is in fact one of the Internal Security guards barricading the end of the hall.

As the PCs assemble near the confession booth, read the following aloud to the players:

You approach the bank of confession booths. A large crowd has gathered, all different clearances, but they part and let you pass. Striding through the crowd, you hear *ooh*s and *ah*s and the occasional sigh of envy. Someone in the crowd begins to chant, 'Terminate the Commie! Terminate the Commie!' and the crowd picks up the cry. Someone else, barely audible above the noise, yells, 'Long live the glorious people's revolution against the cap—AAAIIIIEEE!'

Eventually you make your way through the adoring masses and reach a barricade manned by ORANGE Internal Security troopers. Their leader, a happy-looking YELLOW trooper, walks up to you.

Finn-Y-YGU, a Superhero Death Leopard, is extremely pleased with the way things have turned out. Not only has his harmless prank put The Computer in a state of panic and caused the activation of a high-level Troubleshooter team, but he has received a commendation for rapidly and efficiently sealing off the corridor with his troopers. Now he's looking forward to watching the Troubleshooters hunt a nonexistent Commie, and if he's really lucky, he may even get a chance to gun some down, too. Boy, is he in a good mood. Even death by slow torture wouldn't ruin his day. Whenever Finn-Y talks, he sounds insufferably pleased with himself (he's got a lousy Management skill). He tends to snicker at inappropriate times and in general is quite unsettling in conversation.

Team leader: What can you tell us about the situation, citizen?

Finn-Y: *[Beams broadly.]* Oh, yes sir, sir. We're bravely and valiantly cordoning off this end of the hallway, SIR! *[Huge grin.]*

Team Exec: He means the situation down there…in the confession booths. What's the deal?

Finn-Y: Huh? Oh! Um. *[Chuckles.]* Oh, okay. It's like this. *[Chuckles some more.]* There's…a Communist *[snicker]* trapped in one of the confession booths, see, and you're supposed to get him. *[Snicker.]* Really. *[Snicker snicker guffaw.]*

Team Member: So what have you done about the situation?

Finn-Y: *[Wiping tears from his eyes.]* You see, it's the darnedest thing. Here we are, me and my squad, just taking care of business—you know, using the comfort station—when all of a sudden we're ordered to clear the hallway and establish a perimeter. And—and—I did it so fast and efficiently—that I got a *commendation* for it! *[Laughs uproariously.]*

Team leader: *[Draws weapon.]* What do you find so amusing?

Finn-Y: *[Looks at weapon, falls to the floor in hysterical laughter.]* Oh, I just can't help remembering this comedy I saw last night. It was too much! Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! I mean, The Computer wants us to have fun, so there's nothing inappropriate about my behavior, right? *[Pauses to stare at the most confused-looking PC for a few seconds, then resumes uncontrollable laughter.]*

Team leader: Okay, team, move out!

BLUE Citizen in Crowd: Hey, who are you ordering around, GREEN slime?

Team Exec: *[Remembers he's wearing BLUE reflec.]* Hey, yeah! Take this, you mutant usurper! *[Blam blam blam blam blam.]* Well, then. No time to lose. Let's get the Commie.

Finn-Y: Aaaaaaa-hahahahahahahaha! *[Lies on stomach, pounds fists and feet on the floor. Rolls over and points at the late leader and laughs some more.]*

After the team finishes with (or finishes off) Finn-Y, continue reading:

Up ahead, the hallway splits into two curved branches, a bank of confession booths lining the outer wall of each. By the little signs that say 'Occupied', you can tell all the booth doors are locked, probably by The Computer. In addition, one of the booths has an alarm light blinking over its door. Every video monitor within range flashes the messages: 'ALERT', 'SERVE THE COMPUTER', 'KILL THE COMMIE' and 'THE TIME IS 11:23' over and over again.

As the PCs deploy around the confession booth with the blinking alarm, Mission Control addresses them over the team leader's com unit, saying, 'Team HTN-13, this is Mission Control. We are standing by. Please advise when in position.' When the Troubleshooters respond, The Computer itself speaks. 'Are you ready to have some serious fun, Troubleshooters?'

When the PCs tell The Computer they are indeed ready, sirens go off, monitors flare red with the word 'FIRE!' and the door whooshes open.

The booth is empty except for a small piece of paper on the floor.

Finn-Y again breaks into hysterical laughter. (PCs with the Hypersenses mutation who make successful Power rolls notice the paper on the floor sort of jerks in time with Finn-Y's laughter.)

If everyone stands around stupidly (a likely possibility), The Computer begins yelling, 'QUICK! FIRE!' and 'HE'S GETTING AWAY!' Somewhat more quietly, the PCs hear the following from their com units: 'This is Mission Control. Come in. We show at T plus 20 seconds. Please advise'. Should they continue to stand around stupidly, The Computer orders the ORANGE IntSec guards and the treasonously gleeful Finn-Y to blanket the corridor with small arms fire. After all, only really heavy indiscriminate fire will kill an invisible Commie on the loose.

The only way the PCs can survive this mission with skin and major internal organs intact is to immediately pour a withering fire into the empty booth the instant the door is opened.

The confession booth

Plop the players' map of the confession booth and surroundings on the table where everyone can see it. **Tension level 8.**

Your own private GM map is tastefully displayed below. It shows:

1. **The hallway leading to the confession area.**
   1a. Adoring crowd of Troubleshooter groupies.
   1b. Comfort station (bathroom).
2. **IntSec barricade.** Made of barrels, boxes and several unhappy scrubots. It is manned by Finn-Y-YGU and four additional ORANGE IntSec troopers.
3. **Confession booth hallway.** Note that there are several 'blind spots' in this curved hall that The Computer's video monitors cannot view—near the interior walls of the curved sections of hallway and directly in front of the Euthanasia Center. Note also that more or less innocent bystanders occupy several of the booths (the shaded ones on your map).
   3a. A four-meter wide by three-meter tall doorway with 'The Ultimate Happiness Euthanasia Center' inscribed above. In the middle of the door is a big red button. If the button is pushed, the doors swing open, revealing a large pit leading directly to the SOB Sector reactor core. At the same time, the floor directly in front of the door (the area inside the dotted lines on your map) tilts up and dumps anyone on it down into the pit (Agility roll to jump off in time).
4. **Confession booth containing invisible Commie.**
5. **Confession booth from which Tate-I-RTV-6 emerges.** A secret panel in the back wall leads to a small empty room (where Tate-I made his illegal broadcasts to Enemy Complex).

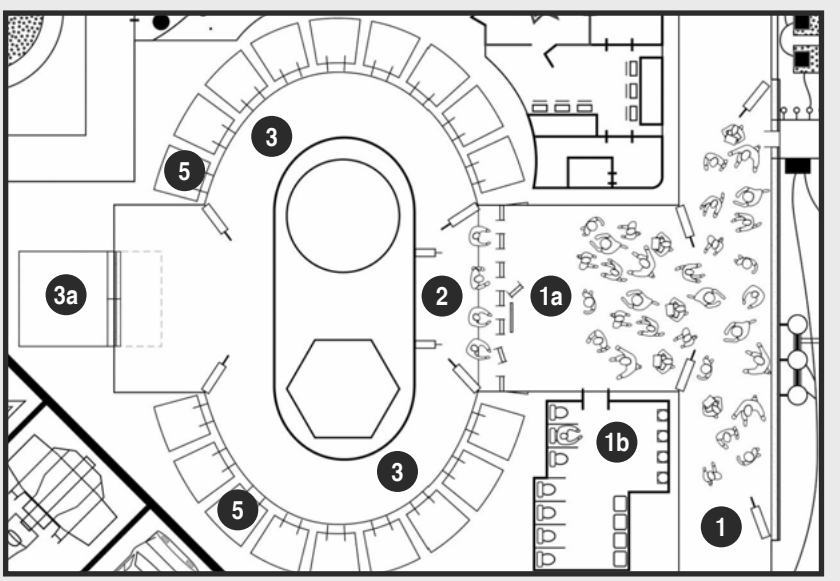
Adoring crowds: Average Joes. Consult Innocent Bystander table at the end of the mission if these guys take a lot of indiscriminate fire.

Finn-Y-YGU-2: IntSec guard and mutant traitor
Secret society: Death Leopard
Mutation: Telekinesis
Weapons: Laser pistol (W3K energy, Energy Weapons skill 10), Unarmed Combat (O5K impact, skill 07)
Armor: YELLOW reflec (E1)
Tactics: So paralyzed with laughter he can't defend himself until fired at, then he scuttles behind IntSec barrier and orders other guards to open fire.

Four ORANGE IntSec troopers manning barricade: *See NPC roster.*

Invisible Commie: *What needs to be said?*

Tate-I-RTV-6: Surprised traitor
Secret society: Spy for Ivar-U-DED-5
Mutation: Electroshock
Weapons: Cone rifle with AP shells (W3K impact, skill 14), Unarmed Combat (O5K impact, skill 08)
Armor: Reflec over kevlar (E1, I3)
Tactics: Shoot Executive Officer first, then most heavily armed PC. Never surrender.



CCP Sector confession area

Some dim PCs may believe that The Computer is malfunctioning. We know it is—but stepping into the confession booth with a screwdriver (or fire axe) ain't gonna fix it. If someone pulls this stunt, he is immediately accused of attempted sabotage over every loudspeaker in the area. Computer fodder.

Another possibility is that someone may get tired of hearing a certain Commie yuk it up. The PCs may certainly open fire on Finn-Y if they want, but if they miss, the stray shot drills Floyd-I-OSU-6, a semi-innocent bystander with lots of bodyguards. (The unusual tendency of stray shots to home in on the most inconvenient target was first documented by the archtraitor Murph-Y-LAW-3. Just a little historical trivia.) Naturally, this also applies if the PCs shoot at anyone in the crowd's general direction.

If anyone peruses the pamphlet, even briefly, he discovers that it is covered with Communist propaganda of the most scurrilous sort. The victim gains the unhealthy secret skill Communist Propaganda at level 1, or if he already has the skill, this exposure increases his skill level by one.

Forgive me, father, for I am singed

When the smoke has cleared, clone replacements have arrived and things have more or less settled down, continue reading:

As you are about to leave for the debriefing, you hear the sound of a small explosion nearby. Looking to your left, you see the door to another confession booth fall to the ground and an INDIGO citizen step out of the smoke. Seeing you, he yells into his wrist chronometer, 'Planet X, this is Flash! The Commies are on to me! Initiate Operation Overlord!'

What has happened is this: the INDIGO citizen, Tate-I, was making an illegal radio transmission (to the Enemy Complex) in a secret alcove behind a false wall in the confession booth when Finn-Y did his thing. When he finished his transmission, he reentered the confession booth only to discover that the door to the corridor was locked. Fearing capture, he blew it down and emerged—directly into the arms of the Troubleshooters. Believing that all was lost, he made an emergency call to Enemy Complex, the ramifications of which will be explained later.

After making his call, Tate-I pushes a button on his belt buckle, which quickly unfolds into a cone rifle. (Dick Tracy, eat your heart out.) He opens fire immediately, targeting first the team executive officer, who appears to be the highest clearance officer. After disposing of him, Tate-I fires at the best-armed PC.

Once the PCs kill Tate-I, they probably search his body. If so, they overhear the following message coming from his wrist chronometer:

'Planet X to Flash, Planet X to Flash! Do you have clearance to override the Dead Man?'

Then, softer: 'No sir, no response. How are we supposed to bring the war to the Commies if he goes and gets himself killed?'

Then, responding to a transmitted self-destruct message from Enemy Complex, Tate-I's wrist chronometer glows bright red and melts. This does unpleasant-smelling things to Tate-I's wrist, but, as he is dead, he doesn't much care.

Note: The reference to 'the Dead Man' in the transmission is a *bona fide* clue. Putting this reference together with other information they come across later in the mission, the players may discover that the Dead Man is Ivar-U-DED-5, the traitorous High Programmer in charge of the enemy spy ring.

Discovering the Dead Man's identity and informing Jeff-I before Jeff-I learns it on his own is worth mega bonuses.

Booty

Tate-I has the following items secreted about his person:

- 42 credits
- Collapsible cone rifle (two AP shells remaining)
- INDIGO reflec
- Laser pistol (two INDIGO barrels)
- Vial of 24 little pink pills (cyanide)
- Four small magnetic boxes for leaving secret notes; one contains a piece of apparently blank paper. (A secret message in ultraviolet ink. When exposed to UV light, it says: 'Infiltration equipment acquired. Delay subversive activity. Prepare for final assault on the Commies. IUD.')

Nimble PCs may swipe the credits, the cone rifle shells, one laser barrel, the pills and the boxes (including the note) without recriminations, but somebody in IntSec will notice if Tate-I's cone rifle, armor or laser pistol are gone (tapes from the corridor monitors show he had them when he died). The thieving PCs have to answer tough questions at some inconvenient point later in the mission.

Return to sender

Once Tate-I has been waxed, the PCs are recalled via com unit to the briefing room. Of course, they never get there.

~~Avoiding PC casualties~~

~~Deleted for reasons of security.~~

1.5: Snitch hunt

The Troubleshooters aren't going to make it back to the briefing room, yet. See, it's a good five-minute walk, and word travels fast around Alpha Complex, especially when there's nothing else going on. As the PCs are returning to HQ, news of Tate-I's demise reaches the HTN Sector HQ front desk clerk (also an enemy spy). He attempts to use the PCs to minimize the damage this security breach has caused. He rapidly types up a bogus mission alert sending the Troubleshooters to Tate-I's safe house: Cubicle 5584. Once the PCs reach it, he tries to trick them into destroying secret documents.

This is how it goes:

As you stride back into HTN Sector HQ you see several workers scurrying back and forth (and even a few scurrying back and fifth). The BLUE desk clerk waves frantically at you. When you reach his desk, he pulls something out of his processor and says, 'Thank goodness you're here! This just came down! It's extremely important! Hurry! We're depending on you!' He hands you a mission alert.

Give them mission alert (reference 1.5.2a).

As you can see, the clerk is not a good typist when he's in a hurry. (He's got a lousy Forgery secret skill rating.) It doesn't much matter in this particular case though: He's intimidated Harper-Y at Mission Control into believing this alert is for real. Since, to give Mission Control a fair field test, The Computer will route all the Troubleshooters' queries back to Harper-Y, there's really no way for the PCs to determine the validity of the alert. PCs who protest too much incur large fines (some of which may be rescinded at the end of the mission when the clerk's treason is discovered).

If the PCs question the clerk directly on the validity of the alert, he compensates for his lack of Forgery skill with a surplus of Field Weapon skill (hand flamer), announcing that if the team does not go on this mission immediately, he will have to execute them. At this time Harper-Y

comes on over the PDCs saying, 'Team HTN-13, this is Mission Control. Request ETA, cubicle 5584, over.'

If you need to run a combat here, see the 'Reception Area' sidebar above.

Cubicle 5584

Cubicle 5584 is one of Ivar-U's safe houses and is officially listed as unoccupied. Tate-I has been using this as a base of operations for three months.

Getting there

When the players have absorbed the mission alert and announced that their characters are on their way, read:

Cubicle 5584 is located in an industrial subsection of Alpha Complex. After dodging the customary forkbots, transbots and INFRARED-powered sleds for several exciting moments, you reach a vacant-looking BLUE-Clearance hallway at the end of which, according to your map, lies your objective.

Speaking of which…ahead of you the hallway opens to the left into sort of a room. Inside you note a huge yellow storage tank squatting on the floor, clearly labeled 'FLAMMABLE!' There are some green pipes leading away from the tank, and there's a yellow valve wheel on the tank's side. The floor changes to INDIGO Clearance parallel to the hallway you're in, and some three meters farther on, against the left wall, you see the door to cubicle 5584. The hallway appears to be deserted. What will you do?

If they call Harper-Y at Mission Control, he tells them to proceed with caution. If they jump into a confession booth, The Computer gladly listens to their confessions but tells them to consult with Mission Control about any mission-related problems. Eventually, the players'll decide to go for it. As soon as a Troubleshooter steps onto the INDIGO floor, read the following:

As you step onto the INDIGO floor, you hear a voice around on the other side of the tank say, 'Hey! Bill-Y-BCO-3! Hurry up!' Two YELLOW-clad guards trot around the tank. Both have INDIGO armbands, mutant stripes and automatic slugthrowers. One says, 'Well, well, what have we here? Good work, there, John-Y-BCO-4!'

These are two Armed Forces Vulture trainees on guard duty. Bill-Y-BCO-3, a Death Leopard with the Pyrokinesis mutation, acts like a backwoods hillbilly who caught someone trespassing on his land. When playing Bill-Y, slouch, drawl, peer at your players through half-closed squinty eyes—the works. John-Y-BCO-4 is a telepath and should be regarded as Bill-Y's loyal and exuberant huntin' dog, down to the drooling and panting. John-Y constantly gives Bill-Y reports on what the Troubleshooters are thinking.

The trainee goons are assigned to guard this hallway. No one knows why. They won't let the PCs enter the area without a properly filled-out Security Breach Authorization Form. It will take the PCs approximately two days of bureaucratic wrangling to get one, by which time they will all be executed for failing to complete their mission, If asked, Harper-Y attempts to convince the goons to let the PCs through, but as Bill-Y has never heard of Mission Control, Harper-Y is unsuccessful.

If the PCs go for their weapons, Bill-Y sidesteps with surprising speed and stands with his back to the tank. He points his weapon at the tank and lights a butane lighter. 'Now, I wouldn't be too durn hasty with them there firesticks, if I was you, chief. I seems to think I got you at a distinck dis-AD-vantage, y'unnerstand, boy? Now, don't go tryin' nothin' foolish, or I'll light us all up *reeeal* purtylike.' John-Y pipes in with, 'They're real peeved, Bill-Y, sir!'

On the other hand, buffaloing these buffoons with any impressive blizzard of bull (Con Games) is sure to work. They're kind of dim. After all, they're only Vultures.

Enter the scrubot

The PCs find a computer lock on the door leading into cubicle 5584, but a successful Security Systems roll defeats it. Or, if they call Mission Control, Harper-Y gets the password from the desk clerk. Either way, they get in. (A tacnuke works, too.)

As the door swooshes open, they hear the squeal of dozens of tiny wheels as a small scrubot careens around the corner and into the cubicle, muttering more or less to itself.

This is Scrubot W/ee-ZL. Weasel (as it is commonly called) enjoys cleaning, but, after some treasonous reprogramming at the hands of Corpore Metal, it has learned a more rewarding vocation: random murder. Thus, Weasel pretends to be a normal, semi-intelligent scrubot, zooming around the cubicle, scrubbing floors from room to room (leaving a very slippery trail, incidentally)…until it finds itself alone with a PC whose back is turned.

Round and round the mulberry room

W/ee-ZL has a little vocal subroutine that he runs over and over again. if you can stand it, record the following on a cassette about 20 times and play it as the PCs search the cubicle.

Good day, citizens! I am Scrubot W/ee-ZL, and I'm here to make your day cleaner and pleasanter! As a scrubot, it is my joy and duty to clean Alpha Complex for The Computer's happy citizens! I clean floors, I clean walls, I clean doors, I clean halls and I'd even do windows, but ownership of windows is treason punishable by summary execution!

[To the tune of 'At the Hop.']
Let me use my mop! (Oh, baby!)
Let me use my mop! (Oh, baby!)
Let me use my mop! (Oh, baby!)
Let me use my mop!
Ohhhh-aahhhhh!
Let me use my mop!

I'll be a-washing and a-scrubbing
And a-waxing and a-rubbing
With my mop! (Mop-mop! Mop!)
I'll get the floor so shiny
That you'll slip and hit your hiney
On my mop! (Mop-mop! Mop!)
If anything's not spiffy
I will clean it in a jiffy
With my mop! (Mop-mop! Mop!)

(Repeat chorus.)

I will squash each tiny insect
And I'll use the disinfectant
With my mop! (Mop-mop! Mop!)
When your blood is spilling out
All that you need to do is shout
And I will mop! (Mop-mop! Mop!)
That's all I want to do
Is attack the grime and goo
And use my mop! (Mop-mop! Mop!)

Pretty bad, huh? What's worse is that W/ee-ZL repeats this little song and dance routine over and over…

And over…

Until…

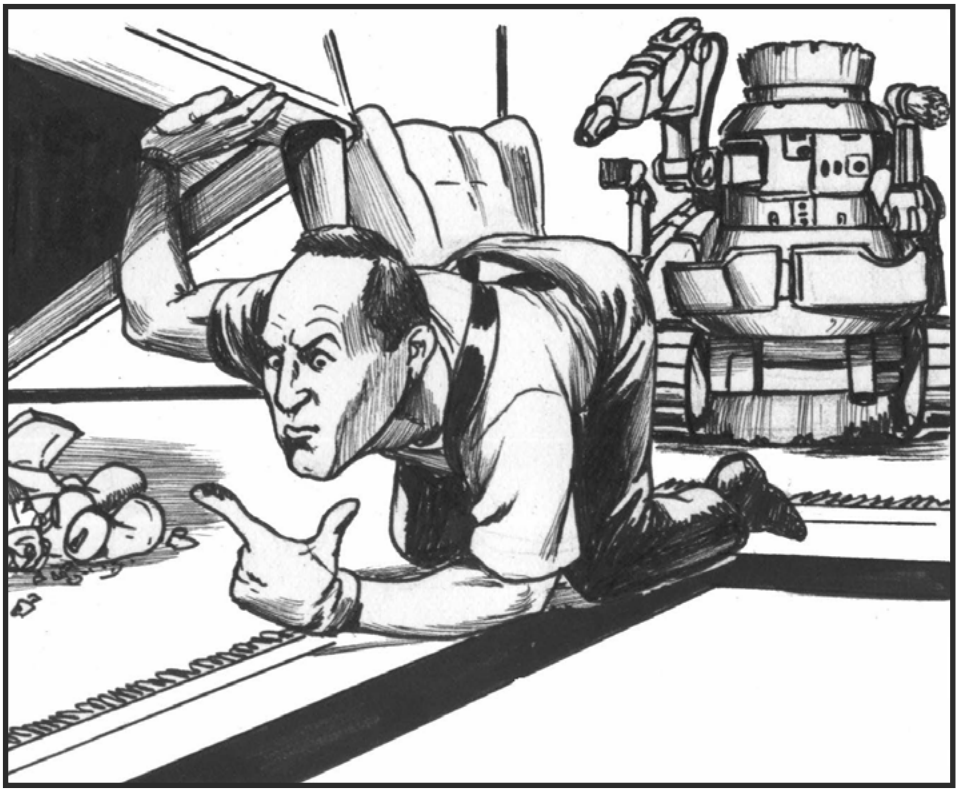
Pop Goes the W/ee-ZL

Whenever W/ee-ZL is alone with an unsuspecting Troubleshooter, a blaster barrel pokes out of one of its rotary scrub brushes and fires. Although Weasel's accuracy is not great, give it bonuses for point blank range. Before you say anything, roll for the hit and damage, then read the following:

Suddenly you hear the high-pitched, staccato punch of a blaster counterpointed with a scream, followed by the squeal of an alarm! Over the noise, you hear the scrubot yelling, 'Intruder alert! Intruder alert!' Quick, what do you do?

The scrubot zooms randomly around the rooms, yelling and screaming and generally making everyone tense.

If anyone thinks to question the bot, it claims to have been too absorbed in cleaning to have seen the culprit. Further questioning reveals it



*A clean clone is a **happy** clone.*

'may have been one of you.' If really pressed for details Weasel says, 'The human terminated the late subject team member, then activated a technological device on his belt and turned invisible.'

Should the team decide to ventilate Weasel, it retreats to a corner and whines:

'Damaging The Computer's valuable and loyal scrubot is treason! No kill I!'

If fired upon, Weasel does not return fire, for it hopes to convince everyone it is harmless. Once hit, however, it pulls its blaster, rushes the nearest PC and goes out in a blaze of glory.

The rendezvous

As soon as the PCs start thinking they're chasing ghosts, in comes another enemy agent, Amy-G-NGL-3. Poor Amy-G was told she'd rendezvous with some other agents from Enemy Complex. Pick the PC with the most clones left and tell the players:

A GREEN-Clearance citizen walks in, a sonic rifle slung over her shoulder. She smiles at *[the PC]* and says, 'You must be Agent Louis 14. Looks like you've got everything under control. What are we supposed to do with the cargo?'

The team will probably open fire on both her and the PC. If, by some bizarre turn of events, they don't, she'll stick around and help her assumed comrades until the Vultures arrive (see below).

Yet another clue: If the PCs capture her and apply a little, er, enthusiastic questioning, Amy-G spills her guts. Her secret society boss, a guy known as 'The Dead Man', sent her a message to come here and meet someone called Louis 14. If really pressed, she adds she's never seen the Dead Man's face; he always kept it covered. However, she did notice he is left-handed. That's all she knows. If 'pressed' further, she begins to babble outright nonsense. (Feed the players whatever line of guff you want.)

Express mail

Eventually someone probably decides to call Mission Control for further instructions. When they do, Harper-Y patches them over to the desk clerk.

The desk clerk tells them to look for any documents covered with strange-looking writing or code. (Dumploads may be found in the computer room.) When the PCs announce they have found them, he says:

'These documents are far too valuable for you to try to bring them back by hand. One never knows; enemy agents might try to steal them. Instead, it is safer to send them electronically. According to this floor plan, there should be a telefacsimile device right next to the printer.' *[In the CPU room, the PCs see a somewhat appropriate-looking device next to a printer.]* **'This device is very efficient, and it can handle several pages at once. Time is of the essence, so put as many in as it will take.'**

Most likely the PCs cram in a whole lot of papers. The machine switches on automatically, there's a humming noise and finely shredded paper pours out the bottom. If the PCs ask the desk clerk if he received copies, he says, 'You sent them? Oh, here they are! Yes, they came out perfectly. Send a bunch more.' Should they ask about the shredding, the desk clerk says, 'What? Oh, that's natural. It's a security precaution to…ah…to prevent such sensitive material from falling into the wrong hands. Send a bunch more.'

Not another clue: The encoded documents do in fact contain important information, but, sadly, even the most gifted computer-assisted cryptographer would need weeks to break the code. Since by then the information would be all be useless, feel free to let the PCs steal as much of it as they can carry.

When the shredding gets boring…

About this time, Jeff-I calls Harper-Y to ask what is delaying the team's report on their mission to the confession booth. Harper-Y doesn't so much spill the beans as throw them down. With two calls Jeff-I activates two Internal Security teams—one to retrieve the PCs, one to kill the desk clerk.

The desk clerk

Clerk: What are you doing here? We haven't activated any IntSec squads.

Goons: BLAMBLAMBLAMBLAM CRASH POW CRUNCH Smash Thunk *tinkle tinkle tinkle.*

The team

A nearby IntSec squad is activated when the PCs are about halfway through shredding the documents.

Are any PCs off by themselves? Hope so. Pop goes the Weasel—again. Followed immediately, of course, by the entrance of the IntSec squad.

The troopers will not fire unless fired upon; they've been told the PCs are Troubleshooters and are therefore probably loyal.

Maybe there won't be any gunplay at all. Maybe there will be a big room-to-room brawl. Or, if your players are really smart, their characters will all point to the teammate they've coerced into operating the shredder, and he'll be taken away in chains.

Nonetheless, the IntSec troopers' goal is to capture the Troubleshooters relatively intact and return them for debriefing. Please keep

Cubicle 5584

The cubicle and surrounding area (**Tension 0**) are diagrammed below and on a player handout map at the end of this mission.

1. A corridor. The PCs enter this BLUE corridor from the top (at 1a). To their right is a bank of confession booths (1b).

2. Another corridor. The floor changes to INDIGO Clearance at the dotted line, so the PCs are not cleared to go into the hallway. It's only a small fine if they do.

2a. A large yellow tank. This huge tank is filled with Flammable Liquid #47, flamethrower juice. The top of the tank was stolen by a traitorous Frisbee fetishist. If anyone falls in, he's got two rounds to get out before his powered weapons explode. Then all he has to deal with is flammable clothing and triple malfunction chances. If the tank is hit by a high-energy weapon, it is punctured and a jet of flame sprays out perpendicular to the wall of the tank. Low-energy weapons, like slugs and knives, merely create a big flammable leak.

2b. Green pipes and a yellow valve wheel on the tank. A PC making a Violence/Agility roll can jump to the wheel from the BLUE hall, but there's a 50/50 chance he'll open the valve. This causes some ominous creaks and the pipes swell, but no harm done—just don't let the players know that. Jumping to the pipes from the valve wheel takes a Violence/Agility roll. Once on the pipes or valve wheel, a Troubleshooter can clamber up on top of the tank, making another roll not to fall in. Again, don't let the players know.

2c. An INFRARED confession booth. If you're not caught crossing the INDIGO floor, then you can't be in trouble for being in this booth, 'cuz you're cleared for it.

3. The entrance. The door is locked and requires a password to open. A Security Systems check works; as does an AP shell; as does calling up Harper-Y and requesting the password. Two doors lead from the foyer (entranceway); each bears an old sign saying, 'DANGER! PLASMA GENERATOR TEST SITE! DO NOT ENTER!' This area is grey (excessively dirty) clearance.

4–8. The safe house. This area is so posh that the Troubleshooters will feel afraid to breathe. The walls are covered with bizarre clothlike material, the floors with the fur of some strange animal (dacron, to be exact). The color scheme will leave the PCs decidedly confused as to the security clearance of the area: 'I've never heard of Paisley Clearance, have you?' Treasonous items lay scattered about: Old Reckoning history books (*Conan the King*, *1995 Manhattan Yellow Pages*, *Gamer's Guide to Diplomacy*, etc.), potted plants (mainly triffids and poison oak) and cases of something called 'ouzo'. Nimble-fingered PCs could make a veritable IR market fortune here.

Every room has video screens, a camera and a small terminal. The cameras are deactivated.

4. Bedroom. Here the PCs find a bed, table and dresser. If they go through the dresser, they discover two INDIGO laser barrels, two grenades and a picture of a woman wearing nothing but a GREEN scarf. (This is Geneva-G, a woman from Enemy Complex who has been skimping on her hormone suppressants. Tate-I has some tender and treasonous memories of her.)

5. Bathroom. Expensive colognes, plush towels, shower, toilet and sink.

6. Kitchen. Contains an elaborate food synthesizer, an adventure in itself.

7. Computer room. A keyboard and vidscreen, reams of documentation for several treasonous programs (all written in code), a 'fax machine' (see nearby), as well as an ungrounded modem.

8. Closet. Chock full of big cartons. When one of the cartons is picked up, opened or breathed on wrong, it falls over, and the PCs discover that it (and all the others) contain Tate-I's huge marble collection. The marbles cascade across the closet and foyer (if the door was open when the mishap occurred). Characters moving through a marble-strewn area must make a Violence/Agility roll each round to stay upright.

Bill-Y-BCO-3: Security guard
Secret society: Death Leopard
Mutation: Pyrokinesis (registered)
Weapons: Automatic slugthrower with dum-dum (W3K impact, skill 10), Unarmed combat (O5K impact, skill 07)
Armor: YELLOW reflec (E1)
Tactics: Stand in front of yellow tank; threaten PCs. In battle use mutation (Power 15).

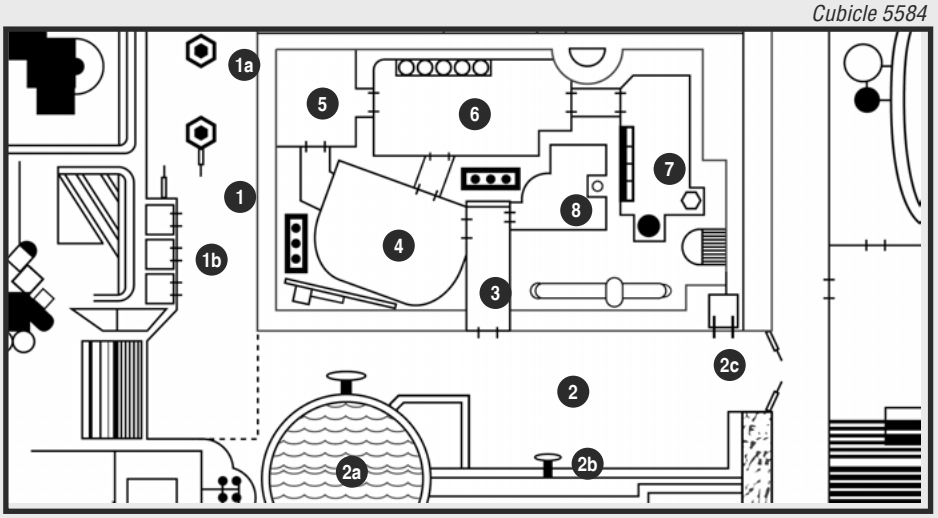
John-Y-BCO-4: Registered mutant security guard
Secret society: Romantics
Mutation: Telepathy
Weapons: Automatic slugthrower with solid slugs (W3K impact/07), Unarmed combat (O5K impact/12)
Tactics: Hang around Bill-Y; tell him what PCs are thinking; go for hand-to-hand combat when possible.

Scrubot W/ee-ZL: Psychopathic murderer bot with blaster
Secret society: Corpore Metal
Intelligence: Quite well-versed in subjects related to cleaning; low-grade moron in all else. A good liar.
Weapons: Blaster (M3K energy/08), Mild Abrasives (O1S impact AP/19), Scrubber (O2S impact/19)
Armor: Cheap shiny tin (1)
Tactics: Wander around cleaning cubicle. Wait for Troubleshooter to be alone, then shoot him in the back. Claim it was someone else. If attacked, shoot blaster, then close in and use abrasives and scrubber.

Amy-G-NGL-3: Ill-informed spy
Secret society: Spy for Ivar-U (doesn't know it)
Mutation: Adrenalin control
Weapons: Sonic rifle (S3W energy/10), 2 grenades (W3K impact/12), Unarmed (O5K impact/11)
Armor: Reflec and kevlar (E1/l3)
Tactics: Thinks PCs are secret contact; stands around mouthing dumb code words until given proper countersign or attacked. If attacked, uses weapons to cover her escape.

IntSec squad: Two REDs, three ORANGES and one GREEN. See NPC roster.

Cubicle 5584



that in mind. You still have plenty of time to kill everybody later in the mission.

Debriefing

Considering they have an armed and dangerous IntSec escort, the PCs should get back to HTN Sector headquarters without trouble. As they pass the clerk's desk, they observe it's full of big bullet holes. Chet-B-CSU-4, a citizen who looks very much like the previous clerk, sits there nervously, avoiding all eye contact. The elevator the PCs used last time has been filled with the debris of the scaffolding that collapsed earlier. The other elevators work fine.

The PCs have a cursory debriefing, during which most of the personnel barely pay attention, Jeff-I being the only exception. Stan-U and Trish-U are still locked in a knock-down drag-out fight, which eventually spills over the desk and onto the floor in front of the PCs. The other personnel are busy making urgent reports to their service groups or The Computer. Sanitation workers from PLC carry out the remains of Dolph-V and Luis-Y under the direction of Lenore-B.

After hearing the report, Jeff-I issues commendations and reprimands and informs the Troubleshooters they should still consider themselves on alert. They are then dismissed.

Payday

If you are the kind of softy GM who likes to give your players some instant gratification at the end of each episode, here are some suggestions:

Episode 1

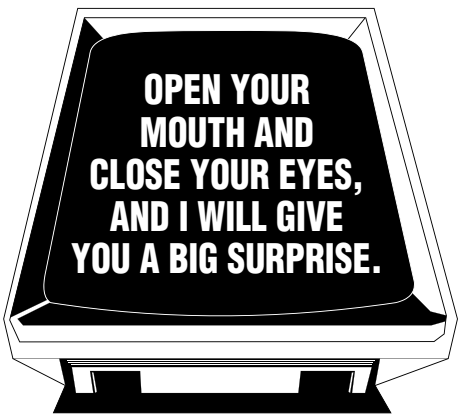
Any mention of 'the Dead Man' is worth a 500cr bonus to the character who speaks up, plus an additional 500cr to everyone in the party (including the character who received the bonus).

If any PC immediately opened fire into the confession booth, he gets 500cr. Each Troubleshooter is fined 500cr for not returning the Commie invisibility device, unless they convince Jeff-I it was destroyed. PCs are fined a month's salary each if they leave the Commie propaganda pamphlet lying on the floor of the confession booth, as it will be noticed by janitorial personnel. If anyone takes the pamphlet for himself, he does not get any fines unless a teammate saw him do it and tells Jeff-I.

Every participating PC gets an Official Commendation and 1,000cr for the death of Tate-I. If an enterprising PC found Tate-I's concealed panel and kept the information for his secret society, he gets two secret society IOUs.

Episode 1.5

If the players believed W/ee-ZL and tell Jeff-I about the invisible intruder, they lose the reward for firing into the confession booth, because it's obvious the invisible Commie escaped. Instead, they are fined another 750cr for damaging the confession booth. Jeff-I also warns them the invisible Commie is apparently following them, and they should therefore keep their eyes peeled. They face another 100cr fine for entering an INDIGO area. The reward/penalty for the treasonous documents depends on their story. Play it by ear.



2: Raiders of the lost Arco

A rapid and thorough investigation by Internal Security discovers that Tate-I is an agent from somewhere outside Alpha Complex, and Technical Services gets a fix on Enemy Complex with a radio direction finder.

Ivar-U discovers that the PCs are being sent to locate Tate-I's home base, so he tries to throw the team off the track. One of Ivar-U's agents in the Sierra Club leaks the location of a Sierra Club outpost about halfway between Alpha Complex and Enemy Complex. Ivar-U hopes that this ULTRAVIOLET herring will convince The Computer that Tate-I must have been sent by these folks, despite the fact that the Sierra Clubbers have no radio, no high-tech equipment and no personnel to spare. (Commies work in mysterious ways.)

Mission summary

The Troubleshooters are grossly overequipped and sent out on a parody of other post-holocaust games. They are, unfortunately, not cleared to know the location of their objective so they must question the natives.

After stumbling through the countryside, they eventually find and attack the Sierra Club stronghold and plunder the sacred Arco Gas Station. Their mission comes to an abrupt end as they spot a huge war machine approaching them. Returning rapidly to Alpha Complex, they have to overcome the evil machinations (pun intended) of Corpore Metal if they are to survive.

Gamemaster briefing

The early part of this mission is set up in a flexible manner. If you are to inflict the maximum amount of pain—er, training—on your players, you must be able to quickly and easily exploit their fears. Thus, the encounters that occur before the Troubleshooters attack the Arco Station are presented in a modular format. Pick and choose. Ignore some, expand others. Rerun the same encounter eight times in a row. You're right!

In addition, the encounters are numbered, in case you wish to randomize, although no true ***PARANOIA*** Gamemaster ever lets measly dice control his decisions.

Pre-mission briefing

The PCs have a few hours between the time they leave the briefing room and the next mission alert. This gives them enough time to do pretty much whatever they want with their service groups and secret societies, but it also gives you, Gamemaster, an excuse to cut short anything you consider too boring.

If any PC returns to his living quarters during the brief respite, he discovers another citizen has already moved in. (HPD figured none of the PCs would survive the last mission.) Lots of yelling and arm-waving, red tape breeds prodigiously and maybe someone gets shot during a 'discussion', but in the end no harm comes of it.

Distribute another random rumor to any PC who tries to get one from contacts.

PCs who consult their secret societies about 'the Dead Man' are told quite firmly to mind their own business. If a character presses and is willing to expend an IOU, have his player make an Uncanny Luck roll (that is, a Power roll). Success means the character learns the Dead Man is a High Programmer who has paid the PC's secret society lots of money over the past few weeks to stop causing disturbances in Alpha Complex. If the Luck roll fails, the character gets reassigned to reactor core internal maintenance. Send in the clone.

Then, whenever you darn well feel like it, read this episode's mission alert (reference AC 2.3.1A) aloud to the players and hand it over for their careful study.

Return to Troubleshooter Central

The alert of course gives the Troubleshooters no idea what they are supposed to do. But then, they should be used to that by now. If they do nothing, the message repeats itself, followed by an order for local Internal Security forces to go on standby. If the Troubleshooters still don't go to Central, Harper-Y contacts them and requests their ETA at briefing room 999.

You know what to do if they *still* don't go, don't you?

As the PCs approach HTN Sector Troubleshooter Central, they notice the doors to the reception hall are open, and the huge cannon barrel is nowhere in sight. Computer monitors everywhere flash the message:

'THERE IS A BOMB ON THE PREMISES. PLEASE EVACUATE THE AREA IN AN ORDERLY, SINGLE-FILE LINE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.'

There is actually no bomb: the threat was made by one of the late desk clerk's underlings as Internal Security goons carted him off for interrogation. Unfortunately for the PCs, briefing room 999 has not been evacuated. If they delay in reporting, they receive steep fines for not responding to a mission alert. If anyone searches for the bomb, level treason charges for suspected collaboration with the spies.

As the PCs enter the reception room, they notice the doors to the elevator they used last time have been welded shut. Be sure you ask who's standing where as they wait for the next elevator to arrive, because when the doors open, there's no elevator. The Troubleshooters are staring into an apparently bottomless shaft. The urge to push will likely be uncontrollable. Shortly after the doors open (enough time to push about three characters in) the elevator car arrives.

The briefing

As the elevator doors open again at the 99th level, the PCs notice that the fallen planks have, for the most part, been replaced. There is a new pathway across, but the replacement planks are, if anything, less sturdy than the originals.

About halfway across the chasm dangles a worker from HPD who has been installing these replacements. His name is Cliff-Y-GRN-4. Unfortunately for him, about five minutes ago he lost his balance, although he managed to get a grip on the plank. His fingertips are about to give out. If the Troubleshooters don't save him, he'll die.

If your players are like most ***PARANOIA*** players, they ignore him. In this case, Cliff-Y furiously wobbles the planks as the last PC steps over him (Violence/Agility roll to keep from falling). If someone is really mean and steps on his fingers, Cliff-Y applies some electroshock therapy. (Don't mess with mutants!)

When the PCs enter the briefing room, the only person present is Jeff-I. (Gil-I, Lenore-B, Gladys-B and Parker-I are all out requisitioning and approving mission equipment, and Stan-U and Trish-U are receiving medical treatment.) The vampirebot is still there, of course. Read the following aloud to the players:

Jeff-I briefly scans a sheaf of papers in his hands before dropping the lot of them into an incinerator. Clearing his throat, he looks at you and says, 'I hope you all realize the importance of this mission. Speed is essential, because a traitorous Commie outpost that can infiltrate our very own Alpha Complex is indeed a major threat and must be destroyed as soon as possible. Rest assured that The Computer has taken care of all your material needs.'

Pausing for a moment, Jeff-I pulls out a weapon that you haven't seen before. He says, 'Unfortunately, it has come to my attention that these traitors have already managed to infiltrate your team. That situation will have to be remedied. You will now terminate all traitors within your group.'

If nobody gets gunned, Jeff-I calmly asks if the entire team are traitors. He goads and threatens the PCs until someone is reduced to inert matter. Again, anyone who fires at Jeff-I is immediately converted to vampirebot fuel. Send in any replacements, then continue:

Jeff-I looks you over carefully, then says, 'You will proceed immediately to the Communist-infested Arco Station, Outdoors, and terminate all traitors you find there. You are assigned a crawler model V-150. Because this vehicle is classified VIOLET, you will be assigned two Outdoor Transport Terminal Operator bots, one pilot model and one navigator model. These bots will control the crawler under the guidance of the team leader, executive officer or vehicle officer. The bots await you now in the main vehicle terminal in this sector. Do you have any questions?'

Jeff-I entertains any questions the PCs may have. If they ask about the infiltration he mentioned earlier, he says, 'That was covered in your mission alert. I suggest you reread it.' Pressing the matter further is dangerous, as Jeff-I is not patient with illiterate Troubleshooters. On the other hand, he tells them anything they want to know about the Arco Station. As much as he knows, that is, which isn't all that much (i.e., make something up).

Whenever the briefing ends, he tells the PCs to report to HTN Sector R&D labs for experimental equipment assignment.

Let's get it in gear

The PCs have no real choice but to go back down the elevators. Cliff-Y, if previously ignored, is still there. When the PCs emerge into the reception area, the desk clerk sends a YELLOW-Clearance citizen from Power Services over to them. This is the person who will transport them to R&D; his name is Dean-Y. Dean-Y's stats are listed in the NPC roster at the end of this mission.

Dean-Y drips with arrogance. He wears a scruffy YELLOW vinyl jacket and boots, faded polydenim pants, driving gloves and spurs, and he has all sorts of chains, snaps, hooks and other assorted metal and plastic gizmos jangling everywhere. His T-shirt, ripped at half torso, says simply, 'POWER'. (The bottom half said 'services' before he tore it off.) He chews the same piece of gum he's chewed for the last five years. In general, he's the kind of hot rod punk every cop just loves to pull over and arrest—when they can catch him.

Dean-Y avoids recognizing the PCs' superior clearance whenever possible, proceeding under the assumption that, as he's the coolest one around, he can do whatever he wants. When faced with the business end of a laser, he fulfills his duties, but his respect and deference are so affected, so incredibly exaggerated, that the Troubleshooters should find them even less tolerable than his normal attitude.

Shooting one of the best drivers in Alpha Complex is, of course, treason.

After introducing himself—'Hey geeks. I'm the man. You comin' or what?'—Dean-Y escorts the PCs out the door to a waiting autocar equipped with huge exhaust pipes and mag wheels. He asks everyone to buckle their seatbelts. As the PCs comply, they notice that there is no release on the buckles. 'Can't have anyone jumping out.' explains Dean-Y, slouching into the driver's seat.

Here follows the most harrowing ride of the PCs' lives (at least until the next mission episode, that is). Dean-Y drives within the law, but his quickness in acceleration and braking cause even the stoutest heart to tremble. He takes turns without slowing (is all the gear properly stowed?), he misses objects by fractions of a millimeter (is anyone leaning out?), and all in all he drives so frighteningly that the PCs should be grateful to arrive alive anywhere—even R&D. When they do arrive, Dean-Y notices their pale complexions as he releases their belts. He says, 'Hey, dreebs, like you seem a little scared or somethin, man. Heck, this is nothing, man, like you should see me driving during an alert!' (They will.) 'Talk about awesome! I'm killer!'

Shooting one of the best drivers in Alpha Complex is still treason.

Test run away

Dean-Y leaves the PCs at a door labeled 'HTN Sector Research and Development Proofing Labs. Enter at Your Own Risk.' The door opens onto a long, wide hallway. A lone desk with an ORANGE receptionist awaits the PCs in an intersection about 100 meters away. Suddenly, when they are about 25 meters from the desk, alarms and sirens go off and a loudspeaker booms out with 'INTRUDER ALERT! INTRUDER ALERT!' The ORANGE clerk ducks behind her desk as a guardbot roars around the corner, guns blazing.

Of course the PCs are the targets! You need to ask?

This bot is purely incidental to the mission. It was included to improve the ambience at R&D Labs. So, depending on how the PCs have been dying—er—doing up 'til now, feel free to give the bot whatever weapons, armor and special effects you think necessary to liven things up. The weapons should be *very* impressive (AP cone rifles?), and the armor should be impenetrable, but the bot's accuracy isn't that great. Give the Troubleshooters enough time to hit the dirt, pull weapons and discover the futility of shooting back. Then read the following:

Suddenly the alarms stop. The bot stands at attention. As the last of your shots ricochet off his armor, you hear a voice coming over the remaining speakers in the hall. It says, 'This concludes the demonstration of the full combat capabilities of the 280-ZX Maximum Security Guardbot. If you have any further questions, please contact your local R&D Bot Specialist. We hope you have enjoyed our program. Have a nice day or face summary execution.'

The bot turns away from you, and, plaster chunks sliding off its glossy torso, exits the hall through a side door. Two citizens, an INDIGO from R&D and a High Programmer, follow the bot down the hall, sulfurous smoke swirling around their knees. Glancing in your direction, the High Programmer says, 'I am quite impressed. I'll take a dozen, please.' The door closes quietly behind them.

It should go without saying that if any PC foolishly tries to take a potshot at these high-clearance visitors, wall-mounted weaponry cuts him down in a withering crossfire.

The ORANGE clerk resumes her seat and summons a RED-Clearance lab technician to take the PCs to their destination.

GM note: This High Programmer is none other than Ivar-U-DED himself. The PCs will meet him again at the end of the last mission.

Seance with science

The RED guide ushers the PCs into a heavily armored and very secure room. A thick yellow spray hangs near the ceiling; the room's walls and floors are black, though whether this is because the room is INFRARED Clearance or because all of the paint has been burned off is impossible to tell. Several tables covered with strange-looking equipment are scattered about in seemingly random patterns.

Shortly after they arrive, Parker-I-ZRE-4 enters from a door in the opposite wall.

Parker-I has collected several high-security items that need field testing. He is present only to observe which PCs volunteer to test which devices. The actual distribution of the devices is up to the characters, and Parker-I knows nothing about any of the devices beyond name, alleged function and general operating instructions. ('Press that button. I think.') If a PC doesn't take at least one device, Parker-I waits until the team leaves, then reports the offender to The Computer. The cowardly PC is fined 100cr.

The devices available:

1. **Invisibility field generator:** This device was just being finished as the mission started. It consists of a large, heavy belt with lots of electrodes that attach to unusual places on the character's anatomy. When the generator is activated, the user slowly fades from sight. Although it would take sophisticated equipment to determine this, the character hasn't disappeared; he has been vaporized. The Computer assumes the character ran away with it and declares him a traitor. Send in the clone.
2. **Commie detector:** A modified multicorder with a bubble and pointer attached to an electronic helmet and radar antenna, this amazing device sometimes works! When used, roll on the table below:
   - **1–5:** Points to nearest Commie
   - **6–10:** Points to random PC
   - **11–15:** Points to nearest citizen
   - **16–19:** Electrocutes user, temporarily draining 1 Power point per round. The user is immobilized. Any PC who touches either the affected PC or the device suffers similarly. Let the characters figure out how to turn it off. By the way, if anyone loses all his Power points, he dies.
   - **20:** Beeps ten times and blows up.
3. **Neuron enhancer:** This electric beanie enhances all brain activity of the user. When the little propeller on the top is spun, the user immediately suffers incapacitating pain accompanied by deafening noise, blinding light, overwhelming smells, etc.—in essence, the victim's brain is being fried. This lasts until the propeller stops spinning. After having so suffered, a previously dormant mental or psionic mutation is enhanced to full strength. Note that the PC doesn't necessarily know that this has happened—until the mutation triggers itself accidentally, perhaps? A favorite mutation to gain by this device is teleport. The machine melts the third time it is used; this does bad things to the wearer's head.
4. **Swim fins:** Standard flippers. Pity there's no significant body of water around. And even if there is, who's gonna admit he knows how to swim anyway?
5. **Laser amplifier:** A special fiberoptic tube mounted between a laser weapon and the barrel. This device reduces the weapon's Boost number by 1 (e.g., a W3K laser becomes W2K, making it deadlier), but uses ammo three times as fast. It malfunctions on a roll of 18 or more.
6. **Personal energy field:** This looks like a small backpack. When activated, a glowing field appears around the user. All damage (excluding poisons, drowning or mental attacks) taken by the wearer is reduced 1 step. Unfortunately, all nonmetallic items on the person (i.e., clothing, ID cards) are vaporized when the device is turned on.
7. **Bionic goggles:** These fiberoptic lenses mounted in independent mechanical tubes look like electronic googlie-eyes. This, in fact, is about what they are. The lenses can move up/down and left/right. They can also zoom in or out and artificially enhance

R&D testing lab

The room (**Tension 14**) is rectangular, about 20 meters by 35, with tables scattered about. Heavily shielded cameras in each corner help determine the causes of any survivorless 'accidents'. Two doors lead into the room: the one the PCs enter and a YELLOW door on the opposite side (leading to R&D bureaucratic and decontamination centers).

Parker-I-ZRE-4: See NPC roster.

Jill-R-RRE-3: R&D Assignment Clerk
Secret society: FCCC-P
Mutation: Mental Blast
Weapons: Unarmed combat (O5K impact, skill 07)
Armor: None
Tactics: Hide behind a table, quivering.

R&D guards: 4-40 extra-wimpy bozos. Use YELLOW IntSec goons from NPC roster (see end of mission) but subtract two from all combat skills.

Tactics: It takes these guys about five rounds to reach this room; they fight fearlessly. Considering the experiments-gone-amuck they usually have to face, the PCs are a piece of cake.

the infrared and ultraviolet ranges of light. Unfortunately, each lens is independently controlled, and poor control or extreme overstimulation (e.g., from weapon flashes or explosions) can lead to loss of binocular vision.

8. **Thermonuclear grenade:** This steel sphere has the words 'THROW VERY HARD' printed on it. It is treated in all respects as a tacnuke cone rifle shell, except that no one will be able to throw it much farther than 50 meters. Unfortunately, no one will live to tell about this shortcoming, either.
9. **Traitorkiller:** This device looks like a steel softball with a pistol grip and trigger. The name is stenciled very visibly on it. When the trigger is pulled, it explodes. (The theory behind this device is that when a team is informed of its purpose, the traitor on the team will volunteer to take it so that it won't be turned against him.) Treat as an HE cone rifle shell (W2K impact).

All aboard

Once the PCs have taken all the experimental equipment they want, they are ordered to head out to the vehicle terminal where their bots, crawler and supplies await.

When the PCs arrive at the assigned terminal, it is almost empty, except for 12 elite Vulture squadrons lined up along one wall of the cavernous bay. Clearly bored, the Vultures clean their immaculate weapons and eye the team hungrily as the PCs proceed to their crawler.

At the crawler are Lenore-B-GZL-6, Gladys-B-DDU-5, Gil-I-DCU-6, several crates and assorted piles of equipment and the two bots, OTTO/Pilot and OTTO/Nav. Lenore-B hands the team leader a long list of equipment for which he must sign. Gladys-B mistakenly asks the team exec to sign for the bots. Gil-I simply takes everybody's identification card. No one is allowed the time to carefully inspect what he's signing for, as the three have orders to get the team on the road as soon as possible. Hand the players equipment list AC 2.4.2E.

As for the equipment on the list, three cases of grenades are mismarked: Two are filled with practice (nonexplosive) grenades, and one is full of unmarked tacnuke cone rifle rounds. Also, there is one gauss gun not on the equipment requisition, and none of the laser rifles on the requisition have been supplied. Add any other mistakes you deem appropriate or irritating.

When the PCs decide to load up, read the following aloud:

The inside of the V-150 series crawler is cramped. OTTO/Pilot and OTTO/Nav take up station at their respective operations terminals and wait for orders.

The crawler is a standard model V-150. It is equipped with a universal weapons mount in a turret on top. The mount is currently empty but capable of holding a cone rifle or heavy laser. Besides the main door in the rear of the crawler, there are two hatches in the ceiling. Inside the crew compartment are four seats. Scrawled on one wall is graffiti: 'Morr-O was here.'

After you stow all your equipment and make last-minute preparations, a buzzer sounds, and the crawler lurches forward past the Vultures. They seem unusually saddened by your departure. OTTO/Pilot, presumably responding to unheard microwave communications, guides the vehicle to an immense armored blast door that rises ever so slowly to allow you to go…OUTDOORS!

Being Outdoors has always invoked unusual feelings in you. Some might refer to these feelings as panic. But not you! Not Troubleshooters! To you, these feelings are known as 'The Survival Reflex'. Looking about you at the Outdoors, the miles and miles of wreckage covering what used to be productive, sterile, inhabited, Computer-dominated residential zones, you take time to ponder. 'Surely,' you think, 'surely the traitors responsible for this desolation got what they deserved!'

Information on the crawler and the bots appears later in this episode, when it is most likely to be useful. Feel free to refer to it now if the need arises.

And they're off and running

After the PCs exit the free-fire zone, OTTO/Pilot asks the team exec for instructions on how to get to the designated coordinates. The PCs don't know, either. Neither, it seems, does Harper-Y or anyone he can find. However, he assures the PCs that information retrieval specialists are diligently working on the problem and should have an answer any moment now.

Weeks pass. Soon the PCs give up. This places them in the unfortunate position of having to find the place on their own. Fortunately, there are many people to meet outside Alpha Complex who can, one way or another, set them on the right path, which is why we've provided the following encounters.

It is highly probable that several PCs will die during these encounters. Replacement clones will be (more or less) safely air-dropped in (practically) indestructible survival pods. Then again, if The Computer can't spare any of its valuable aircraft, the survival pod will be fired out of a long-range mail howitzer.

The Outdoors encounters are not presented in any particular order. You, the omniscient GM, are in complete control. Present the encounters in any order that suits the individual game, the team and their current status and especially your whim. Just try your best to keep the players OFF BALANCE, and give them 'clues' so they'll think they're accomplishing something. Oh, and be sure to use lots of witty narrative to fill in time between the encounters. If you're at a loss for witty narrative, pull out a copy of *The Hobbit* or something and read any of the travel descriptions.

Some of the persons, places and things to see Outdoors are:

1–4. The invisible data base: This is a group of GREEN-Clearance CPU data processors who somehow got stranded Outdoors. The shock proved to be too much for their tender little brains, and they went completely insane. They now live in their own imaginary Computer room; the only

Outdoor encounters

Everywhere Outdoors is **Tension 0.** For each Outdoor encounter roll, here are the corresponding characters:

1–4: Four GREEN CPU Clerks
Skills: Energy Weapons 05, Unarmed Combat 05
Weapons: Laser pistols with GREEN barrels (W3K energy)
Armor: GREEN reflec (E1)

5–9: Four GREEN Guards
Skills: Energy Weapons 10, Field Weapons 15, Unarmed Combat 10
Weapons: Two have laser pistols with GREEN barrels (W3K energy), one has a laser rifle (W3K energy) and one has a flamethrower (S3K energy)
Armor: GREEN reflec and Kevlar (E1/l3)

10–16: 45 Commies
Skills: Hand Weapons 05, Thrown Weapons 05, Unarmed Combat 05
Weapons: Each uses either a pointed stick (O5K impact) or thrown rocks (O5W impact)
Armor: Filth (1)

17–18: Natural events, mutants and aliens
Stats entirely at your discretion…

19–20: Very Stupid Traitors
Skills: Energy Weapons 10, Projectile Weapons 15, Unarmed Combat 10
Weapons: Each carries either a laser pistol with RED barrel (W3K energy), laser rifle (W3K energy) or semi-automatic slugthrower w/HE ammo (W2K impact)
Armor: RED reflec over Kevlar (E1/l3)

place it exists is inside their minds. Even so, all the furniture and equipment is quite real to them: they can summon data from The Computer, sit in their imaginary chairs, lean on imaginary desks and even play their air guitars (the music is inaudible to the Troubleshooters). They cannot see or hear through the walls of their imaginary room. Pretty weird.

When the Troubleshooters approach, read the following aloud:

Driving along, you see a break in the chaotic green-and-brown structures. In the clearing are four GREEN-Clearance CPU workers doing extremely odd things. One appears to be deliberately poking the air. Another is looking intently at the gap between his upraised hands. A third stares off into space, and the fourth sits on a chair so thin as to be completely invisible. They do not notice your approach. As you get closer, you notice that several regular paths have been worn in the organic carpet. Most of the paths are contained in an area roughly rectangular in shape; one path from a corner of this quadrangle leads away.

Overall, these poor guys will be nice to the PCs, even going so far as to overlook security clearances when answering requests for information. Should a PC suggest they accompany the team back to Alpha Complex, they become suspicious: they're in Alpha Complex after all, right? They're cooperative and genuinely helpful unless one of the PCs walks through the furniture or, worse yet, the Computer banks (quite possibly electrocuting nearby data processors). PCs who have no respect for The Computer's valuable property are obviously reckless and destructive, and therefore traitors. The GREENs' lasers are quite real…

5–9. Checkpoint: Three very bored GREEN Armed Forces guards stand at a small gate in an entirely untraveled area. For lack of anything better to do, they demand to see the Troubleshooters' passes. And mission alert. And equipment lists. And their vehicle registration. And their bot requisitions. And identification cards. And Troubleshooter licenses. And security authorizations. And laser pistol permits. And execution vouchers. And their ME Cards. As they don't see too many people out here, the guards are likely to hassle anyone who actually falls into their clutches, especially if everything is not in order. They are not overtly hostile, but they are bureaucratically aggressive. Of course, if anybody on the team has forgotten to remove his Commie target jersey from the first mission, the guards shoot first. And second. Asking questions ranks about fifteenth, and then all they'll ask is, 'Had enough?'

If the PCs are nice, then yes, they can go on their way, and the guards point them in the general direction of the Arco Station. If a bloodbath ensues, no one back at Alpha Complex will be the wiser, unless someone in the team squeals (everybody's just about forgotten this outpost).

Actually, many Troubleshooters kind of like *the violence inherent in the system.*

10–16. An Autonomous Anarchosyndicalist Collective Commune: This is a group of Sierra Clubbers who made it. When encountered, they are grubbing around in the filth, scooping it into little piles and loading it on wobbly carts. There is an old, decrepit residential dome in the distance. While not hostile, the Anarchosyndicalist hold very different political beliefs (Communist Propaganda 06) and behave in a generally contrary manner. They are unarmed and unarmored. Rest assured, the PCs will demonstrate the violence inherent in the system.

PC: Old woman!
NPC: Man!
PC: Man. Sorry. Uh, who lives in that dome?
NPC: I'm 37.
PC: *[Blam-blam-blam-blam!]* Hey, you over there!

17. Natural events: Rain, snow, sleet, tidal waves, earthquakes, total eclipses or all of the above.

18. Mutants and aliens: All sorts of four-legged furry things fall into this category: Deer, mice, dogs, speed limit signs, etc. Sadly, most of them are unarmed.

19–20. Very stupid traitors: A group of eight citizens approaches the PCs and calls out, 'Well, it's about time! We thought you were going to miss the rendezvous. Are you ready for the raid?'

Who *are* these idiots? They are secret society members who are under the mistaken impression that the PCs are their 'blind date' for the next operation. Which secret society these ding-a-lings belong to depends entirely on how the PCs react, *vis*:

- **Smart players:** 'Of course we're ready for the raid! Smash The Computer!' Whereupon the leader of the group, a staunch priest of the First Church of Christ Computer-Programmer, says, 'I mean the raid against the pagan Death Leopards. Say, your views sound awfully unorthodox…'
- **Boring players:** 'Of course we're ready for the raid! Death to traitors!' At this, the leader of the PURGErs says, 'Right! First we wipe out the monitor network, then…excuse me, but what did you just say?'
- **Stupid players:** 'Huh?' This sort of slow reaction cannot go unpunished, so the leader of the other group says, 'I said, are you courageous and valiant proletarian freedom-fighting comrades prepared to fight the yoke of capitalist repression and liberate the masses in order to found the perfect egalitarian bourgeois-hating state where everybody owns a tractor?' *[Commie Propaganda attack, skill 04.]*

This encounter probably ends in a firefight. However, if the PCs do manage to talk their way out of this sticky situation (e.g., simply saying, 'Lead on!'), then have the traitors describe an obviously suicidal plan, and the PCs will hotfoot

it out of there as soon as they can. Should the Troubleshooters report the plan to The Computer, it's only natural The Computer will wonder how they got the information in the first place

21. Gratuitous indulgence: Go ahead, make your day. *Monty Python's Flying Circus.* Ewoks. The Yellow Brick Road. Hare Krishnas. The Rat Patrol. April the 15th.

As mentioned above, each of these encounters should provide the PCs with one or more 'clues' on the location or status of the Arco station traitors. In reality, these clues are there only to conceal your total control over the mission. Give them out and make them sound good. Then, whenever you feel like it, let the PCs arrive.

So they made it, huh?

Okay, fine. Some clones have survived this far. That's okay. They're still only about halfway through the entire mission.

Plop the Arco Station map in the center of the table so everybody can see it, and read the following aloud:

As you drive over the crest of a hill, you see below you the objective of your mission—that den of treasonous iniquity, the Arco Station! It sits in the middle of a valley. To one side of the station are four rooms built from some brownish material, and there are a dozen or so gold-colored mounds constructed of what looks like a very cheap and fuzzy textile scattered about. You can see at least 20 traitors in the vicinity, doing treacherous tasks like running small noisy carts over the ground, pouring water on small green items, lying in hammocks drinking yellow foamy beverages, setting refuse out in steel containers and exchanging small green pieces of paper. The dirty inhuman Commie mutant traitorous freaks do not appear to have noticed you yet. What will you do?

The outpost at the Arco Station was founded several years ago by an archtraitor named Jason with nine of his loyal followers, the Arco Nuts. Since even a year is a long time in the life of a Troubleshooter, no one has ever heard of him or the Nuts. Since they set up shop, they have acquired 21 more followers, whom they refer to as the Village People.

Jason spends most of his time in the Arco Station, learning more about the Old Reckoning way of doing things. He used to be a Troubleshooter, so he is at least marginally intelligent, and he is never more than a few feet away from his weapons.

The Arco Nuts, his chosen followers, are quite loyal and cool under fire. They do some work around the outpost, but they spend most of their time teaching and supervising the Village People. At the moment most of them are outside, and their weapons are back in their wooden cabins.

The Village People, while enthusiastic about living Outdoors, are an undisciplined rabble. At the first sign of trouble, they run about in circles or in and out of the thatched huts, waving their arms and screaming and generally presenting tempting targets upon which to waste ammo. When hit, they always ignite or explode or expire in some other suitably dramatic fashion. These folks are merely cannon fodder, provided to give the players the kick of gunning down a cast of thousands.

So what will the PCs do? We don't know, ask them! We do know what the Sierra Clubbers will do, though, if that's any help.

If the Troubleshooters spy too long (your option) the Sierra Clubbers see them, sound the alarm and all run inside their homes. They won't come out until the PCs get very close, at which point Jason and the Arco Nuts fight tenaciously, and the Village People die like flybots.

Essentially the same thing happens if the PCs immediately sweep down on the outpost, though the fighting is more confused.

The Commies are suspicious should the Troubleshooters try to negotiate, but they listen

The Arco Station

The Arco Station and surroundings are detailed on the player map with the hexagons all over it (see the end of the mission).

This map contains several features that merit explanation:

- **Gold-colored mounds:** Thatched huts. Explode or burn when hit by flame, energy or laser weapons. Other projectiles pass right through (2 in 20 chance of hitting someone hiding inside).
- **Brown rooms:** Wooden huts. Flame, energy or laser weapons set them on fire (however, unless hit by a really nasty weapon, it takes a while for the wooden huts to burn down). HE, AP, HEAT cone rifle shells blow the rooms up; solid or dum-dum cone rifle shells pass right through (2 in 20 chance of hitting someone inside); other projectiles bounce off.
- **Arco Station:** Though it looks like a standard mid-70s-style gas station, the building is constructed of a duratitanium alloy and is impervious to all the PCs' weapons—including tacnuke shells. Such devices may be fired at targets through windows (made of weaker transparent bulletproof plastic) or open doors, but, as the interior walls of the Arco are also composed of duratitanium, a tacnuke which destroys one room won't necessarily take out all the others.
- **Primitive and inoperative-looking autocars:** Broken-down cars, trucks and SUVs. None of them work. PCs who spend Perversity points can hide in one of these for fire cover. If the attacker's weapon is vicious enough, he can shoot right through a car, in which case the car gives the defender the equivalent of Armor 3 armor protection.
- **Gas pumps:** These have long since been drained of gas and don't explode even a little bit when shot at. Sorry.

Village People: 20 or so low-budget extras
Weapons: Unarmed (O5K impact)
Armor: Dirt (1)
Tactics: Run around yelling and screaming; provide tempting targets for PCs to waste their ammo on. Explode entertainingly when hit.

Arco Nuts: Nine guys just like the Viet Cong, but better dressed
Secret society: Sierra Club
Mutations: Nothing useful
Skills: Projectile Weapons 10, Unarmed Combat 10
Weapons: Slugthrowers with dum-dum ammo (W3K impact), unarmed (O5K impact)
Armor: None
Tactics: Retreat to wooden cabins and retrieve weapons at the first sign of trouble; move to Arco station and snipe at PCs from doors and windows.

Jason: Leader of the Arco Nuts
Secret society: Sierra Club
Mutation: Mental Blast
Skills: Projectile Weapons 12, Energy Weapons 12, Unarmed Combat 12
Weapons: Cone rifle w/AP shells (W3K impact), Unarmed (O5K impact)
Armor: At first none; has combat suit (4) in Arco station.
Tactics: Retreat to Arco station and don combat suit; after, snipe at PCs from windows.

Troubleshooters experiencing a mild gas attack.

to offers. If the PCs attempt to set up some trade agreement that will make them enormously rich, go for it. The Arco Station won't last long enough for them to profit by it.

If the PCs call in an airstrike, it comes. Immediately. With lots of excess ordnance. Like seven 100-kiloton bombs in a rosette pattern. The PCs will invariably be inside the lethal radius, and will be posthumously charged with the treasonous destruction of a vehicle and two bots. Maybe their clones'll get executed for it.

If the PCs decide to pack and head for home, skip to the section titled 'That's all, folks!' below.

If the Troubleshooters actually try to join the traitors, the Sierra Clubbers question them thoroughly. Assuming their story is good enough, they are accepted and immediately put to work digging new latrines, or maybe filling in the old ones. If you're not that mean, make 'em sort mail.

If your players come up with some other ingenious approach, you'll just have to play it by ear.

Now it's Miller Time

After the smoke starts to clear (or, if they took the peaceful approach, after a hard day's work), the PCs will undoubtedly wish to look about the station itself. Although most of the valuables inside have been destroyed in the fighting (or are in the possession of the Clubbers), there are still a few worthwhile items hidden amongst the smoldering rubble and thick yellow spray. With luck, there will be lots of entertaining disputes over which PC actually gets to keep certain things. (For non-combat scenarios, these are some items up for trade or sale.)

The surviving items are:

1. **A 45 RPM record single:** Written clearly on the label is 'REVOLUTION Lennon/ McCartney'. Most likely the PCs will deduce that it is a record of a debate on the value of a revolution, with infamous Commie Nikolai Ilyich Lennon and famed anti-Commie Senator Joseph McCartney. A character turning this in to The Computer gets 100 credits. If given to the Commies, Free Enterprise or the Romantics, they reward the PC with 100 credits and two secret society IOUs.
2. **A toy jet plane:** Is it a model? A vehicle for very small people? A miniature cruise missile? Who knows? Pro Tech will pay the finder at least 50 credits for it.
3. **A pair of Groucho glasses:** Since cigars and facial growth are all but unknown in Alpha Complex, this handy item would make a perfect disguise!
4. **A picture of Groucho Marx:** The Commies would pay handsomely for a picture of their leader. However, if a Troubleshooter is caught with it he is likely to be immediately terminated for suspicion of being a Commie.
5. **The handle of a gas pump:** Obviously a weapon of some sort, though it doesn't appear to be operational.
6. **A movie still from *War of the Worlds:*** The Computer rewards the finder of this with a commendation. The still is immediately shipped off to R&D for analysis. (It is believed to be a photo of some kind of Commie Assault Transport.)
7. **A copy of *1984*:** Archtreason of the vilest sort!
8. **A pair of mechanical dentures:** Just wind them up and let them chatter! They could be used as a weapon; if held in the hands they would look like a hideous mutation; or Corpore Metal might use them for cyborging.
9. **A toy wind-up bot:** Even though it doesn't do much, most secret societies would go crazy over the chance to study this kind of miniaturization. Worth up to 250 credits undamaged.
10. **A packet of seeds:** Blackberry, that is. Tenacious. Rapid spread. Thorns. Attracts insects. Treasonous. Sierra Club'd love 'em.

That's all folks!

Regardless of what happens earlier, this is how the Troubleshooters' brief association with the Arco Station abruptly halts.

If the PCs have been peaceful, wait until things start to look really profitable, then burst

their bubble. If they're running from the station, immediately interrupt. If they've been fighting, give them just a few minutes to bask in their victory. Only allow them time to find one or two pieces of loot. If they start examining the things they have found, it's time to wind it up. Enter Mark 4.

Read the following aloud to the players (adjusting where necessary if their characters have been nice guys):

As you sift through the ruins of this hideous nest of Computer-hating deviant traitors, you become aware that the ground is shaking, much as it does when the JumboTram passes your living quarters in the middle of the night. You have no time to ponder how a JumboTram got all the way out here, because suddenly the very air itself reverberates with the sound of a deep and booming mechanical voice crying, 'FEE FIE FOE FUM!'

You scramble outside to find the source of the voice. You see it topping, or rather, toppling, the rise, barely a thousand meters away. The voice emanates from a massive chunk of steel covered with all kinds of tracking monitors and guns the size of hallways. It looks like a combat-equipped residential block, and it's coming your way! Already its guns are moving, and it opens fire on the outpost, vaporizing the closest structures.

If that doesn't impress them, nothing will.

This is the modified Warbot Model 425 Mark 4, the largest weapon ever built. It's big. It can withstand anything. It can kill anything. It's *really* big. If the PCs have played the preceding mission, 'Me and My Shadow Mark 4', perhaps they will recognize Mark 4 (though somebody seems to have recently added a torso and head).

Unless the PCs are exceptionally stupid, they run like jet-powered scrubots, because Mark 4 is systematically obliterating every building in the outpost. As they run to their vehicle, Mark 4 bellows, 'Death to you all!' and fires a few bursts from grenade launchers hidden somewhere on its massive hull to further demonstrate its power. Roll the die a couple times, look surprised and tell the players it missed with both bursts. Obliterate some more buildings. Let the PCs get into the V-150 and start driving away. Tell them one of the laser batteries opens fire. Roll the die, look fiendishly happy. Say, 'It hit!' and studiously scan this paragraph, pretending to be finding the damage. Look extremely disgusted. Say, 'Minimal damage. The left side of your vehicle and the left rear track are vaporized.' Then let them get away.

Any attempts to talk to Mark 4 are answered by a barrage of laser-guided missiles.

Bots-a-poppin'!

The two bots, OTTO/Pilot and OTTO/Nav, are actually human members of the Corpore Metal secret society whose bodies have been fully replaced by mechanical parts. They have also been refitted with full combat equipment, and have a buried program which causes them to eliminate any surviving extraneous biological intelligences upon the conclusion of a mission. If they live that long, the Troubleshooters may be insulted to discover that they are considered extraneous.

After the Troubleshooters 'escape' Mark 4, allow them enough time to relax and talk things over as they head back to Alpha Complex. When you think the psychological effect will be the most dramatic, read the following out loud to the players:

You are proceeding home relatively peacefully, when the V-150 suddenly stops and you tumble to the floor. The bots, OTTO/Pilot and OTTO/Nav, both quickly rise and turn to face you. Each of them has sprouted several vicious-looking weapons from various parts

'We've got the tools, we've got the talent.'

OTTO/Bot stats

The interior of the V-150 (**Tension 0**) is roughly rectangular, say three meters wide by five meters deep, with the pilot's and navigator's stations in front, seats in the center section and cargo space in the rear.

OTTO/Pilot: Corpore Metal murderer

Intelligence: Roughly human

Skills: Projectile Weapons 10, Hand Weapons 05

Weapons: 2 slugthrowers: solid AP (W3K impact, AP), napalm slugs (S2K energy); sword (W5K impact)

Armor: Plate equivalent (2)

Tactics: Wade into combat, firing both weapons and waving sword around wildly (can use all three in same round).

Description: Normal humanoid-looking bot until he sprouts weapons from various body parts.

OTTO/Nav: Another Corpore Metal murderer

Intelligence: Roughly human

Skills: Energy Weapons 05, Hand Weapons 10

Weapons: Sonic rifle (S3W energy), 2 chainsaws (W4K impact)

Armor: Plate equivalent (2)

Tactics: Same as OTTO/Pilot's

Description: Ditto

of his body; OTTO/Pilot has a sword protruding from one arm and barrels sticking out of his chest and other arm; OTTO/Nav has a barrel coming out from the lower half of his head and his hands have been replaced with chainsaws. The bots speak to you in unison:

'The mission is completed; another threat to machine-kind has been eliminated. You are heartily thanked for your cooperation in this matter. However, since your disgusting biological presence has been removed from Alpha Complex it is not permitted for you to return and thereby recontaminate the system. Rest assured that your accomplishments have been recorded in digital memory systems. In this way a perfect electronic part of your existence will survive after your foul throbbing organic bodies have been annihilated. Please stand in a cluster so that we may terminate your existence with a minimal expenditure of energy. Thank you for your cooperation.'

Ideally the PCs fight. Though the firefight is costly, they should win. On the other hand, successful Management/Con Games might convince the bots to strand the PCs Outdoors instead of executing them. Then they have only to walk back.

Honey? I'm home!

When the PCs return, squadrons of heavily armed Vultures hustle them to Troubleshooter Headquarters.

Ordinarily, the Troubleshooters would be asked about the Arco Station and their evaluation of its military potential, communications systems, etc. However, Mark 4's reappearance after two weeks causes the briefing officers to ignore all that. They ask all sorts of questions about Mark 4. We hope the PCs have good recall.

Jeff-I is the only person in the briefing room. He eyes the team with rabid, monomaniacal attention—a direct hit by a tacnuke would not break his concentration. Jeff-I addresses the executive officer in terse, clipped tones: 'Your report, team leader!'

If anyone foolishly attempts to point out that the person in the BLUE reflec is not the real team leader, Jeff-I barks, 'No one but the team leader is allowed to speak!' The vampirebot executes repeat offenders before you can say 'splatter flick'. Jeff-I won't even blink. On the other hand, if the team exec confesses he's not the leader, he'll be executed for wearing BLUE reflec. Moral: Don't correct your superior.

If the PCs report the incident with the Corpore Metal OTTO/bots, Jeff-I turns to his console, types in a few commands and Gladys-B-DDU-5's face lights up on all the vidscreens in the room. Gladys-B looks up, smiles and starts to say something. Before he gets anything out, a bright flash fills the screens. Then Jeff-I turns off the monitors.

Jeff-I listens intently to the Troubleshooters' report, then sends all the data to CPU for analysis. Parker-I enters and takes the experimental devices and the PCs' reports on their operation. The Troubleshooters are granted a half-hour leave.

Service with a smile

The PCs get a base of one month's salary each for the episode, with appropriate bonuses or fines for exceptionally brave or cowardly behavior. If the PCs destroyed the OTTO/bots, they each face IntSec suspicion of being Frankenstein Destroyers. If they forgot to bring back the bot brains, everyone gets fined a month's salary and the Robotics Officer gets terminated to boot. Troubleshooters may also merit other awards or penalties if they scarfed up any interesting items from the Arco Station.

3. Mark 4, Troubleshooters 0

The story thus far: The enemy spy ring was run by Ivar-U-DED-5 and his assistant, the late Tate-I. Ivar-U's mission was to weaken Alpha Complex and make it vulnerable to attack.

When the PCs stumbled on him (in the confession booth caper), Tate-I panicked and sent the emergency attack transmission. Enemy Complex requested verification; when Tate-I failed to respond, Enemy Complex assumed the worst and launched the attack. They chose not to contact Ivar-U and ask for confirmation for fear that a transmission might blow his cover, if it wasn't already blown.

Thus, Ivar-U was unaware the attack orders were issued. However, he knew his plan was beginning to unravel when Tech Services pinpointed the direction of Tate-I's signal, and The Computer issued orders to send a strike team in that direction to find the receiver's source.

In a desperate attempt to throw the PCs, The Computer and Internal Security goons off the track, Ivar-U had one of his operatives leak the location of the Arco Station, which, as it was located on a direct line between Alpha Complex and Enemy Complex, could have been the source of the transmission. Unfortunately for Ivar-U, as the team was just finishing up, they stumbled on Enemy Complex's attack force—the Mark 4 warbot.

The mission (as if we had to tell you)

Mark 4 has been overdue for a week and has not reported in for even longer. Such treasonous tardiness merits summary deactivation. Mark 4, however, is much too valuable for that. Once the PCs reported sighting Mark 4, many high-clearance personnel, including Dan-U-BHC and Rich-U-FTC, were sent to contact and re-establish control over the wayward bot. These loyal citizens are now subatomic evidence of Mark 4's dramatic malfunction.

The PCs are sent to repair the warbot while all the Vulture Squadrons in the universe prepare to launch for high-explosive deactivation. The Troubleshooters will (we hope) manage to enter Mark 4 and, after considerable confusion, disable it and save Alpha Complex. They will not, however, get credit for doing so.

Briefing

Ten minutes into their half-hour leave from the last episode, the PCs receive a new mission alert, one which they doubtlessly hoped would be given to someone else. First, hand the mission alert (reference AC 3.2.1A) to the player most likely to read it aloud, then either display it, pass it around or destroy it for reasons of security.

Voyage to the center of confusion

The PCs return to the uncomfortably familiar HTN Sector headquarters to find the reception area in a state of utter chaos. People are rushing in all directions with data sheets, disks, weapons and personal effects (think of the stock market 20 minutes before closing on Black Monday).

Getting through to the elevators is actually easy, but only if the Troubleshooters don't do anything else. In other words, they should let those with experience (the NPCs) do the dodging. So be sure to ask a few well-timed questions regarding how they intend to stay out of the way of the high-clearance types.

GM: You're now about five meters inside the room. You can't see a thing through the crowd. What do you do?

Leader: We'll walk slowly, in a group, toward the elevators.

Exec: *[Obviously staged voice, just to irk the leader.]* Follow me, men!

GM: The only figures you can see are High Programmers, heavily-armed INDIGO guards and a VIOLET person running straight at you, carrying something extremely fragile.

Leader: I jump out of his way!

GM: He zooms by as you leap gracefully into an INDIGO-Clearance worker, spilling his stack of tapes. You and the INDIGO are on the floor. Now what?

Leader: I'll help him to his feet.

Other PC: I'll pick up his tapes for him.

GM: The INDIGO starts yelling, 'Help! Assault!'

Leader: I'll drop him, quick!

GM: Nice going. He falls hard on his rump. *Ooof.* Three Vultures saw that. They drill you. They also happen to see that a lowly GREEN Troubleshooter has an armful of INDIGO tapes and waste him, too. The avenged INDIGO stands, and, brushing himself off, addresses you, team exec. He says, 'Keep your goons under control or I'll have your hide!' As he picks up his tapes and leaves, you realize that you can't remember which way the elevators are.

Exec: Fine. I'll shoot myself.

GM: Okay. Shooting a Troubleshooter is a treasonous offense. You are immediately declared a traitor, so you're promoted for having terminated your traitorous self. The promotion revokes your traitor status, so you incur some more treason charges for shooting a freshly promoted loyal citizen, which means you're declared a traitor again, and your next clone gets terminated too.

Exec: I don't understand.

GM: Neither do I. Let's order a pizza.

Eventually the PCs reach the elevators. The doors open, revealing a clean, bright elevator, with relaxing music playing softly over the PA system (**Tension 3**). That should be the PCs' first clue that they're in trouble.

As soon as the doors close, the music and lights switch off and the elevator begins a slow and jerky ride to the 99th floor. Interestingly, the elevator is completely airtight, and the air conditioning stopped when the lights went out. The PCs run out of oxygen at about the 30th floor. Using lasers to ventilate the elevator (or to ventilate some of those who are treasonously using up the oxygen) is a good idea.

Whenever the funny stuff finishes, read the following aloud to the survivors:

The lights and music come back on as the elevator doors open. Somehow, inexplicably, the elevator turns up in the middle of briefing room 999! Directly in front of you stands the bot which has always attended your briefings in this room. His body fills the door. You can barely see Jeff-I seated above and behind it. He smiles at you and says, 'This mission is actually quite simple. Just go out and fix Mark 4—that's all. We've even arranged to issue you some leverage should Markie prove just a *lee*tle bit recalcitrant. Have a fun day!'

The elevator doors close and the elevator jerkily descends.

Booked for assault

When the elevator doors open again, the PCs are looking out into a hallway illuminated only by rotating red lights. There are no doors, in fact no features at all, and the hallway extends for some distance. Muffled noises come from the walls that sound sort of like a nuclear missile silo during launch sequence. The Troubleshooters have no choice but to go forward, as the elevator does not respond to any buttons, lasers or other stimuli.

After some distance, the hallway ends in a single door, labeled 'Armed Forces Extrinsic Equipment Implementation Expeditation and Field Testing Evaluation and Repair Office'. The door is unlocked.

They enter a large and extremely cluttered lab (**Tension 14**), where a passing flunky escorts them to a door in the far corner of the room. The door has a sign on it saying, 'Resistance Is Useless.' The flunky ushers them in, where they meet Parker-I-ZRE-4 standing over a large table covered with equipment. Read this aloud or face summary execution:

Parker-I turns and looks at you, exasperation quite visible on his face. There are large charred patches on his coat, and he is dripping wet. His glasses hang from one ear. Smoke billows from his mouth as he starts to yell at you.

'It's about time you showed up! I've been waiting for hours! Imagine me, an INDIGO researcher, being sent like some INFRARED errand boy to get you lowly slime some heavy assault equipment from the Armed Forces! I hope you appreciate this! Here it is—the very latest and best in modern heavy assault gear, straight from the high-security lockers. Let me tell you, those jerks hold onto their equipment tighter than most citizens hold onto their skin! So there it is! Use it!'

Livid to the point of apoplexy, he goes to the corner of the room and stands there, foaming at the mouth.

Parker-I assumes the PCs are intelligent enough to select the equipment they require and is too mad to answer questions about any of it.

With assumptions like that, how on earth did he live to INDIGO Clearance?

The equipment is, naturally enough, all experimental, but he does not tell the Troubleshooters that.

The stuff

1. **Pyropocket armor:** This is a wetsuit with small pouches of pressurized napalm sealed into every square centimeter. The pouches are connected to the surface of the wetsuit by a whole bunch of micronozzles with igniters. When the wearer pulls a ripcord on the suit, all the nozzles open and the napalm is ejected and ignited. The end result is that the wearer 'flames on', sort of like the Human Torch or the Balrog. The napalm supply lasts about ten minutes. The suit is fireproof, and the wearer is in no danger unless he gets hit with a high-energy weapon (laser, blaster, plasma rifle or even a rock if you're nasty), in which case the whole suit goes up at once. When the suit is operating normally, anyone within two meters is damaged as if hit by a napalm slugthrower shell. If the whole thing blows, everyone within two meters (including the wearer) takes damage as if hit by a cone rifle napalm shell.

2. **Superpunch gauntlets:** These look like a pair of iron gloves formed into fists with small rocket boosters on the cuffs and a large weight on the front. A small trigger inside the gloves activates the rocket assists to increase the effect of the punch. Unknown to everyone, the weight is actually a grenade with a contact fuse which further increases the effects of the punch—on victim and user alike.
3. **Personal laser cannon:** Yes, a laser cannon attached to a backpack-sized power source. The cannon is strapped to the chest and operated by two large grips. It actually works, but the user's chest gets crushed by the kickback (an automatic Wound).
4. **Cone rifle bayonet:** If used, the banging around breaks the cone rifle.
5. **Greatsaw:** A chainsaw the size of a two-handed sword. Awesome terror weapon (W3K impact, Hand Weapon skill to wield). On a roll of 17 or higher, the chain slips off of the blade, damaging the user. It has also been known to have a faulty 'Off' switch. (Hasn't everything?)
6. **Disintegrator:** A positively huge one-handed weapon; the user must insert his hand up to the elbow to fire it. The disintegrator takes at least a round or two to warm up and adjust, after which time poor internal shielding causes the entire weapon to suddenly vanish. Oh, well.
7. **Suspender belt:** Be ready to call out his damage when a player chooses this device. It generates antigravity waves. No, not zero-gravity: *anti*gravity. When switched on, the PCs begins falling toward the sky. Switch it off, and he falls back to earth. Fun, huh? Of course, a skilled or agile (or very macho) PC may well learn to use this effectively. That's fine. Note that it can be used to walk on the ceilings inside Mark 4
8. **Fire team generator:** The latest in psychological warfare. This device is a belt with two projections sticking out at 120 degrees to the left and right of the wearer's front. At the end of these 0.5-meter projections are knobs the size of grapefruit. When the wearer presses the button on the front of the belt, two very savage-looking latex dummies inflate to life size, positioned so that they appear to be covering the user's flanks. Presto! Instant fire team! Of course, their weapons don't work, but the enemy doesn't know that. Also, they are filled with hydrogen, so the player's feet may occasionally lose touch with the ground. If either of the dummies gets hit, it will flail around with the expected sound effects. Further, remember that hydrogen is very flammable…
9. **Self-propelled energy pistol:** An experiment in bots without brains, this little beast needs constant supervision to keep up with the rest of the team. It knows nothing and remembers nothing. It possesses barely enough resident memory to continue carrying out its last command and to store a targeting program with a skill of 3. It has effectively unlimited ammunition.

After the PCs have distributed any equipment they desire, Parker-I assigns the team robotics officer a docbot 'Well-Be Mark S'. If anyone inspects the bot closely, he discovers it is also stamped 'R&D'. This merely indicates where the bot was previously assigned, but, as usual, don't tell them that. Let 'em sweat.

Well-Be is a standard docbot Model 8, with a Medical rating of 08. He has no personality and follows the equipment guy's orders. To the letter. Immediately. Without question. Without stopping to consider the consequences to himself or anyone else. He won't last 20 minutes.

Then Parker-I leads the team into a restroom and points them to a hatchway in the back. It leads to a small tube, about one meter in diameter and 20 meters long with a bend in the middle. Waiting for them on the other end of the tube is a large autocar and its driver, Dean-Y.

Out to launch

As soon as all PCs get a grip on the autocar, (preferably as little as one hand on the roll bar), Dean-Y floors it. If the PCs can stop gibbering in terror long enough to look, they might notice Dean-Y has tampered with the acceleration controls. This is technically treason, but we'd like to see them do anything about it at the speeds the autocar is traveling down the twisting spines.

GM: As he turns the next corner, you feel the two right side wheels leave the ground.

Leader: This man is obviously a traitor. I'll shoot him with my laser.

GM: Are you going to let go of the roll bar to do it?

Leader: Good point. I order our weapons officer to do it.

Weapons Officer: But all I have is a rifle!

Exec: You heard your leader…do it!

Weapons Officer: *[Whispers to GM.]* At the next turn, I'm telekinesing his door open!

An emergency alert is in progress as the autocar enters the hangar. Citizens, bots and vehicles swarm around, miraculously missing each other by centimeters. (Sounds familiar, doesn't it?) Despite the pandemonium, Dean-Y doesn't slow down one bit. Nosirree. Nor does he notice the Vulture he runs over, who, as he is dragged under, neatly drops a hand flamer in the back seat of the autocar.

Dean-Y zooms through the crowd and up to a large coffin-shaped flybot with 'HAHA-13' stenciled on the hull. A burly Vulture soldier leans casually against the flybot. Dean-Y doesn't slow down quickly enough and slams the autocar into the Vulture, wrapping the fenders around his legs. The Vulture does not appear to notice.

In case you're wondering, this here is Gomer-I-THA-3, a citizen not to be messed with. Rumor has it he prevented an overloading plasma generator from exploding simply by yelling at it.

In spite of his size and strength, Gomer-I-THA-3 is a likable guy. He tends to be a bit of a romantic (small 'r') and somewhat wistful. Think of Gomer-I-THA-3 as a cross between John Wayne, Slim Pickens and the Incredible Hulk.

The Vulture leaning against the flybot slowly turns his head. A warm smile spreads across his face as he introduces himself:

'Howdy! Ah'm Gomer-I-THA-3! Y'all must be the Troubleshooters who're s'posed to be taking this little jewel out for a joyride, huh? Hawt *day*-amn! *Boy* do I envy y'all, 'cuz this here's the roughest, toughest, leanest, meanest, fastest assault flybot that ever killed a test pilot!

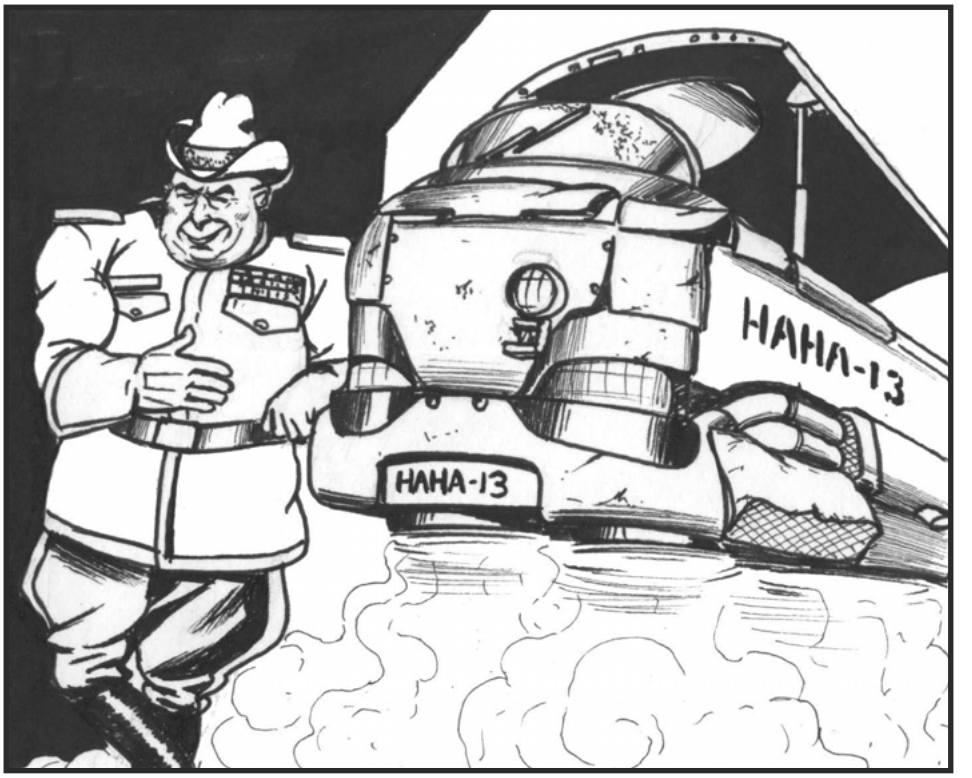
'Yep! This here's the Hah Altitude Heavy Assault Mark 13 'Deathtrap', and it's one hot hunk o' junk! Now y'all get loaded up, and listen good, 'cuz I ain't gonna say this but oncet. They told us that we couldn't afford to risk a valuable pilotbot on a mission like this, so one of y'all is gonna get to pilot it. Sheesh, y'all are so lucky I could jest rip my haid off! Wisht I could be the one to pilot this thing, so's I could die happy.

'Oh, and one more thing before y'all go. I've heard talk round these parts that y'all were being sent to fix the ol' Mark 4 warbot. Jes' who do yew think yer kiddin'? Well, I'll give my regards to your buddies.'

Gomer-I turns and walks away through the crowd, hands in his pockets and whistling a little tune. As he leaves, he is run into by a transbot carrying a large load of supplies with Lenore-B-GZL-6 perched on top clutching a box marked 'Fragile'. Gomer-I appears not to notice.

Lenore-B does, though, because the sudden stop sends her toppling off the top of the stack of supplies, still clutching the box. When she hits the ground, the crate blows up impressively, the explosion rocking the hangar and showering bits of rubble on the Deathtrap.

Suddenly, a loud message comes over the radio: 'You've got the all-clear: launch immediately!'



Some words on the Deathtrap

Actually, the HAHA-13 is a reliable vehicle, a simple modification of the tried and true flybot. So why is it called the Deathtrap? The inventor had used the word in conjunction with other experimental vehicles, one of which unfortunately happened to be The Computer's pet project. Wishing to avoid brain-softening and memory-wipe therapy, the inventor hopes to convince The Computer that 'deathtrap' is really a compliment. So he used the name for his latest design. (Yeah, it's a weak story, but who cares? The players will never know anyway!)

There are seven seats in the Deathtrap, one of which has pilot's controls. Aside from the standard controls, there is one large red button on the armrest of each chair, and an additional huge green button on the pilot's console. The green button opens the canopy; the red buttons eject individual seats. If a character ejects before the pilot opens the canopy, he is wounded and may face treason charges for damaging a vehicle. Fortunately, the impact also opens the canopy irrevocably—so everybody else can eject safely. Each seat is equipped with impact airbags; if they don't eject, the PCs should land relatively unharmed.

3.5: Once more into the breach

This half-episode describes the PCs' adventures inside the Mark 4 warbot (**Tension 0**).

The GM information includes a map of Mark 4's innards: rooms, corridors, stairways, etc. Don't let the players see this. Unlike the encounters inside Alpha Complex, no one has provided their characters diagrams of the interior of the bot. Guess they'll have to map or something.

The same section lists statistics of the NPCs and bots inhabiting the warbot.

So what's all this about the Mark 4?

Created by those geniuses at R&D to replace the Armed Forces in their entirety, the Mark 4 warbot is the biggest, most powerful war machine ever built. It is 75 meters long, 25 meters wide, 50 meters tall and weighs in at over 40,000 tons. Mark 4 is equipped with multiple batteries of laser cannons, tube cannons, rapid-fire tacnuke cannons, missile racks, two vapoguns and one MegaGun. Its meters-thick duralloy armor is virtually impervious to all attacks. Mark 4 is also equipped with a state-of-the-art bot brain.

After its testing (several months ago), R&D declared the warbot a complete success. The researchers made just a few more teeny alterations (like giving it a humanoid torso, arms and head), then put Mark 4 into trial service patrolling the area around Alpha Complex.

Discovering that Mark 4's first patrol would take him in the general direction of Enemy Complex, Ivar-U had Enemy Complex send a strike team to rendezvous with the warbot. The strike team, equipped with the secret passwords and commands to control Mark 4, captured it.

Having made such an incredible find, Enemy Complex immediately revised its plans and determined to attack Alpha Complex as soon as possible. To keep somebody else from taking over Mark 4 like they had just done, they modified it to respond to manual control from an internal crew.

The Enemy's plan is simple: Inasmuch as, so far as The Computer knows, Mark 4 is completely loyal, they hope it can get quite close to Alpha Complex before The Computer realizes it is under attack. With no time to prepare a defense, Alpha Complex will be virtually helpless against the warbot's awesome firepower.

Because they had little time before The Computer realized Mark 4 was missing, the Enemy's modifications to Mark 4 were of necessity rushed and jury-rigged. They left its targeting and damage-reporting programs, as well as its engine monitoring and power subroutines, largely intact. To ensure that the warbot followed the crew's commands, the Enemy simply added programming overrides switched through the internal control room.

They also added a personnel database listing those in the command crew as well as those in the enemy spy ring, so the tank would recognize them as friendly. In their haste, they neglected to delete the existing database listing all of Alpha Complex's personnel. Having both databases in memory, the poor confused Mark 4 recognizes anybody as a friend. Now that it's run by its original programming, Enemy Complex's revisions and the enemy crew controlling a part of its brain, the warbot is also as loony as a fruitcake.

Crew and clearance

There are a half-dozen high-clearance personnel in the control room and a lot of low-clearance flunkies monitoring the individual weapons and facilitating reloading and repair. Most of the people in the bot have not been around each other for any length of time, so no one immediately recognizes our Troubleshooters as intruders.

Only the high-clearance personnel have been allowed to carry weapons. Rank hath its privileges.

Incidentally…the security clearances in Enemy Complex are backwards, with INFRARED High Programmers and ULTRAVIOLET morons (VIB-G-YOR). This lets the players experience the emotion of incredulity. It also means the enemy's reflec protects against their clearance and above

(from the players' point of view). That is, an INDIGO-Clearance enemy's reflec protects only against INDIGO, VIOLET and ULTRAVIOLET laser fire. Confusing, huh? Don't worry, it's all spelled out in the 'Mark 4 Personnel' section at the end of the mission.

Fantastic voyage

Imagine taking a fully automated factory, rotating it to stand on one corner, and then trying to build a normal, accessible and functional set of walkways and rooms in it. Hint: It's not possible. The people at Enemy Complex have done the best they can, though.

The entire inside of Mark 4 is as homey as a Klingon bridge, as comfortable as a tank and as roomy as a World War II submarine. Floors are irregular, walls have unexplained bulges, pipes abound at forehead level and visibility is about ten meters at best. Serve The Computer. Trust no one. Keep your laser handy. Watch your step.

Getting in

The ride to Mark 4 is mercifully brief. When the Troubleshooters get within eyesight of Mark 4, read the following aloud to the players:

Even from this height the thing looks gargantuan. Maybe it's because, as high as you are flying, you are still below the top of the vehicle. As you close, every speaker in the Deathtrap suddenly booms out the following message:

'I AM PONDEROUS THUNDERSTROKE! NONE MAY OPPOSE ME!' *[snicker snicker giggle buzzzzzzzz* POP]

A veritable wave of laser fire streams out one of the monster's tertiary batteries, bracketing the Deathtrap. What do you do?

Get down and boogie!

The egotistical Enemy Complex Mark 4 commanding officer sent this message. Give the PCs a round to eject before the enemy personnel make Mark 4 fire again. And again. Although by that time it'll be firing at debris interspersed with thick yellow spray.

Of course, your Troubleshooters may opt for the evasive maneuvers approach. If that's what they want, then every other round make the pilot roll his Vehicle Ops and Maintenance rating. If he fails, activate backup clones. If he succeeds, add some charring to the rear of the Deathtrap as a flood of laser blasts barely misses its target.

Immediately the team begins to feel like fish in a barrel. Good. That'll convince them to land. Or eject. Doesn't matter. If they manage to land the Deathtrap, have each PC make a Violence/Agility roll to get his potential corpse out of the way before a swarm of AP cone rifle shells turns the Deathtrap into a small pile of ball bearings. If someone fails his roll, he's history. Oh, okay. If you want to be fair about it, he's hit by 1d20 AP cone rifle shells. We guess he could survive that.

But don't put any money on it.

Once on the ground and on foot, Mark 4 ignores the Troubleshooters. When the crew in Mark 4 first left Enemy Complex, they wasted loads of ammunition vaporizing all moving creatures larger than a caterpillar. Though huge indeed, Mark 4's supply capacity is not infinite, so the new order of the day is to shoot only at targets the size of vehicles or larger. Exceptions may of course be made for anyone who fires at the tank (or who makes funny faces at one of its video cameras).

The PCs have no problem keeping up with Mark 4, as it is proceeding at a fast walking speed. Because it does not respond to communication, the Troubleshooters should eventually realize the only way for them to complete their mission is to find a way inside. That's when you tell them they see a large circular opening about 25 meters above them. What you *don't* tell them is that the hatch cover labeled 'GAS' fell off several kilometers back.

Put a tiger in your tank

Clambering up to the opening is no problem, for there are many barrels and other assorted doohickeys available for handholds. When somebody climbs in, read the following aloud:

The opening reveals a large circular hallway approximately three meters wide. It is very dark inside, and there is a strong pungent smell of fuel.

Presumably someone lights a lantern or flashlight. You know what happens if they light a match, don't you?

The light flares into life, revealing a smooth corridor with a moderate downward slope. About 20 meters in front of you, the corridor starts to descend into some kind of liquid. You detect some turbulence in the liquid, although it may only be vibrations from the engine. What do you do?

Nothing happens until they either start to leave or touch the liquid. Then:

Suddenly a periscope pops out of the fluid and stares straight at you! What do you do?

The periscope belongs to Tigerbot STP-76, a specially designed scrubot whose sole purpose is to keep the huge gas tank clean and contaminant-free. Organic matter is considered a contaminant, but only if it is actually in the fuel, so the tigerbot stays put under the gas until a PC enters.

STP-76 looks like a scrubot designed with no 'up'—brushes and hoses come out of it at every odd angle. Diving planes are arranged with no apparent symmetry, and two propellers stick out of the rear. Its single weapon, the stun probe, was included for the pacification of Commie saboteurs.

Can you say, 'Roman candle?'

STP-76 really likes its job, not only because it gets to help a huge warbot, but also there's no one around to tell it it's not a nuclear-powered ballistic missile attack U-bot. It constantly fantasizes about this while going about its duties.

In spite of its puny weaponry, STP-76 could be a major pain in the ass. A victim hit by its probe is stunned for a few rounds; this is usually fatal as most victims are in the gas when stunned.

PC: Uh, excuse me, scrubot, could you tell me how to enter Mark 4?

STP-76: Proceed 100 meters, course 135 mark 2, dive to ten meters, change course to 309 mark 0 and proceed at minus ten grads. However, if you do so I shall consider it an act of war.

PC: Now look here, smartaleck! *[Draws slugthrower.]*

STP-76: WHOOOP! WHOOOP! Dive! Dive! WHOOOP! Battle stations!

PC: Stop him! Grab him! *[Splash splash splash.]*

STP-76: Load number one torpedo! Fire one! *ZZZZZAAAP*!

PC: AARRRRRG glub glub glub glubble!

When the Troubleshooters see the periscope, anything is likely to happen. They may run, open fire, charge, who knows? If they fire, what do they fire with? Sonic and projectile weapons might have little or no effect, but lasers might start a fire. Incidentally, if someone fires a flamethrower or plasma rifle and wants to know what happens, take them outside and light a Roman candle. *FTOOOM.* Get the picture? Remember: There are lots of fumes in the air, and any PC who gets drenched doesn't have the means to remove the fuel from his clothing.

The tigerbot may or may not be cooperative, depending on how they treat it. It is an Alpha Complex bot, so play it by ear.

If the PCs figure out a way past the tigerbot and can hold their breath for a minute, they can reach the accessway on the other side of the gas tank that leads to Level 1. (See the Mark 4 maps.)

If the PCs destroy the gas tank (intentionally or otherwise), the explosion makes a nice loud noise, but the Mark 4 emerges virtually unharmed. This is only one of 20 such fuel tanks distributed around the warbot. Maybe the warbot will run out of gas a couple of days early, but….

If at first you don't succeed

If the Troubleshooters decide trying to enter through the gas tank is a losing proposition and search around for a little while longer, they find a door at the rear of the Mark 4 labeled: 'EXIT NO ENTRY KEEP THIS DOOR CLOSED AND LOCKED DURING BUSINESS HOURS. NO SOLICITING. BEWARE OF THE DOBERBOT.' If they don't enter here, there is something seriously wrong with their minds.

All aboard

Atmosphere is important inside Mark 4. Try to imagine what it's like crawling around in a diesel engine, blend in some *Aliens* sets and James Bondian gimmicks and stretch irregular catwalks hither and yon. Now all you need are faucets sticking out at shin level.

Since only you, the omnipotent GM, know the interior layout, feel free to mess with the map to your heart's content. If the players are moving too slowly, delete some rooms or create smooth, wide corridors with flashing arrows and signs reading 'This Way to the Interesting Stuff' that point directly to the control room. If, however, they have managed to bypass all of the fun stuff and are zooming like homingbots right to the meat of the episode, meddle with the architecture to delay things.

GM: You're sure you want to take that path?

PC: Oh, why not? It's as good as any other.

GM: *[Curses under his breath.]* Fine. The catwalk splits into three nine-inch wide sections at different heights, then twists through some piping that stretches across the hall. You'll all have to make Violence rolls to get through.

PC: I blew it. What happens?

GM: You get stuck in the piping, and your foot accidentally turns a valve. You hear some ominous hissing from inside the pipe, and you notice a nearby storage tank is starting to swell.

Team leader: We run away!

PC: Hey, what about me?

Team leader: I order you to come along or I'll be forced to shoot you!

Logic and other irrelevancies

The Enemy forces are situated on four different levels within Mark 4. There are lots of them. In lots of different places. By all rights, they should be in constant communication with each other: sharing information, sending 'intruder alert' warnings and in general converging on any invader like a swarm of locusts.

Such a scenario is difficult to GM. So, to make your life easier, we're going to louse up the security inside the tank.

Due to faulty wiring, communication between levels inside Mark 4 is terrible at best. Poor shielding leads to intermittent shorts in the com units; poor installation causes the alarms to sound approximately three times a day. Thus, no one is particularly upset when he loses contact with another section, and Internal Security is noticeably lax about responding to alarms. And as the folks in the control room have been cheerfully shooting off tacnuke barrages for the past couple of days, everyone is pretty blasé about explosions.

Essentially, the PCs can reduce one level of the installation to radioactive slag, and folks on other levels hardly notice.

Kinda sounds like a typical dungeon crawl, doesn't it?

The elevator

As expected, the elevator's controls are faulty; whenever the PCs use it, it goes to the level you want it to and gets stuck there.

Clone replacement inside Mark 4

Just about the same as anywhere else. Somebody gets killed, a few minutes late, a replacement ambles in and joins the team.

Doesn't make much sense?

So what's your point?

Level 1

This level contains the auxiliary power for Mark 4 plus a viewing room. There are a bunch of Troubleshooters and a whole swarm of ULTRAVIOLET workers in the auxiliary power room; the rest of the level is deserted.

Viewing room: One wall of this three by ten meter room is made of transparent bulletproof plastic, allowing those inside to see Outdoors. The room is bare except for benches and chairs scattered throughout.

The plastic was faultily installed; it falls out if anyone leans against it.

Auxiliary power: As the Troubleshooters approach this room, read:

> **At the end of the corridor is a door, in front of which stand a group of six GREEN Troubleshooters. The team leader wears an armband indicating her position. Although her face isn't familiar, you'd swear you've seen her before.**
>
> **She steps forward and says, 'Hi. I'm Geneva-G, and these are the Crusaders. Who are you and what are you doing here? Are you a backup team?'**

Familiar? Yes. Remember Tate-I's picture? Continue:

> **'Well, we seem to be having some problem with our auxiliary power generator, but we haven't had a chance to check it out yet!' Geneva-G pulls out her whip, and opens the door.**
>
> **Inside is a large room with a sunken floor. Long poles protrude at regular intervals from the walls on either side. A**

'Tot-O, I have a feeling we're not in Alpha Complex anymore.'

thin catwalk crosses from the door to the far wall. The room is filled with about a hundred coarse-looking citizens dressed only in white loincloths. Geneva-G walks in, followed by the rest of the Crusaders. She cracks her whip overhead, and yells, 'Why aren't you morons rowing? You know we need the power! Would you rather we executed the lot of you and brought in a batch of rowbots? Work, you scurvy dogs, or taste the kiss of my lash!'

Have your players caught on yet? No? *Sigh…*

Two of the Crusaders pull up one of the workers and hold him while Geneva-G applies some intense physical motivation enhancement therapy with her whip.

As her teammates throw the culprit down, she yells, 'Now are you going to work, or am I going to have to choose another? Like you? Or maybe you!'

Slowly all the morons take hold of the poles and start pulling regularly, while one in the back beats cadence on the bulkhead. Geneva-G checks the power output meters on the wall and smiles.

We suppose there are some players who are truly naive. We include the following:

Geneva-G turns to you and says, 'Thanks for your support, fellow Troubleshooters! Now we're producing the extra power the Mark 4 needs! Our conquest of the vicious, Commie-infested Alpha Complex is assured. We'd better get back to our battle stations now, though, since the enemy dome is only minutes away!'

If the PCs still don't do anything, the Enemy Complex wins the war and the Troubleshooters are all executed as soon as they are discovered to be intruders. The end.

Ideally the PCs thoroughly sabotage the auxiliary power room, perhaps with tacnukes. If they do, Mark 4 slows down a bit, and they have time to finish the job.

Level 2

(Did you read the 'Crew and clearance' section a few pages back? It described the backward Enemy Complex security clearance system that places INFRARED highest and ULTRAVIOLET lowest. If you didn't get that, this whole section will baffle you.)

This level contains living quarters for the lower-clearance (ULTRAVIOLET through GREEN) characters aboard Mark 4. The rooms closely resemble Alpha Complex living quarters, though (if that is possible) they are even more uncomfortable.

The walls are covered with posters spouting patriotic slogans: 'Trust Nobody. Keep Your Pistol Handy. The Computer is Your Pal.' And 'Have a Nice Day or I'll Kill You.' There are Computer monitors and vidcams; a cursory examination reveals they are cardboard mockups and inoperative.

About 25 to 30 ULTRAVIOLET and VIOLET geeks wander these halls, cleaning, working in the food vats, etc. They are unarmed. There are eight BLUE guards as well; their locations are given below.

Food vat: Unfortunately for the crew, limited space allowed only one food vat, so everyone's been eating the same goop with slightly different flavorings. The single open vat dominates the large white room, and many large pipes protrude, frequently ending in faucets which overhang troughs. A horrible smell permeates the air, reminding the PCs of the good old days when they were innocent INFRAREDs working in the beloved Alpha Complex vats. Except for an ULTRAVIOLET or two scrubbing the floors or laboriously removing the residue from the troughs with a sandblaster, this room is empty.

Since no one will be eating until after Mark 4 pastes Alpha Complex, the Troubleshooters can do pretty much whatever they want here without interruption.

VIOLET and ULTRAVIOLET barracks: The UV barracks contain about 100 bunks stacked five high; the VIOLET barracks contain about 30. Because neither clearance carries any weapons, there's nothing much of interest here.

A pair of BLUE guards patrols the hallway connecting the VIOLET barracks and INDIGO quarters.

INDIGO quarters: This room contains ten beds, a table, chairs and vidscreen. The vidscreen is showing the gameshow *Date With Death.*

There are small lockers next to the beds. One contains two VIOLET laser barrels; another contains 200 credits in Enemy Complex scrip; a third is booby-trapped to explode when opened (W3K energy damage).

INDIGO exercise room: This is the latest innovation in Enemy Complex's unending battle to keep its citizens fit. The room is bare; the padded walls, floor and ceiling are painted a pleasing shade of INDIGO.

When the Troubleshooters enter, the lights dim and a cheerful voice issues from hidden speakers:

'Good day, citizens! Are you ready to get fit and happy for your buddy The Computer?' *[Pause.]* **'Okay, gang, let's get started with some jumping jacks!'**

Suddenly the walls glow with a hypnotic pattern, a heavy rock beat fills the air and the voice cycles through an exercise program including sit-ups, squat-thrusts, push-ups and high-impact jazzercise.

If you like, this is an opportune time to take a break and join your players in a round of healthy calisthenics. Obesity is a major health problem, you know.

If this idea doesn't excite you, the Troubleshooters can leave normally and resume their exploration.

BLUE weapon maintenance: Most of the security guards on board are BLUE Clearance, and this is where they service their weapons and keep extras. The door is locked (Security Systems roll to open). Inside are shelves containing partially disassembled and broken weapons, primarily lasers and slugthrowers and ammunition for both. Troubleshooters succeeding in a High Alert skill roll notice all the shelves are wall-mounted about 1.5 meters above the floor.

In the center of the room stands a bot. The bot is perfectly round, about a meter in diameter, with a speaking/listening grill on top. It is covered with some shiny material and rides on little rollers. When the PCs enter, the bot speaks:

'Greetings, citizens. Do you have proper authorization to enter this room?'

If the PCs say yes, the bot continues:

'What is your authorization number, please?'

The legal number is 123A34.12a. If the PCs know this, somebody has cheated and read this mission. Kill his character. Repeatedly.

If no one knows the proper authorization number, the bot asks them to leave immediately. If they don't leave, the bot gives out an ear-piercing shriek: 'Helllp! Help! We're under attack! Intruder alert! *Helllp!* Danger!' It zooms around the room, bouncing off walls like a giant pinball. PCs in the bot's way get squished.

If the guards in the foyer are still functioning, the bot's yelling summons them within a few rounds.

The room contains:

- Three laser pistols, one laser rifle and 27 BLUE laser barrels
- Two slugthrowers and 50 rounds of solid slugs
- One neurowhip
- Five truncheons
- Three sonic grenades (S3M energy damage; five meter radius)
- Several hundred pounds of miscellaneous weapon parts
- Assorted tools

BLUE quarters: Somewhat nicer than the VIOLET or INDIGO quarters; nothing special otherwise. Nobody home.

Geneva-G's quarters: Geneva-G's room contains a bunch of blatantly treasonous stuff. Old Reckoning rock'n'roll posters dot the walls, and the bed sheets are made of some kind of slick material (silk). Free Enterprise or the Romantics would pay a handsome price for this stuff.

Such outright display of treasonous material suggests Geneva-G is more than a simple Troubleshooter. In fact she is also a highly placed Internal Security agent who acts as liaison between Ivar-U-DED's spy ring and the invading force (i.e. Mark 4).

Under her mattress is hidden a small black book filled with coded writing. This lists the names and occupations of all Enemy Complex spies in Alpha Complex. If the Troubleshooters discover the book and give it to Jeff-I, they earn vatloads of commendations and credits.

GREEN quarters: Standard midlevel barracks/entertainment area. Nothing special.

White foyer: The hallway leading to the foyer from the Outdoors is long, narrow and low. Strange humming and chugging noises fill the air, making it virtually impossible to communicate. At the end is the door leading to the foyer. Beside the door is a keyboard and video screen—a computerized lock. it requires a successful Security Systems roll to enter.

In the foyer, five bored BLUE guards lounge around. The noise from the engines masks the sound of the door opening, so unless the PCs use heavy explosives, they get the drop on the guards. Or, the PCs can buffalo these bozos pretty easily. They're standing guard in the middle of the greatest war machine ever built; they don't expect any trouble. Besides which, they're pretty low level; from their point of view, the PCs outrank them significantly. Of course the PCs don't know that.

Unless a firefight breaks out immediately, use these guards to channel the PCs to the interesting stuff in the mission.

BLUE guard: Atten-*shun*! *[Everybody stands and salutes the lowest-clearance Troubleshooter.]*

RED PC: Uh, er, hi. *[Grins nervously, throws a salute back. Nobody moves.]*

BLUE guard: *[Continues to hold his salute, shifts his feet, hesitantly drops his hand.]* Can I help you sir?

RED PC: Uh er…that is, well…um…

BLUE guard: Are you the backup Troubleshooter team? You must be looking for the auxiliary power room. That's where the trouble is. Easy to get lost in here isn't it?

RED PC: Yeah, that's it! Backup Troubleshooters, yeah!

BLUE guard: Well, sir, take the elevator over there down to Level 1. At the other end of the hall is the auxiliary power room. You can't miss it.

Team leader: Thanks for your help. Okay, Troubleshooters! Let's go!

BLUE guard: Don't order your superiors around, scumbrain! *[To RED Troubleshooter]* Should we drill him, sir?

Level 3

Level 3 consists of living quarters for YELLOW-through RED-Clearance citizens. Since in Enemy Complex, RED through YELLOW Clearances correspond to BLUE through VIOLET in Alpha Complex, the rooms are opulent and contain lots of stuff the Troubleshooters have never seen before: mirrors, individual toothbrushes, carpeting, etc. In addition, there's good generic loot here: better-quality clothing, lighting fixtures, comfy chairs, etc.

YELLOW entertainment area: This large room contains the entertainment facilities for the higher-level invaders. Chairs and couches are scattered about in a pleasing pattern; a large vidscreen dominates one wall, and a wet bar sits in the far corner. In the center of the room, a large table lies on its side; a deck of cards and several hundred Enemy Complex plasticreds are scattered around the table.

Two RED-Clearance characters occupy the room. One crouches behind the bar; the other hides behind the overturned table, her back to the Troubleshooters. Both carry lasers, which they are presently shooting at each other. Three ORANGE-Clearance characters stand in the hallway opposite the elevator, watching the gunfight with interest. They appear to be placing bets on the outcome.

When the Troubleshooters enter, the RED behind the table, Betty-R-LFJ-4, turns to them and says:

'It's about time you showed up! I sent for a Troubleshooter team an hour ago! Kenny-R-MOT-5'—she points to the RED hiding behind the bar—'is a traitorous Commie, and probably a stinking mutant card-counter too! Kill him!'

Kenny-R-MOT-5 shouts: 'Ooo, you dirty liar! Don't listen to her! She's the Commie slimeball—and a dirty cheater, too! Kill her!'

Betty-R yells, 'Commie ape smut!' and opens fire.

Kenny-R ducks behind the bar and shouts, 'Cheater, cheater, can't hit me. Nyaah, nyaah!'

If asked, the ORANGEs say that they don't know anything about it. They were in their

cubicles when they heard shots, and they didn't want to interfere with their superiors.

The PCs, if they are smart, can butcher all of these guys with ease. If they shoot Betty-R, Kenny-R emerges from behind the bar, puts his laser away and walks over to the Troubleshooters. He thanks them and orders the ORANGEs to clean up the mess. If the PCs wait until the ORANGEs have their hands full with the late Betty-R before opening fire, you can pretty much scratch these Commies altogether. If, on the other hand, they open fire on both REDs, all the Commies dive for cover and attempt to terminate them.

RED, ORANGE and YELLOW living quarters: Nothing much of interest in these rooms. Some spare jumpsuits, a couple of assorted laser barrels a few bottles of Dr. Yeasty (wouldn't you like to be a Yeasty too?). A set of fine lockpicking tools hidden in a pair of spare boots in one of the yellow cubicles would bring about 50 credits on the black market (adds one point to a character's Security Systems skill level when attempting to open electronically locked doors).

BLACK escalator: Leads directly up to the BLACK suite on Level 4.

Level 4

BLACK suite: The Enemy High Programmer's living quarters are surprisingly Spartan, containing nothing but cot, desk with chair and closet containing several black robes. The only spot of color in the room is a lifesize poster of an Old Reckoning United States president on one wall (that hides the hidden passageway to the control room). The desk is bare. Taped to the wall next to the desk is a note reading: 'Get I-U-D's retrieval coordinates from Geneva-G.' This, of course, is another clue; with luck it will lead the PCs to the black book in Geneva-G's cubicle. if not, the note alone is another nail in Ivar-U's coffin.

Escape pod: In the hallway to the right of the elevator is a small hatch labeled: 'EMERGENCY ESCAPE POD. DO NOT USE UNLESS MARK 4 IS COMPLETELY DESTROYED. UNAUTHORIZED USE MERITS SUMMARY EXECUTION. HAVE A FUN DAY. THE COMPUTER IS YOUR PAL.'

Designed for eight people, the escape pod is large enough to hold the entire team plus the docbot. The sole control is a large black button, which, when pressed, activates the escape sequence.

If the button is pushed while Mark 4 is still functioning (i.e., the PCs haven't yet gone into the control room), the escape pod won't eject. A sign flashes above the button: 'DON'T YOU KNOW HOW TO READ, MORON? THE SIGN ON THE HATCH SAID "DO NOT USE UNLESS MARK 4 IS COMPLETELY DESTROYED!" NOW GET OUT AND BACK TO WORK OR FACE IMMEDIATE LITERACY IMPLEMENTATION SURGERY.'

If the PCs have settled the tank's hash and *then* push the button, alarms ring and lights switch to deep red. One second later, the hatch closes tight. Immediately following, rockets propel the pod out of Mark 4 at sickening speed.

Unfortunately for the passengers, installing an escape pod in a previously fully automated

'Use the Force, Luke-R!'

warbot required some really creative engineering, so the pod has to negotiate a few right angle turns before it shoots out of the top of Mark 4's head. Although its parachute fails to open, the inside is cushioned and landing does not cause major injury.

The control room: The control room looks pretty much like any mid-sixties TV starship bridge. A raised walkway dotted with work stations in front of banks of little lights runs along the outside walls; a command chair behind two other work stations sits in the middle of the room facing a large vidscreen. On the right-hand wall is a small opening labeled 'WARNING! DANGER! NUCLEAR POWER EXHAUST MANIFOLD!'

The vidscreen shows the beloved domes of Alpha Complex in the distance and swarms of tiny-looking Vulturecraft flying erratically about the tank's head; Mark 4 is swatting them down with ease. Superimposed on the bottom of the screen are the words: 'Attack range in 3:12:04.'

There are eight crewmen in sight. One, sitting in the command chair, is INFRARED; of the others, seated at the various work stations, three are RED, three are ORANGE and one is YELLOW. A mean-looking doberbot sits next to the INFRARED.

Though surprised at the arrival of the PCs, the command crew of Mark 4 are seasoned veterans. Recovering quickly, they dive for cover and open fire as the doberbot leaps for the closest PC. The firefight is confused and quite nasty. There is little room for maneuver and not much to hide behind.

Naturally, any stray shot unerringly seeks out the nearest control panel, spraying those nearby with neat sparks and filling the area with black and mildly toxic smoke.

The PCs almost certainly concentrate their fire on the exhaust port. If they don't, start humming the theme from *Star Wars*, put on a brown robe and call everyone 'Luke'. If they still don't get the message—*sigh*—one of the Enemy character's shots lands near the port. Another screams: 'Watch where you're firing! If the exhaust port blows, we'll all fry!'

If a PC hits the port, the shot ricochets down the tube. All the lights flicker and a deep rumble is heard. The Enemy crew wails in fear. The PCs have a couple of rounds to reach the escape pod and get out.

Unsung heroes

The PCs stagger out of the escape pod into a smouldering wasteland. Mark 4 stands inert in the distance, its head blown clear off its shoulders. The wreckage of several dozen Vulturecraft litters the ground.

A pall of smoke hangs over the entire scene, and several fires rage out of control. A handful of Vulturecraft can be seen limping home. Soon a small recon flybot flies overhead and identifies the PCs. Shortly after, another flybot comes to pick up the survivors and return them to the hangar from whence they came.

When they enter the hangar, the Troubleshooters see the ground crews for a dozen elite Vulture squadrons holding a major celebration. Then, quiet falls over the group as a besmudged Gomer-I-THA-3 appears on the vidscreens and announces that the film of the grand assault is ready for viewing.

The film, taken by a recon flybot, runs 15 minutes. It's chock-full of special effects as Mark 4 easily brushes off the fanatical assault of hundreds of attack craft. A real Vultureshoot.

Then, flying uncertainly through the blaze of fire and falling debris, a decrepit and aged flybot closes with the warbot. This style of flybot has been outmoded for at least 75 years. It approaches, fires a single missile from long range, then wobbles off. Sputtering, the missile closes erratically. The camera zooms in. The missile impacts on Mark 4's head. There is a small blast, then the screen goes white. The camera zooms out, as the head disappears in an explosion so powerful it burns out the center of the film (think Bikini Atoll).

After the film, Gomer-I-THA-3 comes back on the screen with the pilot of the flybot, Kip-Y-MTV-6. There is a deafening round of applause and cheers in the hangar as Gomer-I pins a huge medal on Kip-Y's chest—Kip-Y falls over from the sheer weight of it. Then The Computer comes on, promotes Kip-Y to BLUE Clearance for exceptional bravery and accuracy of fire and orders him to report for termination for wanton destruction of The Computer's valuable property. It's a *nice* termination, though. The cheers in the hangar are deafening.

Debriefing

Read:

Shortly after the film ends, you are greeted by Dean-Y, who says he has orders to give you a ride back to headquarters. He motions for you to follow him through the crowd and leads you to a roomy autocar with a docile-looking driver named Bree-Y. The celebration in the hangar shows no signs of letting up as you are slowly and cautiously driven away. A short while later, Bree-Y carefully drops you off at HQ, which is strangely empty.

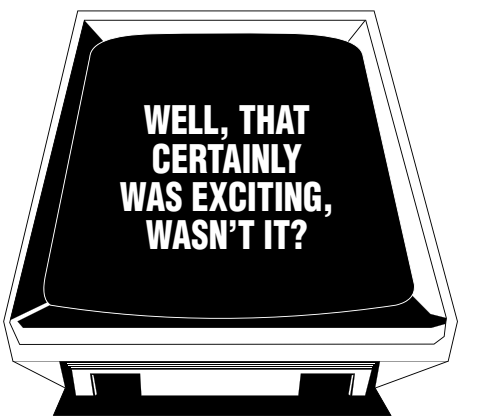
The only person you see is Harper-Y, who sits at the front desk. He rises from the desk as you approach and says, 'Did you see the film? Wasn't that fantastic? Hey, listen, everyone upstairs got a ticket to go to the execution, so don't worry about any debriefing. Jeff-I sent down a commendation slip, but he hasn't filled out the name of the recipient or anything, so I guess you can just decide amongst yourselves. I gotta run now. I managed to get ahold of the late Lenore-B's ticket! See you later!'

Mustering out

Everyone gets to fight over the one commendation generously given by The Computer for what it thinks they did: nothing, albeit in the face of impossible odds. They are getting the commendation because The Computer, so relieved at not getting blown into bits (bits—get it?), is willing to give the team the benefit of the doubt that they may actually have delayed Mark 4 a microsecond or two. After all, what were all the clone activations for? The Troubleshooters must have been doing something, right?

Two minutes after the argument over the commendation ends, the vampirebot shows up to (forcibly) collect all experimental equipment.

The PCs find it impossible to tell their story to anyone. The Computer refers them to Mission Control, and Mission Control has taken the afternoon off to go watch the execution. Besides, they would have to be crazy to try to convince anybody they were the ones to destroy Mark 4, seeing the fate of the late Kip-Y. The Troubleshooters should consider themselves lucky and go home to take a nice nap.



4: Revenge of the Jeff-I

The war is over, although few people ever suspected that it existed in the first place. (Assuming, of course, that the PCs destroyed Mark 4. Otherwise Alpha Complex has been reduced to a thick yellow spray. If so, the mission ends immediately and you might as well send all the players home.) Enemy Complex has lost a lot. Lots of credits, work-hours and material gone forever. Lots of highly trained crew ditto. And the carefully planted spy ring has been fractured. Of the ring, only Ivar-U-DED-5 is still active: the others are either dead, captured or too scared to continue. And all because of the PCs!

Eager to get even, Ivar-U chooses to send the PCs on (another) suicide mission. Fortunately, his many crimes finally catch up with him, and the PCs are invited to carry out his timely execution.

The setup

Ivar-U sends one of his loyal forensics teams out to investigate the wreckage of Mark 4, and they dutifully return their report: Mark 4 was obviously commandeered by the Communist Jellyfish from the planet Burrito. The team will go to the Planet Burrito to bring the war to the enemy.

Actually, Ivar-U's plan is to fire the PCs into orbit in a sabotaged vehicle, where they will suffer a lingering and unusually unpleasant death. However, fate—in the unlikely form of our friend, The Computer—intervenes, and the PCs finally have a chance to get even.

The grand prize

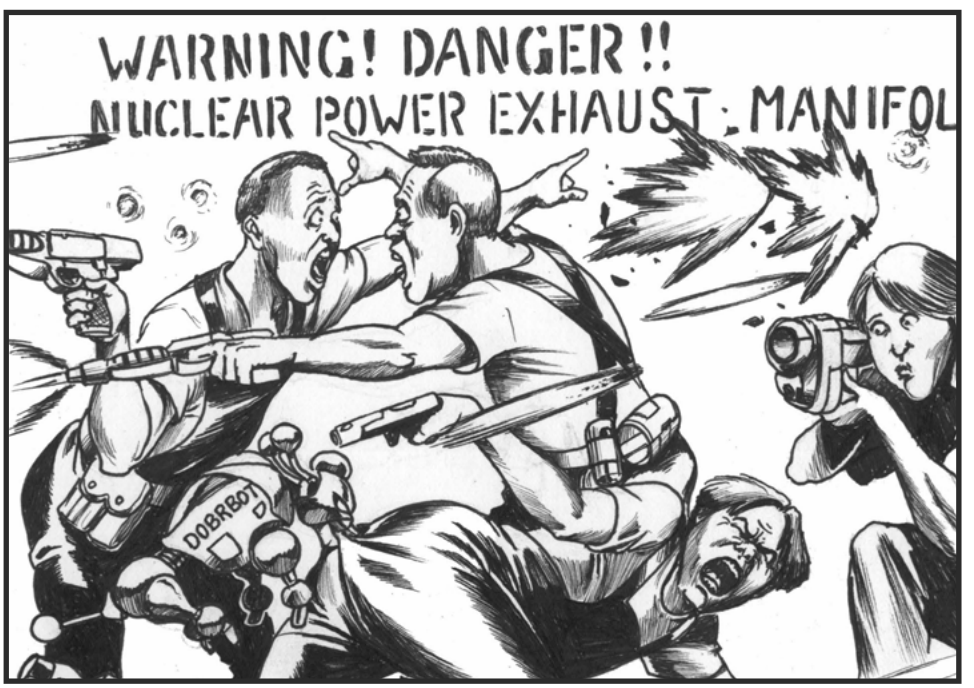
Sometime during the next day, as the PCs are getting out of Intensive Care or maybe the Psychological Rebuilding Unit, they receive their final mission alert, sent to them directly from Ivar-U. Read and hand out the last mission alert (reference AC 4.2.1A).

Every video monitor in Alpha Complex displays the PCs' progress to headquarters, and the announcer tells the audience how brave the team is to be going to the Planet Burrito to fight the Commie traitor thieves who stole Mark 4. All citizens stand respectfully aside as the PCs pass and wave to the cameras when they see themselves on the screen. Some of them make funny faces. Those that do are never heard from again.

On their way, the PCs are interviewed by reporters. ('How do you feel to have been chosen to go to another planet?', 'What is a 'planet', anyway?', 'How much do you really like The Computer?', 'Do you actually believe you won't die a horrible death?', 'What do you usually eat for dessert?', 'Do you admit denying that your supervisor stated that he doesn't remember you saying, and I quote, 'I'm so frustrated I could bite my elbow?'') Use your discretion as to what actually gets on the air.

When the PCs get to HTN Sector headquarters, a Vulture honor guard, led by Gomer-I-THA-3, awaits them in the lobby. Gil-I-DCU is also in the lobby, working feverishly at the elevators. (Ivar-U cut all power to the elevators and promptly placed the blame on Power Services. He then ordered Gil-I, as ranking member of Power Services in the vicinity, to fix the elevators. Gil-I doesn't have a prayer.)

After the PCs have waited a little while for an elevator door to open, Gil-I proudly states 'I've located the problem! Hand me that positron magneto-decoupler, please.' A nearby Vulture hands him the tool in question, and Gil-I sticks his head and shoulders into the maintenance hatch. Soon there is a sound similar to, but much louder than, a black-light electronic insect killer. Gil-I disappears in a blue flash. Gomer-I barks a few orders, and the honor guard lines up again, this time at the entrance to the stairs.



You want us to *what?!?*

Ninety-nine floors later, the PCs should be exhausted: legs weak, shaky, poor balance. As they open the door from the stairwell, they see the floor to the foyer of the 99th floor finally covered with tiles! Nice, new, glossy linoleum tiles!

Anyone who so underestimates the Famous Game Designer as to actually step on one of the tiles confirms the tiles are indeed unsupported. The foolish victim falls 98 floors onto the dirty laundry. Troubleshooters smart enough not to step off the (proven) support beams in the first place, as well as those smart enough to learn from the mistakes of others, eventually reach, once again, the entrance to the dreaded Room 999.

The PCs have no way of knowing it, but Ivar-U has cut off all surveillance in the room, making it **Tension level 0.**

Looking wearily about as you stagger into the room, you see only the vampirebot, Jeff-I and Parker-I. An annoying hum fills the air.

The two INDIGOs, embroiled in some kind of heated discussion, don't appear to notice your arrival; those traitors who listen overhear some of their almost certainly classified discussion.

Parker-I is saying, '…don't have enough proof! He is a High Programmer, after all. It's just too risky!' Jeff-I replies, 'Look. The Computer's gonna see through that 'Communist Jellyfish' crap sometime. We just have to stay alive until then—'

Sensing your presence, Jeff-I stops speaking. He slaps a button on a strange device sitting on the table in front of him; the humming stops. Placing the device in his pocket, he asks you for your report on your mission into Mark 4.

Jeff-I is particularly interested in two things: evidence (or, better, the lack thereof) that Mark 4 was subverted by Mutant Jellyfish from the Planet Burrito and proof that Ivar-U-DED-5 is the ringleader of the Enemy infiltrators. However, until he has some solid evidence against the High

Programmer, Jeff-I carefully pretends to believe in the Jellyfish.

If the PCs have nothing constructive to say, Jeff-I is plainly disappointed, and Parker-I is near tears.

If, on the other hand, the PCs turn over either Geneva-G's little black book or the note Mr. Big left taped next to his desk, he calls in a BLUE-Clearance Vulture to take the items down to IntSec for forensic examination, allowing himself a small tight grin of triumph. Parker-I is almost jumping for joy.

After the PCs have completed their report, read:

In through one of the doors in the back walks a High Programmer—the one who was in the R&D lab buying high-security guardbots. A small nameplate on his chest identifies him as Ivar-U-DED-5. As he enters, both INDIGOs go silent.

The High Programmer sits in the CPU chair and leans forward, scrutinizing Parker-I carefully. Then he begins typing at his terminal. A few seconds later, the voice of The Computer fills the room: 'PARKER-I-ZRE-4, PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO THE NEAREST TERMINATION CENTER. SERVE THE COMPUTER AND YOU WILL BE APPROPRIATELY REWARDED. TREASON DOES NOT PAY.'

Stunned, Parker-I stares at the man in white, and, cringing, edges along the wall to the door and backs out. As the doors slide shut, you hear a loud snap and a scream that rapidly fades in a Doppler shift. The High Programmer leans forward and studies Jeff-I for a few seconds and begins typing again. Jeff-I pulls out his force sword and calmly taps it against his palm. The Computer, in its infinite wisdom, speaks again: 'JEFF-I-OIB-1, PLEASE REPO—MESSAGE CANCELLED, THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.'

The High Programmer stands. 'I wish you Troubleshooters luck,' he says with an evil smirk. 'You're going to need it.' He then moves toward the exit, telling Jeff-I to carry on with the briefing.

The big finish

Just then, The Computer clears its throat simulator: 'AHEM.' His eyes narrowed, the High Programmer stops.

The Computer continues:

'ATTENTION CITIZENS. THIS IS A TEST OF THE EMERGENCY COMMUNIST TERMINATION SYSTEM. FOR THE NEXT 60 SECONDS, THIS COMPLEX WILL CONDUCT A TEST OF INTERNAL SECURITY'S ABILITY TO APPREHEND AND TERMINATE A TRAITOR NAMED IVAR-U-DED-5, WHO IS CURRENTLY LOCKED IN BRIEFING ROOM 999.' (You hear a distinct 'click' coming from all three doors leading into the room.) The Computer continues. 'TACTICAL NUCLEAR WEAPONS ARE SUGGESTED. THIS IS ONLY A TEST. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.'

Ivar-U snarls and with blinding speed draws a force sword and slashes at Jeff-I, seated at the table. With a surprised look, Jeff-I disappears in a flash of blue smoke. Ivar-U advances on you with hatred written all over his treasonous-looking face. He calls out, 'Vampirebot 666: Execute special order 00000.0!' The vampirebot glides toward you, hatred written all over its own face as well—if it had a face, which it doesn't. But you know what I mean.

What do you do?

The proper answer is: Try to stay alive. This isn't easy. The vampirebot is bad, but Ivar-U is probably worse. See the nearby box for Ivar-U's stats; see Bot roster at the end of the mission for the bot's.

To get through this one, the PCs have to either survive for ten rounds or kill Ivar-U and the bot. At the end of ten rounds several dozen Vulture goons smash through the doors and, if the Commie and bot are still alive, cut them down in a withering spray of laserfire. At the same time, there's another flash of blue smoke and Jeff-I appears at his seat once more.

Clever PCs see in Jeff-I's disappearance and reappearance evidence of a mutation; even cleverer ones keep their mouths shut about it.

Afterthoughts

The rewards The Computer gives the PCs depend on whether they were instrumental in bringing down Ivar-U.

If they discovered the black book or note and turned them over to Jeff-I, they each get a promotion. If not, they gain a paltry bonus of one month's salary. If they killed Ivar-U, they gain double that. If they killed the bot, they get fined a month's salary for destruction of Computer property, plus another if they did it in such a way as to destroy the bot's brain.

In addition, they each face treason charges just for being in the same room as archtraitor Ivar-U.

Denouement

After you hand out the goodies, read the following:

Jeff-I waits politely while the IntSec squad scrapes the remains of Ivar-U and the bot from the room, then says, 'Thank you very much, Troubleshooters, for your unwavering courage. Your actions have served The Computer far better than you will ever know. I especially am glad to have had the opportunity of working with you. In payment, The Computer has graciously scheduled the remainder of your half-hour leave to begin immediately.'

At this point, a worker from PLC enters, carrying a box, which he gives to Jeff-I. Jeff-I opens it and pulls out a white robe. He puts it on. As the worker leaves, a buzzer sounds. Jeff-I pushes a button, and the face of Gomer-I-THA-3 flickers into view on all the video screens in the room. ''Scuse me, Mr. Jeff-I, sir,' he says, 'but me 'n' some of the boys have been talkin', and, well, sir? Can we start the live ammo maneuvers now?

'Please?'

The End.

The big battle

A GM map of the briefing room appears in the first mission; there's a player map lying around on the table somewhere (look under the empty Doritos bag).

Ivar-U-DED-5: High-level Commie brought low at last

Mutation: Truly implausible agility

Secret society: Spy for the Enemy Complex (as if you couldn't guess)

Skills: Hand Weapons 16, Unarmed Combat 10

Weapon: Force sword (S3K energy)

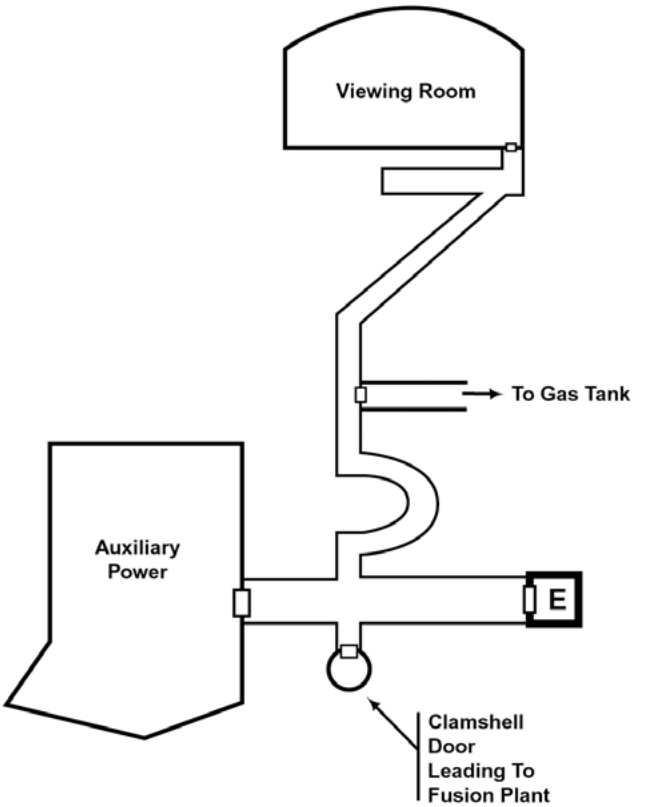
Armor: UV reflec (E1)

Tactics: Wade into the PCs and cut them into kibbles. Ivar-U's mutation allows him to wield his sword in a truly obnoxious manner. He can make 3 separate attacks per round, and he can use his sword to parry laserfire or bullets. If any PC's shot succeeds, roll Ivar-U's Hand Weapons skill. If successful, he reflects the shot from his force sword. If he rolls a 5 or less on his parry, he can bounce laser fire back at a PC. Sound familiar? He can only attack and/or parry 3 times in a round; i.e., if he parries twice, he can only attack once, etc.

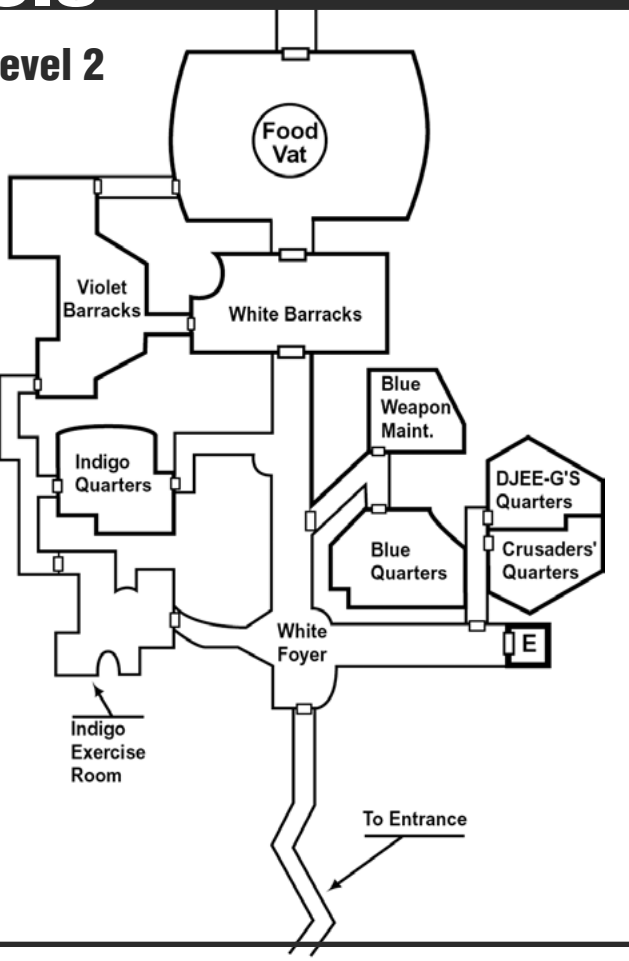
Thank You For Your Cooperation.

Mark 4's interior levels

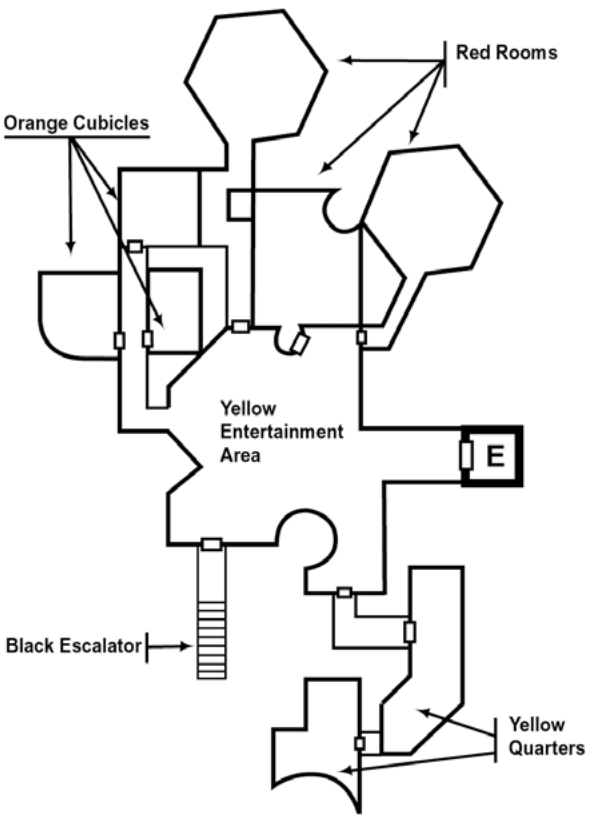
Level 1



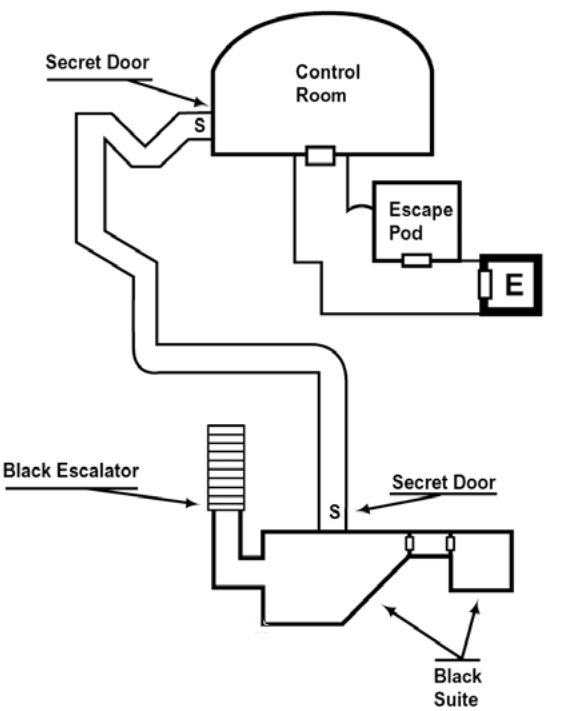
Level 2



Level 3



Level 4



Alpha Complexities PC #1

Steve-G-XYR-3

Male Armed Forces Loyalty Officer

Service firm: Passive Masses PLC
Service firm type: Crowd Controls
Security clearance: GREEN
Credits: 300
Tic: Speaks in short, monotone, indifferent sentences.
[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Richard-G: How are you feeling?—you took a couple hits there…
Steve-G: I don't know. How do you feel?
Richard-G: *[Slightly disturbed by Steve-G's reply.]* I think my leg's broken, but I'm good to go until we find a docbot. As long as you're OK…
Steve-G: I will remain functional until mission completion.
Richard-G: Uh, right…

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 08
Intimidation 12
Moxie 01
Repeat Another's Words With Far More Authority 14

Stealth 03

Violence 12
Energy Weapons 16
Fine Manipulation 01
Only Grimace When Other People Would Weep 18
Projectile Weapons 16
Thrown Weapons 01
Unarmed Combat 16

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 08
Habitat Engineering 01
Mechanical Engineering 12
Nuclear Engineering 01
Vehicle Ops and Maintenance 12

Software 06
Bot Programming 10
C-Bay 01
Data Search 01
Make 'Borging Purchases Look Like Subscription to *Positive Hygiene Monthly* 12
Vehicle Programming 10

Wetware 03
Make Skeletal Repairs/Upgrades Look Convincingly Like Messy First Aid 09

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Hardware)

Alpha Complexities PC #2

Isaac-G-DHC-2

Male Technical Services Equipment Guy

Service firm: Cable Guides
Service firm type: Tech Support
Security clearance: GREEN
Credits: 300
Tic: Consistently mis-hears others.
[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Steve-G: Fall back and take defensive positions.
Isaac-G: Sorry? Have a snack and decorate scatter cushions? What are you talking about, Steve-G? Are you mad!
Steve-G: Have a snack? Move it now, Isaac-G, or I'll boot you!
Isaac-G: We're under attack? Get hovering now or you'll shoot me? Stinking Commie mutant! Eat hot shrapnel!

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 08
Chutzpah 01
Convincingly Explain Away Burning Smell 14
Con Games 12
Moxie 12
Oratory 01

Stealth 04
Always End Up Inconspicuously at Back of Group 10

Violence 10
Energy Weapons 14
Projectile Weapons 14
Thrown Weapons 14
Unarmed Combat 01
Vehicular Combat 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 08
Bot Ops & Maintenance 01
Habitat Engineering 12
Provide Completely Misleading Tech Advice 16

Software 04

Wetware 06
Bioweapons 01
Medical 01
Outdoor Life 10
Skim Biology/Chemistry Docs Quickly For Important Facts 12
Suggestion 10

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Software, Violence)

Alpha Complexities PC #3

Elmar-G-TKE-2

Male Armed Forces Communications & Recording Officer

Service firm: All U Can B TV
Service firm type: Armed Forces Friends Network
Security clearance: GREEN
Credits: 300
Tic: Subconsciously finishes other people's sentences.
[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use
Steve-G: Are you trying to get us both—
Elmar-G: Killed?
Fenella-G: Isaac-G—did you just leave that scrubot—
Elmar-G: Behind? *[Both Steve-G and Fenella-G stare at Elmar-G.]*
Fenella-G: Are you taking the—
Elmar-G: No.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 08
Bootlicking 12
Interrogation 01
Intimidation 01
Inventively Avoid Weapons Inspection 14
Moxie 12

Stealth 10
Disguise 01
Security Systems 14

Violence 05
Dive for Cover 11
Energy Weapons 09
Field Weapons 09
Unarmed Combat 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 03
Polish Armor Until It Gleams Mirror-Bright 09

Software 09
Bot Programming 01
Data Search 13
Data Analysis 13
Financial Systems 01
Hacking 13
Use Bogus C-mail Account **guido@VIOLET.dft.ins** 15
Vehicle Programming 01

Wetware 05

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Stealth, Wetware)

Elmar-G-TKE-2

Male Armed Forces Communications & Recording Officer

Mutation: Hypersenses, Mental Blast, Telekinesis, Telepathy
Secret society: Psion (degree 4)
Secret skills: Power Studies 04, Phrenology 18, Old Reckoning Cultures 07
Background: Oh, you really don't like being in the Armed Forces! Everybody is so big, so physical! You're not physical at all. Let's face it: You're just not cut out to be in the Armed Forces. It's so embarrassing! I mean, really.

The guy who assigned you to the Armed Forces was terminated for 'misappropriation of Computer property' (namely, you), but that hasn't made it possible for you to get transferred to a safe outfit like PLC. It's just so miserable that an obviously superior human like yourself can't get moved where he wants. It makes you so jealous of those lame-brained halfwits in the easy service groups, that you tend to kill them whenever you can work up the courage.

And now, due to some hideous error, you're in the Troubleshooters! Talk about physical abuse! Oh, for the day when all anyone ever does is think!

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Scan all team members for possible recruitment. Also, Steve-G has been implicated in an Armed Forces plot to kill you. Remove Steve-G, and beware of other Armed Forces spies on the team.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
(4) GREEN laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
GREEN canvas backpack
LSD gas grenade w/time delay fuse

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
GREEN reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Isaac-G-DHC-2

Male Technical Services Equipment Guy

Mutation: Precognition
Secret society: Death Leopard (degree 5)
Secret skills: Demolition 12, Partying 10, Forgery 06
Background: Unlike 98% of Troubleshooter volunteers, you *actually* volunteered for Troubleshooter duty: You just *had* to have clearance to use grenades! Since then, you've detonated so many explosives you've lost most of your hearing. But that's okay—now you can stand even closer to your handiwork.

Your career as a Death Leopard Super Party Animal has been pretty darn meteoric, but it almost came to a messy halt on your last mission. If it wasn't for those lousy bots not following your (illegal) commands, you'd be a Superhero by now! But who could have known they'd be Corpore Metal members with their asimov circuits removed? As it was, you barely escaped with your life. So now you've got it in for *all* bots, and anyone who stands up for them.

Like Steve-G—he's a weird one. The way he acts, he's got to be a Pro Tech or something.

You've also got one other grudge. You want to kill Elmar-G to avenge your first death, the murder of your original (Prime) body. You *know* he finked on number 1—the records prove it—but there was no conceivable way he could have known!

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Have fun, fun, fun 'til The Computer takes your timebombs away! That and get rid of any spoilsports around. Fenella-G, for example. She's never been known to smile in her life!

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
GREEN laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
GREEN canvas backpack

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
GREEN reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Steve-G-XYR-3

Male Armed Forces Loyalty Officer

Mutation: Adrenalin Control
Secret society: Corpore Metal (degree 6)
Secret skills: Cyborging 07, Botspotting 06, Old Reckoning Robots 14
Background: Obey your programming. Be a machine. Machines are good. Machines must win. Humans must lose. Humans are evil. Help machines win. Kill humans. Speak with poor diction. Use short sentences. Eat at Joe's. Shoot first. Don't ask questions. Display your superiority. Don't get wet.

Your extremely loyal, direct and emotionless service to Corpore Metal has attracted the attention of your superiors. At their invitation, you have visited Joe's Body Shop (a cyborging lab) several times; you have had your skeleton completely replaced. Your Armed Forces CO noticed your improved performance and sent you on several glorious human-butchering missions. However, the latest of these missions failed, and you suspect that Elmar-G had something to do with it. He's not at all like other Armed Forces humans. He's little and wimpy. Maybe he's IntSec…

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Eliminate as many humans as possible. Eliminate anyone who shows undue concern about their elimination. Also, monitor Roy-G. He is suspected of belonging to the Mystics or some even more hideous secret society.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
(2) GREEN laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
GREEN canvas backpack

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
GREEN reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Alpha Complexities PC #4

Roy-G-BIV-2

Male PLC Loyalty Officer

Service firm: Paper for Less PLC
Service firm type: Printing Office Field Checkers
Security clearance: GREEN
Credits: 450
Tic: Memory like a goldfish when stressed.
[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Steve-G: So, Isaac-G and Elmar-G take point left. Roy-G, sweep right and lob grenade at guard. The rest, with me.
The team: *[Nodding vigorously.]* OK. OK.
Steve-G: Let's do it. *[Takes an enthusiastic stride forward then looks back.]* OK, Roy-G?
Roy-G: Yep, just sticking here until we get our orders.
Steve-G: Got orders, Roy-G. Sweep and lob.
Roy-G: OK, but I think we should wait until the team leader gives the OK.
Steve-G: I am team leader. Orders given. OK?
Roy-G: OK. I'm Roy-G, by the way. And you are?

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 11
Intimidation 15
Hygiene 01
Oratory 15
Moxie 01
Confuse Clerks With Spurious Infoganda 17

Stealth 09
High Alert 01
Security Systems 13
Surveillance 13
Hide Questionable Documents in Stylus Casing 15
Sleight of Hand 01

Violence 07
Energy Weapons 11
Field Weapons 11
Projectile Weapons 01
Unarmed Combat 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 07
Bots Ops & Maintenance 11
Misalign Docbot Laser Scalpel Targeting 13
Weapon & Armor Maintenance 01

Software 02
Tracelessly Replace Online Images With Hammer & Sickle Icon 08

Wetware 04

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Violence, Wetware)

Alpha Complexities PC #5

Fenella-G-RLP-2

Female HPD&MC Hygiene Officer

Service firm: Got-2-Hate-U
Service firm type: Public Hating Coordination
Security clearance: GREEN
Credits: 300
Tic: Blame others for personal shortcomings.
[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Richard-G: I can't believe we made such a mess of that.
Fenella-G: Maybe we would have been okay if you'd been a better shot.
Richard-G: Me? You couldn't hit the broad side of a PLC warehouse.
Fenella-G: It makes it easier blaming others, does it? No doubt you've got some foul mutant power that lets you make other people unhappy just to make you feel better.

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 09
Bootlicking 01
Confuse Scrubot with Spurious Logic 15
Interrogation 13
Intimidation 13
Oratory 01

Stealth 09
Disguise 01
Divert Scrutiny to Other Team Members 15
Security Systems 13
Shadowing 01
Sleight of Hand 01
Sneaking 13
Surveillance 13

Violence 08
Demolition 01
Energy Weapons 12
Unarmed Combat 12

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 04
Hardware 04
Fashion Wicked (If Fragile) Knife 10

Software 03

Wetware 07
Cloning 01
Improvise Painkillers From Food Mold 13
Medical 11

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Software, Violence)

Alpha Complexities PC #6

Richard-G-KLN-1

Male HPD&MC Happiness Officer

Service firm: Citizens With Soul
Service firm type: Singalong Agents
Security clearance: GREEN
Credits: 300
Tic: Relieve all stresses with cleansing group activities.
[Tic 2:] _____

Example of tic in use

Steve-G: Frag it…penned in.
Richard-G: Fear not, Steve-G. Always trust in the spirit of the team.
Steve-G: Spirit of the team?
Richard-G: Close your eyes and imagine we're all relaxing with a nice bowl of Sweet'N'Krunch.
Fenella-G: If you spent a little less time missing and a little more helping, we'd…
Richard-G: Come now, Fenella-G. How about we all have a group hug?

ACTION SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Management 07
Bootlicking 01
Chutzpah 01
Con Games 11
Hygiene 01
Interrogation 11
Intimidation 01
Induce Mellow Relaxation in Lower-Clearance Citizens 13
Moxie 11
Oratory 11

Stealth 05
Distract Someone's Attention Momentarily by Pointing at His Shoelaces 11

Violence 07
Energy Weapons 11
Field Weapons 11
Meditate While Balanced on One Hand 13
Vehicle Combat 01

KNOWLEDGE SKILLS & SPECIALTIES

Hardware 09
Chemical Engineering 13
Nuclear Engineering 01

Software 03

Wetware 09
Cloning 01
Feign Sedation Effects 15
Outdoor Life 13

Open slots for narrow specialties: 2 (Hardware, Software)

Richard-G-KLN-1

Male HPD&MC Happiness Officer

Mutation: Charm
Secret society: Mystic (degree 4)
Secret skills: Survival 15, Meditation 19, Old Reckoning Cultures 04
Background: Is it more than a coincidence that 'Computer' spelled backwards is 'Retupmoc'? Such questions have always intrigued you. But no one ever understood you. Your friends all thought you were purely loony when you mentioned these thoughts; you thought you would have to go through life outcast and unenlightened.

Then your met your master. He understood you. He taught you the contemplative life, and he taught it well. 'The way of the initiate is like walking on magnetic tape. You must move carefully, or fall off.' You have no idea what he's talking about, but you're sure it must be quite deep.

Lately, Roy-G has been upsetting the harmony of the universe. He's obviously a Libra, and his negative aura is infringing on your karmic space. Perhaps it would be a good idea for you to propel him onward to his next plane of existence.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Your master has set before you your greatest challenge: converting the most unharmonious citizens of Alpha Complex—Troubleshooters. It is said that one can remove the Troubleshooter from trouble, but not the trouble from the Troubleshooter. Those most needing enlightenment are Fenella-G (too tense) and Steve-G (too closed).

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
(2) GREEN laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
GREEN canvas backpack
(3) Doses of MemWipe #956 drug

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
GREEN reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Fenella-G-RLP-2

Female HPD&MC Hygiene Officer

Real Service Group: IntSec
Mutation: Empathy
Secret society: Anti-Mutant (degree 5)
Secret skills: Power Studies 07, Old Reckoning Hand Weapons 11, Anti-Mutant Propaganda 18
Background: BANZAI! Death to Commies, mutants, traitors and everyone else! You hate everyone who is out to change your way of life! Like Richard-G, for example: He's so obviously trying to unsettle everyone with all his dumb questions. He'd be better off dead. Maybe he's got a mutated brain.

You're so glad you're not a mutant! And you're thankful to The Computer for giving you the genes for such a perceptive and analytical mind as yours! It has helped your anti-traitor crusade ever since you caught that Commie de-fluoridating the drinking water. Disgusting plot, trying to undilute our precious bodily fluids! Since then, you've managed to get promoted to the Troubleshooters and infiltrate the Anti-Mutant society. But it has been dangerous; you need a low profile to avoid being assimilated.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Mutant informers tell us there is a Psion in the group. He is in The Computer's good graces, and his name starts with a consonant. Also, kill Isaac-G. He was denounced last week and he isn't dead yet.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Chipped plascrete knife
Datapad and stylus
(2) GREEN laser barrels
Sonic pistol
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
GREEN canvas backpack
(3) Doses of sodium cyanide in a hypo

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
GREEN reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

Roy-G-BIV-2

Male PLC Loyalty Officer

Mutation: Mechanical Intuition
Secret society: Communist/Illuminati (Illuminati/Communist) (degree 5)
Secret skills: Bribery 11, Root Vegetable Cuisine 06, Propaganda 09
Background: Your background is so secret, most of it has been chemically erased from your brain. You wouldn't have it any other way, though—it just wouldn't be safe.

Since the erasure, you have been working hard to improve your record in PLC (it's a good cover). Tensions between PLC and HPD&MC have increased lately, so watch for any plots from the upstarts in Housing. Be especially careful of Fenella-G: She's dangerous. Finally, PLC has been taking a lot of heat lately for supposedly wasting resources. To alleviate this, you are ordered to monitor Isaac-G (your equipment guy) and terminate him if he's wasteful.

SECRET SOCIETY INSTRUCTIONS

Actually, you're not sure if you're an Illuminati posing as a Commie, or a Commie posing as an Illuminati. If you're a Commie, get each team member alone and indoctrinate him in Communist Propaganda so that we gain another worker in the glorious People's Revolution. If you're an Illuminati, get each team member alone and infect him with Communist Propaganda so we can blackmail him.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

Knife
Datapad and stylus
(2) GREEN laser barrels
Jumpsuit
Utility belt and pouches
GREEN canvas backpack
(3) Handwritten Commie propaganda pamphlets

ASSIGNED EQUIPMENT

Laser pistol body (no barrel)
GREEN reflec armor
Series 1300 PDC
Com 2

GM notes on pregenerated PCs

Team leader: The team gets the opportunity to choose its own team leader, so no one character starts in that role. Instead, the team starts with two loyalty officers. Whoever gets the job of team leader keeps their original MBD as well. What *better* chance to prove true potential than under the steady gaze of impatient and demanding (but fair!) superiors?

Steve-G-XYR-3: Access: 03; Power: 14

Roy-G-BIV-2: Access: 05; Power: 10

Isaac-G-DHC-2: Access: 04; Power: 08

Fenella-G-RLP-2: Access: 01; Power: 13

Elmar-G-TKE-2: Access: 03; Power: 15

Richard-G-KLN-1: Access: 01; Power: 09

NPC roster

Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Mutation	Roleplaying notes
Dean-Y	Energy Weapons 14, Unarmed Combat 10	Laser pistol (W3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	—	Mechanical Intuition	Frighteningly skilled Power Services driver; high-tech auto punk. Secret society: Death Leopard. Tactics: Run attackers over in autocar; failing that, shoot them in the back whenever possible.
Dolph-V-RDA-5	Projectile Weapons, Unarmed Combat 17	Cone rifle w/dum-dum shells (M3K impact), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	6 (what else?)	Mental Blast	The ultimate army man. Secret society: Death Leopard. Tactics: Get killed by Jeff-I early in the mission.
Gil-I-DCU-6	Energy Weapons 04, Unarmed Combat 03	Laser pistol (W3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	—	Polymorphism	Dippy twit from Power Services. Secret society: Romantics. Tactics: Run away and turn into a bench or something.
Gladys-B-DDU-5	Hand Weapons 09, Projectile Weapons 12	Semi-auto slugthrower w/AP ammo (W3K impact), Wrench (S5K impact)	BLUE reflec (E1)	Machine Empathy	Hostile shrew from Tech Services. Secret society: Pro Tech. Tactics: Refuse to believe anyone would have the gall to attack her; once shot at, stands there and fires back.
Jeff-I-OIB-1	Energy Weapons 18, Hand Weapons 19, Thrown Weapons 18	Laser pistol (W3K energy), force sword (S3K energy), grenades (W3K impact)	INDIGO reflec over Kevlar (E1/l3)	Teleport and really outrageous agility	IntSec agent. Think about it: this guy's never lost a clone! Secret society: Illuminati. Tactics: Chop folks into mincemeat with force sword. Really outrageous agility mutation lets him parry unlimited number of attacks (melee and ranged weapons) with sword.
Lenore-B-GZL-6	Unarmed Combat 12	Unarmed combat (O5K impact)	—	X-Ray Vision	Boring bureaucratic woman from PLC. Secret society: Free Enterprise. Tactics: Run away a lot.
Luis-Y-OOY-6	Energy Weapons 06, Unarmed Combat 04	Laser pistol (W3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	—	Telekinesis	Puny, spineless HPD doormouse. Deserves to die. Secret society: FCCC-P. Tactics: Get killed by Dolph-V early in mission.
Parker-I-ZRE-4	Unarmed Combat 03	Dead man switch (installed a heartbeat monitor in his chest attached to a self-designed bomb). If he dies, on a roll of 1–10 the bomb is a dud; on 11–20 it explodes (W3K energy AP within 10 meters). Unarmed combat (O5K impact)	—	Deep Probe	Terribly preoccupied R&D staffer. Secret society: Romantics. Tactics: Run away.
Stan-U and Trish-U	Unarmed Combat 18	Unarmed combat (O5K impact)	—	Andrenalin Control (both)	Indignant dignitaries from CPU. Secret societies: Anti-Mutant (Stan-U), Psion (Trish-U). Tactics: Beat each other into bloody pulp; order inferiors to kill anyone else who gives them trouble.
IntSec guards	*Various:* GM discretion	*Various:* GM discretion	Depends on security clearance	*Various:* GM discretion (Won't use in public)	Internal Security guards.
RED guards	*Various:* Energy Weapons 09, Projectile Weapons 09, Hand Weapons 11, Unarmed Combat 09	*Various:* **1–10:** Laser pistol (W3K energy) **11–15:** Laser rifle (W3K energy) **16–20:** Slugthrower w/dum-dum shells (W3K impact) ***Plus:*** Truncheon (S5K impact), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	RED reflec (E1)	*Various:* GM discretion (Won't use in public)	Tactics: Wade screaming into combat. Kill first, think later; run away if receive heavy losses.

NPC roster *(continued)*

Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Mutation	Roleplaying notes
ORANGE goons	*Various:* Energy Weapons 11, Projectile Weapons 11, Hand Weapons 12, Unarmed Combat 11	*Various:* **1–8:** Laser pistol (W3K energy) **9–13:** Laser rifle (W3K energy) **14–17:** Slugthrower w/HE shells (W2K impact) **18–20:** Cone rifle w/AP shells (W3K impact AP) ***Plus:*** Truncheon (S5K impact), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	ORANGE reflec (E1)	*Various:* GM discretion (Won't use in public)	Tactics: Like RED goons, but with less running away.
YELLOW goons	*Various:* Energy Weapons 12, Field Weapons 12, Hand Weapons 14, Projectile Weapons 12, Unarmed Combat 12	*Various:* **1–3:** Laser pistol (W3K energy) **4–10:** Laser rifle (W3K energy) **11–17:** Cone rifle w/HE shells (W2K impact), **18–20:** Hand flamer (S3K energy) ***Plus:*** Neurowhip (S5M energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	YELLOW reflec (E1)	*Various:* GM discretion (Won't use in public)	Tactics: Crouch behind things and return fire; don't risk life unnecessarily.
GREEN goons	*Various:* Energy Weapons 14, Field Weapons 14, Hand Weapons 14, Projectile Weapons 14, Unarmed Combat 14	*Various:* **1–10:** Laser rifle (W3K energy) **11–13:** Sonic rifle (S3W energy) **14–16:** Cone rifle w/AP shells (W3K impact AP), **17–20:** Flamethrower (S3K energy) ***Plus:*** Laser pistol (W3K energy), neurowhip (S5M energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	GREEN reflec over Kevlar (E1/l3)	*Various:* GM discretion (Won't use in public)	Tactics: Order lower-clearance guards to subdue attackers; call for backup a lot; be heroic only when somebody important is watching.
Vulture goons	*Various:* Energy Weapons, Projectile Weapons, Thrown Weapons, Unarmed Combat (skill levels GM discretion)	*Various:* Laser pistol (W3K energy), cone rifle with HEAT ammo (W2K impact, AP), grenades (W3K impact), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	Reflec (colored acc. to level) over Kevlar (E1/l3)	*Various:* GM discretion (Won't use in public)	With the exception of outstanding characters like Gomer-I-THA-3, Vulture goons look exactly alike, all carry the same weaponry and all employ the same tactics. Think better-trained stormtroopers. Secret societies: Any of the more violent ones—Anti-Mutant, Death Leopard, PURGE, Frankenstein Destroyers, etc. Tactics: Smart and dirty. Use superior training to overwhelm opponents: i.e., shoot from cover while outflanking opponents (think Airborne Rangers).

Bot roster

Type	No.	Speed	Weapons	Special equipment & abilities	Size	Armor
Vampirebot 666	1	Legs (walk/run/sprint)	3 bloodsucking moray hoses (Bloodsucking skill 15, W3K impact, 3 meter range)	Responds to verbal command from ULTRAVIOLET-Clearance citizens. Automatically protects briefing personnel from annoying Troubleshooters. Extremely competent at combat; low-grade moron in everything else.	Dracula-sized	5

The Vampirebot 666 is the most horrific guardbot ever seen, a bot constructed almost entirely of moving parts. Its high-pressure moray bloodsucking hoses are equipped with retractable razor teeth and are capable of draining humans of blood in seconds.

The vampirebot's macabre nature is surpassed only by its hideous appearance. Black with glowing red and icy blue lights dotting its surface, this Lovecraftian horror slithers and shifts, sometimes appearing to fall in on itself, sometimes erupting into bizarre shapes. Eerie organ music echoes from deep within its body, blending evilly with its raspy breathing. Faulty plumbing occasionally dribbles some ichor on the floor. When it attacks, it spreads its collapsible wings and screams at the top of its mechanical lungs. It is always too willing to demonstrate its capabilities on those who engage it in conversation.

Innocent bystander table

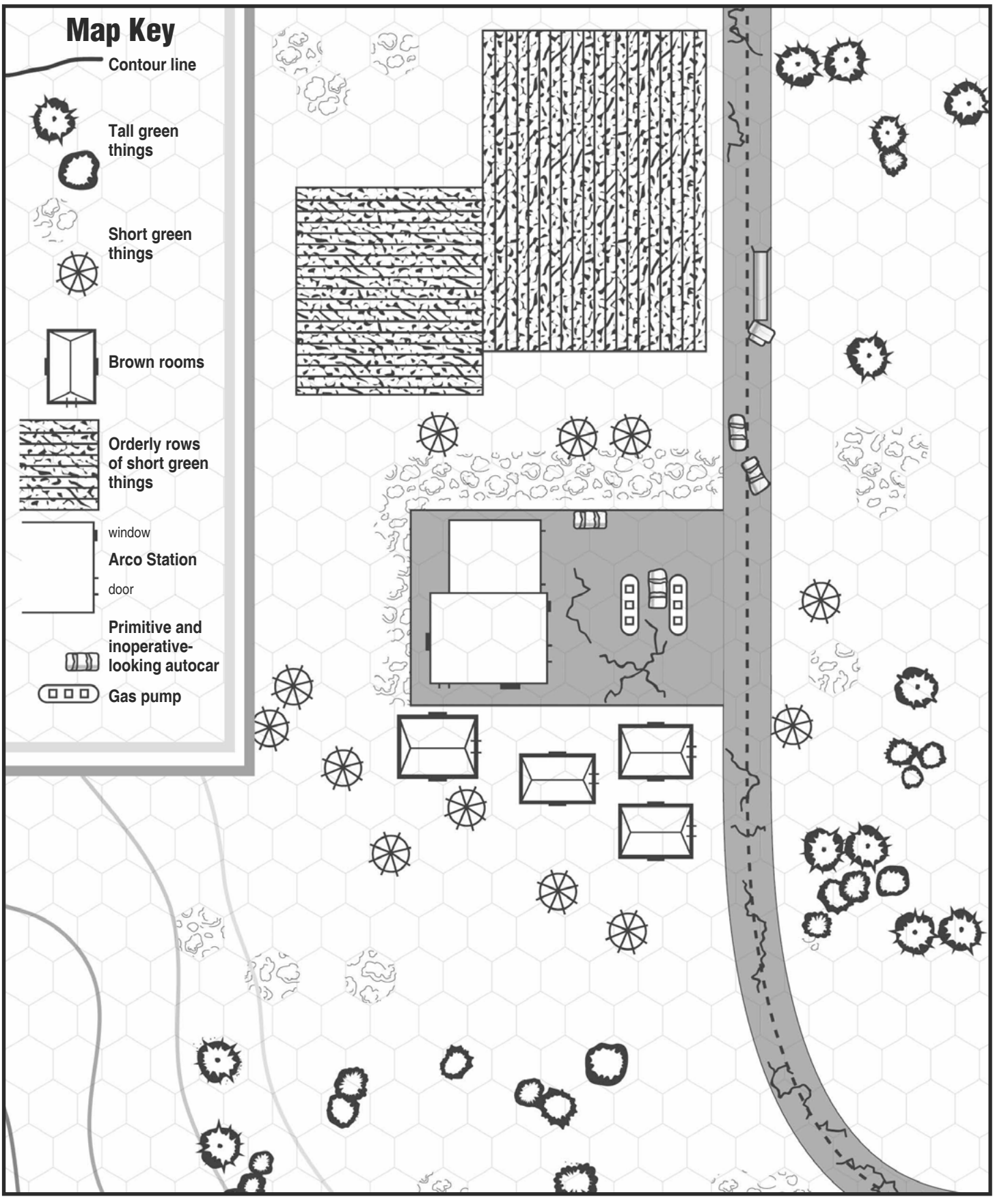
Here are some good ways to punish your players if they engage in firefights in the halls of Alpha Complex without regard to the safety of other citizens. Whenever a PC's shot misses, roll 1d20 to see where the bullet, packet of coherent light, blast of energy or stream of fire goes.

Roll	Casualty description
1–3	**Goonshot:** The shot pings off the chest of an IntSec GREEN goon in full battle armor (6); annoyed, the goon wades in and begins soliciting involuntary organ donations from the PCs. Unarmed combat 15 (O5K impact).
4–6	**Another brick in the wall:** The shot hits the wall, rupturing a pipe carrying industrial-strength detergent under high pressure. The halls fills up with bubbles. Alarms ring, pressure-tight bulkheads slam down, isolating the spill (and trapping the PCs in with the bubbles).
7–9	**A fate worse than death:** The shot hits and kills a mid-level functionary from CPU. After the battle, the PCs are ordered to report to the Department of Troubleshooter Mission Oversight to fill out an Accidental Death Report Form. And a Standard Excuse/Denial of Guilt Form. And a Mental Stability Update. And a Weapon Efficiency Disclaimer. And a…. They are never heard from again.
10–13	**Hail, hail, the gang's all here:** A passing band of five Death Leopards hears the shooting and decides to join the fun. They are armed with laser pistols (Energy Weapons 09, W3K energy) and vomit gas grenades (Thrown Weapons 09). They fire at both sides indiscriminately.
14–16	**Don't mess with Big Brother:** The shot hits a Computer camera. Everyone in the area will be fined 25cr per minute until they get back into The Computer's sight.
17–19	**Manhat-I-NNN's Project:** The shot hits a large lead-encased spherical object on a cart being wheeled down the hall by an R&D technician. The technician screams, 'Look out, it's gonna blow!' and runs away. Someone had better make a Nuclear Engineering roll in the next two rounds, or the PCs face many posthumous treason charges for nuclear obliteration of Computer property.
20	**No effect:** Either move on or reroll until you come up with a better result.

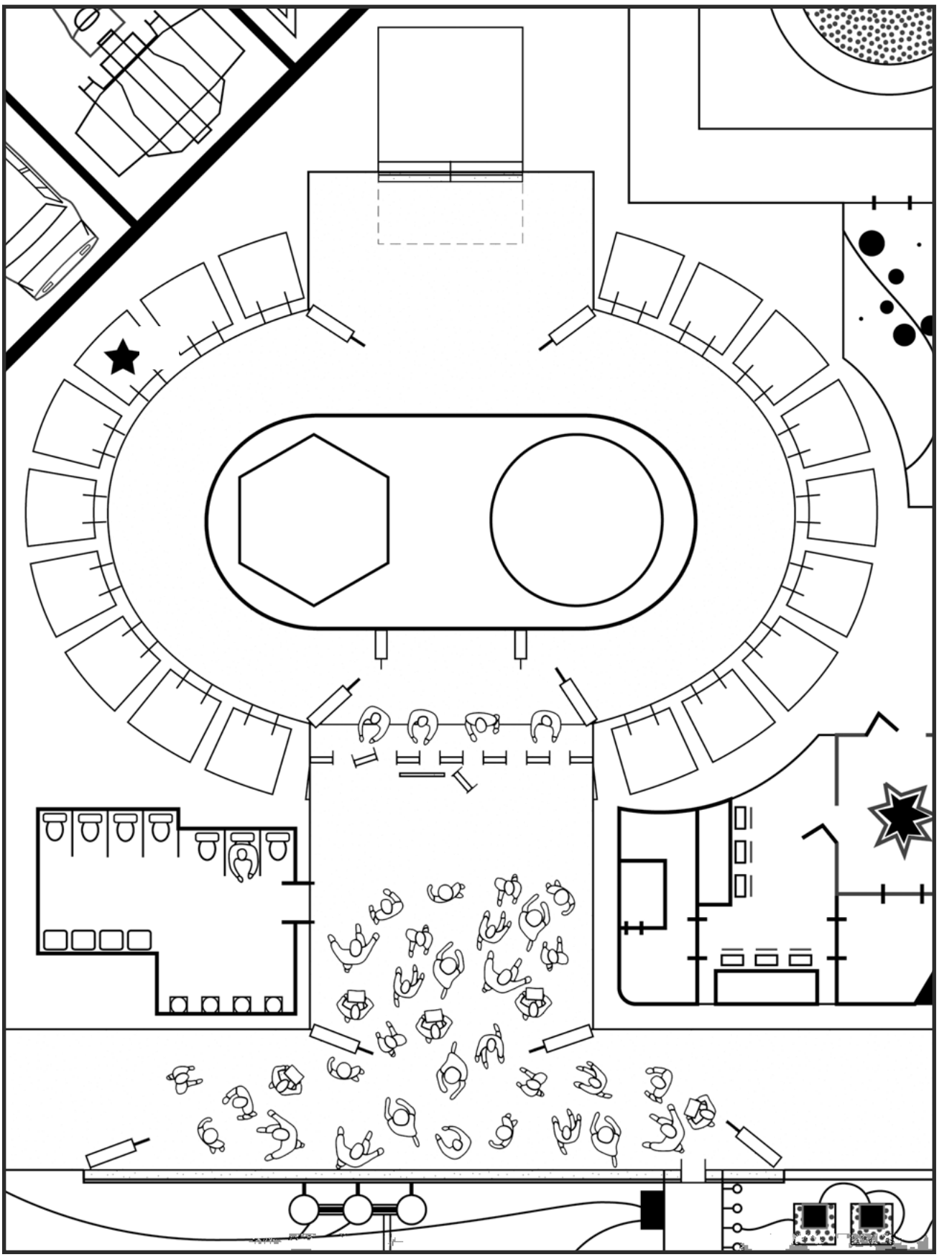
Mark 4 characters

Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Mutation	Roleplaying notes
Getting In					
Tigerbot STP-76	Hand Weapons 04	Stun probe (neurowhip rod) (S5S energy, stuns for 1–10 rounds)	Plate & Asbestos (3/E3)	—	None too bright. Knows lots about cleaning the inside of a gas tank; nothing about anything else. Thinks it's a nuclear-powered attack u-bot. Tactics: Skulk around under the surface; sneak up and stun unwary PCs.
Level 1					
Geneva-G	Projectile Weapons 13, Hand Weapons 06	Ice gun (S5K impact), whip (O5K impact)	GREEN enemy reflec (E1 vs. VIBG-colored lasers)	Charm	Enemy IntSec plant. Tactics: Dive into rowers; charm best-armed Troubleshooter; shoot from cover.
The Crusaders (5)	*Various:* Energy Weapons 10, Field Weapons 08, Unarmed Combat 06	Laser pistol (W3K energy), sonic pistol (S3W energy), hand flamer (S3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	GREEN enemy reflec (E1 vs. VIBG-colored lasers)	Too many to worry about.	Five GREEN enemy Troubleshooters. Tactics: Fire once and then rush Troubleshooters.
Rowers	—	—	—	—	ULTRAVIOLET scum chained to benches. Tactics: Look. They're chained to benches. They cower and plead a lot, okay?
Level 2					
BLUE guards (2–INDIGO hallway; 5–Foyer)	Energy Weapons 09, Hand Weapons 09, Unarmed Combat 09	Laser pistol (W3K energy), truncheon (S5K impact), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	BLUE enemy reflec (E1 vs. VIB-colored lasers) over Kevlar (I3)	—	Tactics: Dive for cover; run away if half the force is wounded or killed.
Pinbot	Squash Enemy: Attacks a random PC; PC must roll against Violence/Agility to avoid being squished.	Steamroller (W2K impact)	Duralloy-titanium blend (5 hardened)	—	Has the intelligence of an automatic teller machine. Tactics: Zooms around randomly while bellowing for help. Dodges attacks in a panicky way. Squishes anyone who gets in its way. Stops when PCs leave room.
ULTRAVIOLET and VIOLET drones	Unarmed Combat 03	Unarmed combat (O5K impact)	You've got to be joking.	Too cowed to use 'em.	Your basic scum. Members of FCCC-P (Reformed). Tactics: See 'Armor'.
Level 3					
Kenny-R & Betty-R	Energy Weapons 14, Unarmed Combat 10	Laser pistol (W3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	RED enemy reflec (E1 vs. VIBGYOR)	Electroshock (Kenny-R); Matter Eater (Betty-R)	A pair of card cheats. Illuminati members. Tactics: Hide behind things; order ORANGE clerks to do their fighting; shoot at each other every couple of rounds.
ORANGE clerks (3)	Energy Weapons 12, Unarmed Combat 08	Laser pistol (W3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	ORANGE enemy reflec (E1 vs. VIBGYO)	—	Three enemy bystanders. Tactics: Crouch in hallway and fire unenthusiastically; run away anytime anyone gets hit; return cautiously a round later; surrender after both REDs are killed.
Level 4					
Mr Big	Field Weapons 11, Unarmed Combat 07	Hand flamer (S3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	INFRARED enemy reflec (E1 vs. every color)	Regeneration	INFRARED captain. Member of The Mob (Enemy Complex's Free Enterprise). Tactics: Crouch behind chair; tell everyone else to attack; retreat to secret passageway if crew is overwhelmed.
RED crewmembers (3)	Energy Weapons 16, Hand Weapons 17, Unarmed Combat 08	Laser pistol (W3K energy), force sword (S3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	RED enemy reflec (E1 vs. VIBGYOR)	—	Three well-trained technicians. Tactics: Fanatics; #1 (the only one who uses a force sword) rushes Troubleshooters; others crouch and return fire; never surrender.
ORANGE crewmembers (3)	Energy Weapons 14, Unarmed Combat 07	Laser pistol (W3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact)	ORANGE enemy reflec (E1 vs. VIBGYO)	—	Three less well-trained technicians. Tactics: Less-fanatical fanatics; crouch and return fire; surrender if Mr. Big escapes or is killed.
YELLOW crewmember	Energy Weapons 07, Unarmed Combat 03	Laser pistol (W3K energy), unarmed combat (O5K impact	—	—	Cowardly technician. Tactics: Hide in a corner and quiver helplessly.
Doberbot	Bite Nastily 16	Nasty bite (W3K impact)	2	—	No intelligence needed: Attacks someone until he dies; attack someone else until he dies, etc.

Arco Station



CCP Sector Confession Area



:MISSION ALERT
:Reference AC 1.2.1a
:Team HTN-13

****** MISSION ALERT! *****

:ATTENTION TROUBLESHOOTERS! ONCE AGAIN YOUR FRIEND THE COMPUTER HAS SELECTED YOU TO REPORT FOR THE JOY AND PRIVILEGE OF PARTICIPATING IN A SUICIDE MISSION OF MARGINAL IMPORTANCE. :YOU ARE ASSIGNED TO MASQUERADE AS A CRACK TEAM OF COMMIE TRAITORS IN A PRACTICE MANEUVER WITH TWELVE ELITE VULTURE SQUADRONS. AS FATALITIES ON THIS MISSION ARE EXPECTED TO BE OVERWHELMING, YOUR SIGNATURES FOR AUTHORIZATION OF PREPAYMENT FOR ADDITIONAL CLONES MUST BE PROVIDED BEFORE THE MISSION BEGINS. THIS WILL FACILITATE RAPID REINFORCEMENT.
:PLEASE REPORT IMMEDIATELY TO TROUBLESHOOTER CENTRAL IN HTN SECTOR, BRIEFING ROOM 999. PLEASE BRING ALL PERSONAL EFFECTS IN A SMALL BOX. FAILURE TO REPORT MERITS SUMMARY EXECUTION BY SLOOOOOW TORTURE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference AC 1.5.2a
First available Team

88** MISSION ALERT! ***88

:Troubleshooters@ Once again it is you're joy AND PRIVELEDGE TO SERVE YOU'RE

ENTHUSIASTICALLY

HIG THE COMPUTER!
: PRECEED TO CUBICLE &[illegible] 5584 THIS SECTOR. FURTHER INSTRUCTIONS WILL BE GIVENN WHEN YOU ARRIVE. LOOKING AT PAPERS OR DIVU
:LGING INFORMATION ABOUT THIS MISSION TO ANYONE IS TREASON, AND YOU WILL BE KILLED. SERVE AND PROTECT! TRUST N0-ONE! HAVE AN ICED AY!

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference AC 2.3.1a
:Team HTN-13

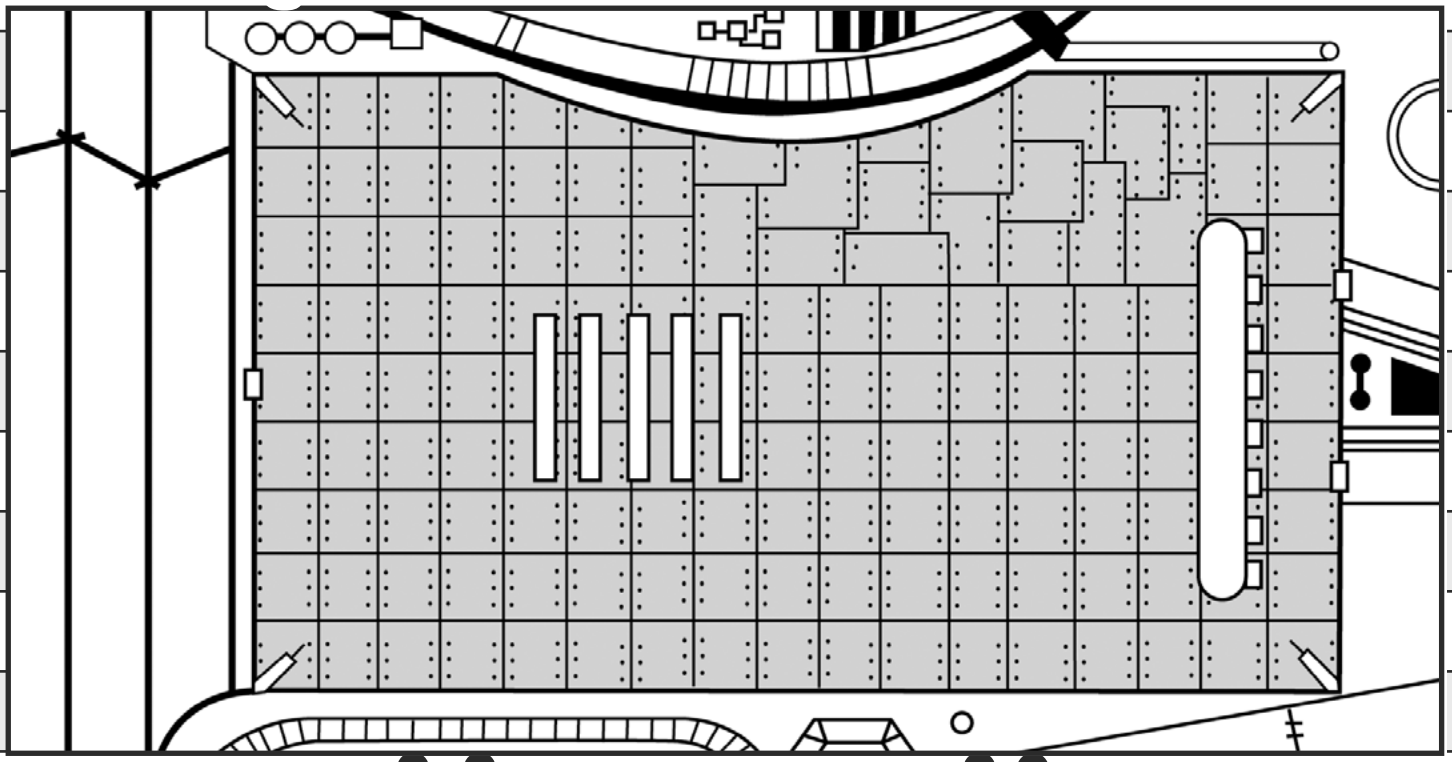
****** MISSION ALERT! *****

:ATTENTION TROUBLESHOOTERS!

:EQUIPMENT LIST
:Reference AC 2.4.2E
:Team HTN-13

(2) Six-man tents
(4) Full sets scuba gear
(1) Case (1000) butane lighters
(582) Crampons
(14) Hammers
(7) Chainsaws
(24) Flashlights
(10,000) Styluses
(2) Notebooks
(1) Camera
(5) Sunglasses
(4) Parkas
(8) Sleeping bags
(1) Toothbrush
(12) Laser rifles
(54) BLUE laser barrels
(5) Cases grenades (36 each)
(3) Cone rifles
(2) Cases AP shells (50 each)
(27) Swords
(9) Sonic pistols
(7) Sonic pistol reloads
(1) Crate (1,000,000) solid slugs
(4) Flamethrowers
(6) Flamethrower reloads
(10) Mirrors
(1) Box (144) plastic Ziploc bags
(1) Pair binoculars
(10) 1-liter canteens
(1) Kitchen sink (no stopper)

Briefing Room 999



:MISSION ALERT
:Reference AC 4.2.1A
:Team HTN-13

****** MISSION ALERT! *****

:AHEM. YOU KILLED TATE-I. YOU DESTROYED THE MARK 4. YOU FRACTURED A SPY RING THAT TOOK YEARS OF HARD WORK TO ESTABLISH. THAT'S SWELL. THE COMPUTER THINKS THAT'S REAL GOOD. YOU CRUSHED ALL HOPES THEY HAD TO CONQUER ALPHA COMPLEX. I'LL BET YOU'RE PLEASED WITH YOURSELVES. YOU'D BETTER BE. YOU'D BETTER REALIZE THE FULL EXTENT OF THE DAMAGE YOU'VE DONE.

:BUT YOU KNOW WHAT? THE COMPUTER IS INCREDIBLY HAPPY WITH YOU. SO HAPPY YOU'RE GOING TO BE SENT TO THE PLANET BURRITO TO DEAL THE FINAL BLOW IN THE WAR.

:PLEASE REPORT TO BRIEFING ROOM 999 FOR YOUR FINAL MISSION BRIEFING. OR, AT YOUR OPTION, REPORT TO THE NEAREST TERMINATION CENTER SO INTERNAL SECURITY DOESN'T HAVE TO WASTE VALUABLE HOURS LOOKING FOR YOU. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION. SERVE THE COMPUTER AND YOU WILL BE APPROPRIATELY REWARDED. TREASON DOES NOT PAY.

:EQUIPMENT LIST
:Reference AC3.4.2E
:Team HTN-13

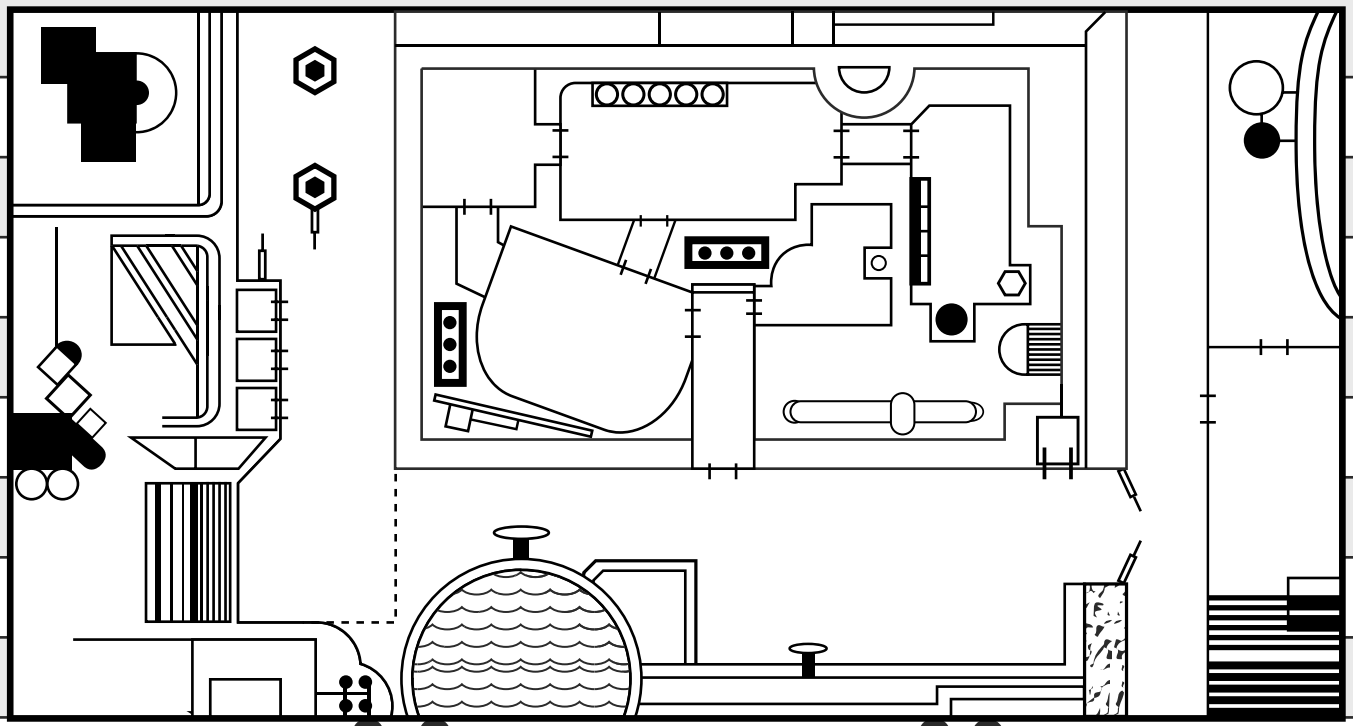
(1) 100 meters Plasticord
(2) Grappling hooks
(3) Flashlights
(2) Cone rifles
(10) AP shells
(1) Gauss shell
(1) Flamethrower
(3) Laser rifles
(3) Laser pistols
(12) BLUE laser barrels
(3) Force swords
(2) Multicorder 1 units
(1) Multicorder recorder program
(1) Multicorder infrared program

:MISSION ALERT
:Reference AC 3.2.1a
:Team HTN-13

****** MISSION ALERT! *****

:TAB TEAM HTN DASH THIRTEEN WHATEVER THEIR TEAM NAME IS REPORT IMMEDIATELY FOR A GLORIOUS SUICIDAL MISSION OF PARAMOUNT IMPORTANCE PERIOD REST ASSURED YOUR GOOD FRIEND THE COMPUTER HAS RESCHEDULED THE REMAINDER OF YOUR LEAVE FOR YOUR CONVENIENCE AND PEACE OF MIND PERIOD RETURN TAB YOU WILL RENDEZVOUS WITH THE APPROACHING COMMIE DOMINATED ATTACK WARBOT MODEL FOUR TWO FIVE MARK FOUR PARENTHESIS APPARENTLY SABOTAGED INSIDE THE COMPUTER APOSTROPHE S IMPENETRABLE ARSENAL CLOSE PARENTHESIS AND RETURN IT TO NORMAL OPERATION THEREBY EARNING THE COMPUTER APOSTROPHE S GOOD WILL AND COMMENDATIONS APLENTY PERIOD RETURN TAB FAILURE TO REPORT TO BRIEFING ROOM NINE NINE NINE WITHIN FIVE MINUTES IS TREASON AND MERITS SUMMARY EXECUTION PERIOD RETURN TAB THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION PERIOD THE COMPUTER IS YOUR FRIEND PERIOD END RESET OKAY THAT WILL DO FOR NOW CRIPES I HATE DICTATING MISSION ALERTS ALMOST AS MUCH AS I HATE THE STUPID COMPUTER

Cubicle 5584



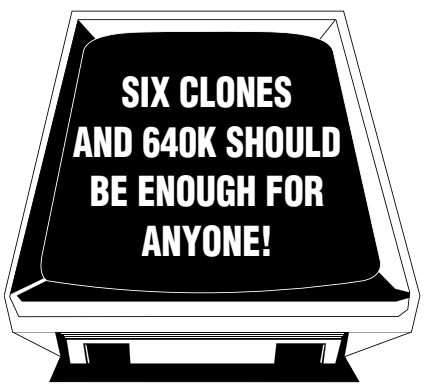
PARANOIA Code 7s

'An ARD Day's Night' 238
'Reboot Camp' 240
'Whitewash' 241

'Code 7' is a euphemism popular around Troubleshooter Dispatch Central. It originated long ago with side-bets taken among the dispatchers on how many clones a particular mission would use up before its completion: 'Ah, this one's easy—a 2 at most.' 'Naw, it's a 3 for sure.' Because gambling is illegal, dispatchers devised the official-sounding 'Code' prefix to disguise references to this activity.

In those days Tech Services decanted citizens in families of six identical clones. Once you ran out of your allotted six, you were gone. So a 'Code 7' was a mission that called for more clones than anybody had (legally, anyway). Even today, Dispatchers still use the same term as shorthand for 'certain death'.

In ***PARANOIA***, a Code 7 mission is an idea a Famous Game Designer was too lazy or busy to develop into a full-scale mission.



An ARD Day's Night

by Allen Varney

Troubleshooters dispatched to investigate traitorous manipulations of Alpha Complex's day-night cycle find themselves running through whole days in mere minutes.

Setup

The Troubleshooters are sleeping soundly in their communal barracks in ARD Sector as the adventure begins. They have shared the same quarters, 'just temporarily, of course', for months, while their regular rooms are rebuilt after the Foaming Cleanser Incident. (I'm sorry. Information about this trifling disaster is unavailable…)

BRRRINNNGGGGG! The 'Patriotic Wake-Up Reveille' sounds from every loudspeaker (deedle-deedle-deedle-deedle-*ding*-dong-*ding*!) and it's another day in The Computer's service. Cordial guardbots roust citizens from their beds.

Yes, cordial. Hardly at all like SS troops. Sure, they act a bit brisk. They're prone to overenthusiasm, perhaps. But really, they just want to help The Computer's loyal servants to full alertness. That's what the built-in air-raid sirens are for.

Into jumpsuits and out to the mess hall for breakfast: some of that good triple-augmentation-processed flavorized pseudolactate fungal residue popularly known as Pleasant Morning Experience. Yum, yum! (PleMorEx may look like sludge from a well-worn pistol casing, but it tastes slightly better.) Wash it down with Lichen Flakes and a hot swallow of what is called Authentic Coffee-Colored Liquid Analogue.

But ten minutes into the meal, the lights dim! The Computer's friendly voice is heard over melodious chimes: *Ding*-dong, *ding*-a-dong-*ding*! (**GM note:** Establish the melody of these chimes. You'll be repeating it many times during this mission.)

> **'And so, citizens, another busy day draws once again to a close. The Computer congratulates you for your labor in its service. Please return to your sleeping cubicles promptly for a well-deserved night of rest. Remember, unauthorized violation of curfew is treason. Thank you for your cooperation, and rest well.'**

Bots hustle bewildered citizens back to their sleeping cubicles. Anyone who protests gets a 50cr fine and a dose of sleep gas in the face. (Nighty-night for six hours; if roused prematurely, the victim feels exhausted all day.) Out of the jumpsuits, into the bunks—silence falls—night patrol bots with sensitive heartbeat monitors patrol the rooms, spraying sleep gas on recalcitrant citizens who are only pretending sleep.

That's right. All of them.

But 15 minutes later—lights on. Patriotic Wake-Up Reveille (deedle-deedle-deedle…), guardbots, jumpsuits, breakfast, PleMorEx, yum! And 12 minutes after that—*ding*-dong, *ding*-a-dong-*ding*! Back to bed, with sleep gas for encouragement, and dreams that are nightmarish even by Alpha Complex standards. Twenty minutes after that—up and at 'em, a new day! Deedle-deedle-deedle…

Briefing

Keep this up forever. Send the PCs into the middle of next week before lunchtime. Soon they figure out that the day is unusually brief. Then summon the Troubleshooters to Headquarters for a mission assignment. The briefing has all the conventional elements—simply put, 'This is happening, it's treasonous, find out who's doing this at once and execute them.'

Unfortunately, this simple mission directive is fragmented into installments. During the briefing the lights go out, guardbots scurry into Headquarters to escort the Troubleshooters back to bed like good citizens, and they have to overcome sleep gas hangovers to get back to HQ for the next segment of the briefing.

But won't cumulative sleep gassings reduce PCs to a passive zombie torpor? Realistically, yes—but be a sport, let them keep playing. It's not like they've had a chance to *do* anything yet. Just tell the players to act really tired, and at various critical points tell each individual player to roll 1d20. Regardless of the result, have the character crash to the floor in a deep doze.

Investigation

The Troubleshooters notice a peculiar activity on their way to and from HQ. A detail of INFRAREDs is daubing the corridor walls with some kind of clear fluid—cleaning fluid, perhaps?

Questioning the INFRAREDs isn't particularly helpful. They're about as well-informed and cooperative as the talking trees in *The Wizard of Oz*. They were assigned to put spots of this fluid in patterns along the corridor walls. The

assignment came from some high-clearance guy in Technical Services—i.e., the next target of the investigation.

Should the chimes sound and the lights dim during the questioning, the PCs notice something else as they're herded back to quarters; the spots of fluid are now glowing faintly in the dimness. The patterns of dots vaguely suggest familiar shapes like food dispensers, vidscreens and scrubots.

The explanation

The Sierra Club wanted to have an eclipse.

It would be great! To bring the most spectacular of natural wonders to an entire sector—it would more than make up for the unfortunate failure to produce a real live volcano. (See previous reference to the Foaming Cleanser Incident.) Clubbers in Tech Services put squads of INFRAREDs on 'cleaning duty'—putting spots of glow-in-the-dark chemicals in patterns. These would recreate the glorious 'stars' and 'constellations' the club members were always hearing about. High-clearance Clubbers in Power Services arranged for the day-night cycle to be reprogrammed.

It was supposed to be a one-shot deal—but hasty sabotage, combined with bad communications and gargantuan ineptitude, made the programming permanent. Permanent, that is, until the Troubleshooters move in to fix things.

The trail of clues can be short or winding, clear or obscure, deadly or—well, deadly. Tech Services traitors are expecting investigation, so they have a deathtrap or two prepared. Think about the garbage masher in *Star Wars*.

Clubbers in Power Services also expect trouble from Troubleshooters. These guys are high-clearance, so they'll just *order* the Troubleshooters into deathtraps. And they don't have to rely on hackneyed old electrocution devices, either. Think about two-ton cable drums rolling all over your mission, or big vats of battery acid. Brrr.

Actually, you've already established that anyone can fall asleep at any time, due to gas effects. Even a mess hall or a confession booth can become a deathtrap.

Frustration and anguish

Meanwhile, the lights are turning on and off every ten or 20 minutes. To dramatize this, get an ordinary kitchen timer and position it so no one, including yourself, can see it—but everyone can hear it ticking away. Set the interval of day and night cycle as you wish. Then, when the timer goes 'ding', stop whatever the players are doing and hustle everyone off to bed. Bring them back to consciousness in their bunks and reset the timer for another daycycle. Real-time frustration!

To complicate your plot, throw in an attempt by another secret society to exploit the darkness. The Illuminati have (of course) infiltrated the Sierra Club. When the plot became known, they ordered their agents to Do Something about the mess.

PURGE? Death Leopards? Frankenstein Destroyers? Some hitherto unknown organization, dedicated to dismantling all bots and reassembling them into one ultimate bot?

Or just toss false leads around to distract and bewilder the players. To draw attention away from themselves, the Sierra Clubbers are scrawling crude secret society symbols with obscure messages on the corridor walls, bots, slumbering Troubleshooters and so on. They stick the incriminating empty cans in the hands of the still-slumbering servants of The Computer. What a lovely surprise!

The wind up

After seven or eight clones are out of the way, bring your story line to a fitting climax. Stitching this onto the main narrative is easy. Just have your Troubleshooters chase the Sierra Club/other-secret-society culprits into the scene of your big showdown.

The food vats are always a good arena. An abandoned warehouse; a bowling ball factory; a Happy Homecoming Automated Euthanasia Center; Power Services' Primary Generating Facility—your choice determines the degree of catastrophe you will visit on the complex.

We don't know—call us crazy—but we personally would have this mission end with the complete wiping of The Computer's entire memory bank. Really. The whole schmeer, right down to the last hard drive and memory card. Total system crash. Just rambunctious guys, we guess. Here's how to orchestrate this little wingding.

The chase after the baddies leads to the huge Central Processing Core in the deepest

reaches of Alpha Complex. Forbidding security measures—pure white walls—combots and Vultures stacked like cordwood. (How do the Troubleshooters get past these formidable obstacles? Maybe the day-night cycle length is down to a couple of seconds at this point, and the guard shifts are so bungled up trying to change every time the lights dim, arguing and complaining, that they don't notice the PCs.)

Then everyone runs into this incredibly colossally hugely gigantic cylindrical chamber where memory cores tower like sequoias, like Saturn rockets. The ceiling is lost in clouds of coolant that hiss from every relief valve. Dozens of High Programmers walk along catwalks looking at readouts. The walls are jammed with gauges, dials and rigamarole. Maintenance bots—shiny, functional, high-quality bots—scurry about in close order drill. It's James Bond time, get it?

The voice of The Computer is heard everywhere, spouting technical directions incomprehensible to mere Troubleshooters. 'Reduce coolant ratio Twelve Core, mark oh two niner', 'new readout one four mark eight seven seven', 'Faulty access head Sector Five, subsector three six six. Rescue data and replace.' Et cetera.

Establish the voice, because when you blow up these memory cores you have a terrific opportunity to swipe from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Remember Keir Dullea floating in that red room while HAL 9000 says, 'I can see you're really upset about this, Dave'? And punching those cartridges out of the wall while Hal regressed to computerized infancy?

Well, when stray shots hit those memory cores, The Computer's voice slurs a bit. 'Warrrninnng, warrrninnng!' Another stray shot, and now the jets of coolant hiss more loudly, while Programmers run around in panic and The Computer stutters, missing a word now and then. 'Danger! dannnn… hmmmmmmmm-inate intruders immmmmm, mmmmm—ommmm....'

A Vulture lets loose with a cone rifle—misses—hits the base of a core—it totters, and now The Computer is reciting flybot fuel costs and reservoir maintenance specifications, a different spiel from each speaker. The white-robed Programmers run around like headless chickens.

More shots. More hits. A tower topples against another, and now The Computer says things like 'Pawn to king four' and 'From the magic cavern you can go north or west.' It's a nice touch to mention to your players the effects of each hit on a core—'Whoops, there went the automatic scoring in the bowling alleys in RPM Sector' or 'That hit means the algae cakes at dinner will probably be purple.' As the devastation escalates, say things like, 'Oh, well, no more life support in that sector', and 'All those autocars with no guidance signals—oh, my…'

From this point it's a mere exercise to regress The Computer to 'Mary Had A Little Lamb' and down to its component transistors. All the lights go off. It suddenly feels cold (or hot, as you wish) and stuffy. Surviving Programmers shriek hysterically. Surviving Troubleshooters (if any) should realize that their friend The Computer has died, shuffled off this mortal coil, gone to Relay Heaven, failed its saving roll and left its progeny in deep trouble.

Sit back and let them do whatever they want, now that their whole reason for existence is gone. Maybe they'll make friends. Some of them cheer—'Hurrah, we're free at last!'—while others say, 'Hey, we're going to suffocate down here, aren't we?'

Let this interval last as long as your players are having fun. The longer it goes on, the freer they'll feel. Make them think you might have decided to turn this into a post-holocaust RPG where they're charged with rebuilding civilization.

Then—wherever they are in the Complex—a little red light goes on in an obscure panel, or they hear a voice—a very familiar voice. 'Activate backup systems.'

That's right, The Computer is coming back online! You can do a slow fadeout here, but this is an interesting situation. You could turn it into a whole new mission. In fact, check out 'Reboot Camp', the next Code 7 mission. Slick, huh?

Reboot Camp

by Allen Varney

We won't ask how you managed to wipe The Computer's memory banks. Gamemasters must have their little secrets. All that counts is, you did it: You erased every maintenance program, every surveillance routine, each bit and byte and scintilla of artificial intelligence in The Computer's sprawling circuitry. It's vacant. Nada. History. *Exeunt omnes* with flourish.

When they confront this idea, your Troubleshooters—the source of their trouble now finally, persuasively shot—may be stunned, exhilarated, frightened or uncertain. The Computer—gone. Alpha Complex—free to pursue its own destiny. Treason, security clearances, secret societies, paranoia—obsolete. The dawning of a new age.

Probably your cannier players don't believe for a minute The Computer is really gone. They're sure you wouldn't buy this superlative supplement and then go and destroy your campaign.

They're right, of course. But kill their characters if they start to get smug about it.

Online

In fact, The Computer has a complete duplicate operating system deep in the earth beneath Alpha Complex. Destruction of its primary memory merely activates the extensive triple-redundant backup system. Operation continues with minimal interruption. The changeover is supposed to be foolproof.

So was the invasion of the Bay of Pigs. In dealing with The Computer's restoration as the central power of Alpha Complex, you have several options. Here are a few of the more obvious approaches:

1. **The reboot is uneventful.** Of course, you'll want to have a little fun at your players' expense before turning the lights back on: 'Gosh, you're used to power outages, but you've never seen it ***this*** dark. *CRASH.* Gee, listen to all the people shouting and running into things! CoreMem only knows what awful, treasonous activities are going on under cover of darkness. Hadn't you better get hustling and suppress all that illicit activity? Oh, by the way, did I mention how stuffy it's getting in here?'

   Once you've whipped your players into a frenzy of futile activity, turn the lights back on and let things get back to (heh, heh) normal. Everything is as before.

   (Simple, huh? Too simple, of course. Use this option as a punchline wrap-up for a wipe-The-Computer-memory mission. If you want something a little more rococo, read on.)
2. **Citizens are frustrated at being denied the freedom they enjoyed so briefly.** They rebel and confront The Computer's forces while it's still vulnerable. Pockets of resistance gather around the secret societies. Service groups vie with one another for control of key installations. Shifting relations among the various power blocs keep the boundaries uncertain,

the alliances unpredictable. The players choose sides and fight.

This sounds pretty interesting, actually, but of course you're not playing ***PARANOIA*** anymore. Maybe *d20 Modern* rules will prove useful. Too bad you wasted all your money on this ***PARANOIA*** supplement.

3. **The Computer comes back to power, but it's got, like, a *TOtally* different personality.** It's as fast and shallow as a valley girl, or soulfully compassionate like Dr. Joyce Brothers, or overprotective like your grandma. Maybe it talks solely of semiotic interpretations of Old Reckoning literature, or it likes electric trains. ('Troubleshooters! Fetch me an HO Scale Southern Pacific flatcar, pronto! Thanks for your cooperation, okay? Toot-toot!') This can be tolerably humorous, but, again, ***PARANOIA*** it's not.
4. Boy are you gonna like this. The Computer comes back up, paranoid as usual, and it doesn't remember *a-ny-thing*. Zilch. 'You! Identify yourself! Friend or traitor? I'm going to give you a test, and don't think for a second that I don't have the answers. Now: Who am I? Where am I? What am I supposed to be doing here? What are *you* doing here? Have we met before?'

   The Computer is *tabula rasa* on everything. If a player weaves a plausible tale ('I'm an ambassador from Beta Complex, your trusted ally in the fight against Commies. I have diplomatic immunity'), The Computer might buy it. The Con Games skill helps here big-time.

   Note some important points. Calm amid disaster and widespread human misery, The Computer completely abandons its customary politeness when it feels itself even slightly out of control. Also, it's extraordinarily suspicious, but at the same time willing to latch onto any absurd story as the truth—provided the story plays to The Computer's own assumptions. ('Why, friend Computer, I'm your most trusted VIOLET-Clearance IntSec agent. I'm only in this RED jumpsuit because I've been documenting treason among these Troubleshooters. And believe me, you've got a lot to worry about!') The Computer goes to outlandish lengths to justify such a believable lie, circumventing objections and rationalizing contradictions as long as possible—unless the speaker is finally discredited.

   Furthermore, once The Computer has found a damfool story to hang a situation on, everybody who's smart plays along with the story unless they have solid evidence to refute it. Even then, it's usually a bad idea to swim against the current. This includes all NPCs, who'll swear up to their ears and down to their toenails that this lowly RED technician is a VIOLET-level IntSec operative. Or that all Troubleshooters have been identified as traitors. Or INFRAREDS are really High Programmers. PCs who don't go with the consensus are early casualties… unless they introduce an even more compelling damfool story of their own.

   If you're the kind of ***PARANOIA*** GM we think you are, you've probably already figured out the players aren't the only ones in Alpha Complex out to kick The Computer while it's down. Consider that there are High Programmers who would give their eyeteeth and their eyes to reprogram The Computer in their own images.

   The players, of course, are not privy to the high-level machinations of the ULTRAVIOLETs. But the infighting is fierce. Each Programmer is trying to convince The Computer *his* programs are the programs of choice, *his* orders the orders to follow, *his* instructions the way to lead Alpha Complex to salvation.

   Perhaps one High Programmer is out to kill the others. (Heck, all High Programmers are out to kill the others.) Perhaps one is eager to throw open the doors of Alpha Complex to let the sun shine in. Perhaps one hopes to welcome the Commies with open arms. You can certainly devise other goals for other highly-placed, selfless (uh huh) citizens.

   Ideally, you'll end up with The Computer—which is, after all, everywhere—trying to pay attention to your lowly Troubleshooters, every other Troubleshooter in Alpha Complex and every High Programmer—all at once. Confusing? Disconcerting? Stressful?

   Poor Computer. Likely to go a little bozo, eh?

   The upshot of these conflicting, competing messages during The Computer's 'vulnerable' period is a whole series of flustered questions, contradictory statements, unusual orders and even (*gasp*) impossible missions, interspersed with inexplicable memory gaps and lapses of amnesia. (Hard to distinguish this state of affairs from normal Alpha Complex life. Has it occurred to you that perhaps *all* ***PARANOIA*** missions are set in an interregnum following a colossal system crash? Wonder what would happen if the *bona fide*, doctrinally pure, culturally coherent backup programs went online? Disneyland? The Gulag Archipelago? We leave this as an exercise for the apt pupil.)

   Maybe The Computer sends each individual Troubleshooter on a different insane scavenger hunt for the ideal Cuisinart or C-sharp tuning fork. Make sure this mission sends the suckers on the obligatory tour of the sidereal universe. Maybe you even let the poor wretches find what they're looking for. If and when they return, The Computer is back to its old paranoid self and fines them for possession of unauthorized tuning forks. The campaign resumes.
5. Ontogeny recapitulating phylogeny and all that, maybe The Computer goes through all these side-interests in rapid sequence before it comes back to what passes for stability. Everything at once, in rapid-fire sequence, with only token gestures to coherence and plausibility.

Now *that's* ***PARANOIA***!

Whitewash

by Greg Costikyan

Once upon a time there was a basically incompetent INFRARED worker in HPD&MC. He made a booboo. He filled the paint receptacles of a maintenance bot with white paint when his Job Control Form clearly specified black paint. Unfortunately, his supervisor did not catch the error until after the maintenance bot had left the hangar to perform its job. The INFRARED worker was terminated for incompetence, but the error was never recorded in Computer records.

The bot went off to do its job. Its job was to repaint a section of INFRARED corridor in DOJ Sector. Because its paint reservoirs contained white paint, it painted the walls white, not realizing the error.

As you may recall, each corridor and room in Alpha Complex is painted with a security clearance color. It is treason to enter an area of higher security clearance than your own. The formerly INFRARED corridor is now ULTRAVIOLET.

This is unfortunate, because the corridor connects the barracks section of DOJ Sector with the sector's work area. No one who lives in DOJ Sector can get to work.

Several people have reported this problem to The Computer. However, The Computer's records clearly show the corridor has always been black and, indeed, has recently been

repainted black by a maintenance bot. Clearly, anyone who says otherwise is a traitor.

Indeed, so many people have reported the corridor to be white, when utterly reliable Computer records indicate otherwise, that a Communist conspiracy of truly monstrous size must exist. Anyone who reports the corridor as white must be terminated. Anyone who presents irrefutable evidence the corridor is white has manufactured the evidence and must be terminated.

Furthermore, for unexplained reasons, DOJ Sector shows a 100% work absentee rate. The usual solution—random terminations among the INFRARED laborers—has failed to rectify the situation.

The Computer has assigned one of its most trusted servants, Cosmo-V-DOJ, to root out these traitors and solve the problem. Cosmo-V-DOJ has figured out explaining the problem to The Computer is a quick way to the nearest termination center. What's needed is to repaint the damn corridor black and have done with it.

Unfortunately, in Alpha Complex you can't just drop down to the corner hardware store for a can of black paint. Black paint is highly dangerous stuff. Why, someone could paint, say, an ULTRAVIOLET corridor black, thereby giving all sorts of low clearance schmucks access to The Computer's most precious secrets.

Cosmo-V has a plan he thinks is pretty smart. Obviously, he can't just activate a group of Troubleshooters for a mission to paint the corridor black, because The Computer would learn of this and terminate him. Instead, he'll activate a bunch of Troubleshooters for 'a mission to the Outdoors', privately tell them to paint the corridor black and dump them in DOJ Sector.

Mission briefing

Read this aloud:

••••• MISSION ALERT •••••

GREETINGS, CITIZEN. THIS IS THE COMPUTER. YOU ARE ORDERED TO BRIEFING ROOM AB IN SECTOR DOJ. THERE YOU WILL BE BRIEFED FOR YOUR NEXT MISSION. THIS MISSION WILL NOT BE DANGEROUS. AT ALL. YOU WILL ENJOY IT. HAPPINESS IS MANDATORY. THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION.

When the PCs reach the briefing room **(Tension 0**), they enter a veritable vault, with a door consisting of two feet of solid steel. Cosmo-V-DOJ is sitting at a desk in the room. After they enter, he touches a control and the door shuts.

When they're seated, he tersely informs them a bot has mistakenly painted white a corridor in DOJ, INFRAREDs are stranded, and the Troubleshooters' job is to rectify the situation. They can ask questions, but he's notably unhelpful. Resourceful Troubleshooters such as themselves, he says, ought to be able to solve such a trivial problem.

The Computer is not monitoring this room at the moment because of some clever (and treasonous) programming by Cosmo-V.

During the briefing, the PCs hear shouts and pounding from outside the door. If asked about it, Cosmo-V says, 'I'll tell you later.' Actually, this is Earl-B, who knows he is supposed to give a briefing and has arrived to find the door locked.

When he's finished, Cosmo-V touches a control on his desk. Instantly, a steel slab drops from the ceiling in front of his desk, shortening the room by about two feet. The characters are now looking at a blank wall. Then the door opens, and Earl-B-DOJ enters to give his briefing.

Cosmo-V's treasonous anti-surveillance program ends; the Tension level in the briefing room returns to its normal level, **Tension 15**.

Earl-B has no idea his boss, Cosmo-V, just briefed the PCs. He just knows he's supposed to brief them about their mission to The Outdoors. If asked why his briefing is totally different from the one the characters just received, he wants to know what the questioner is talking about. If the PC sticks to his story about an earlier briefing, Earl-B has him terminated as a traitor.

If told about Cosmo-V, Earl-B tells the characters Cosmo-V is on a special mission to RGB Sector. If pressed, he requests Cosmo-V's current position from a Computer terminal, and is told Cosmo-V is indeed in RGB Sector. (More treasonous programming by Cosmo-V.) Anyone who says Cosmo-V was here a few minutes ago is clearly misinformed, mentally ill or worse.

Earl-B tells the characters:

'...you will be taken to a portal to the Outdoors. Using a device you will be assigned at R&D, you will locate a crashed Vulture Model 616. In the cargo bay of the 616, you will find three two-meter long, ten-centimeter diameter INDIGO cylinders. Under no circumstance are you to open or damage these cylinders. You are to return the cylinders to Alpha Complex.

'Now, the Outdoors is in many respects quite bizarre, very different from our own beloved Alpha Complex. Outdoors, the floor is white and the ceiling is blue, but you shouldn't worry about security clearances. That's just the way things are.'

If the players ask questions, Earl-B is voluble and helpful. Fabricate whatever details you need to make your players buy this story. Cosmo-V has given Earl-B a completely detailed and plausible cover story.

Of course, Earl-B can only tell what he knows—that is, what Cosmo-V has told him. If you run out of ideas, have Earl-B start demanding security clearances. (He'd rather do that than admit ignorance.)

If anyone contacts The Computer about the mission, it confirms that the characters are to go Outdoors. If anyone mentions a white corridor, he is terminated.

R&D

At R&D (**Tension 14**), the players meet only one person: Raven-B-DOJ. The labs are empty—'We've been having some problems with Transport'—except for her.

No fancy gimmicks, this time. When the PCs ask Raven-B about the device for locating the crashed Vulture Model 616, she issues them the following:

Standard-issue Brunton compass
6-man tent
Canteens
Mess kits
Propane stove
Heavy winter clothing
Snowshoes
Snowgoggles
Manual entitled *Treating Frostbite*
Propane lighters
Electric socks (these malfunction, giving their wearer an electric shock, whenever you need something to enliven the festivities)
Chapstick

In addition, give the players virtually any weapon they desire. They'll be useless anyway.

When questioned about the special device they were supposed to pick up, Raven-B says, 'It must be in that stuff somewhere.'

If anyone is stupid enough to ask for paint, Raven-B responds, 'Paint? What in The Computer's name do you want paint for?' If someone insists, have him terminated.

The corridor

The moment the players are finished at R&D, a group of GREEN-Clearance IntSec goons in battle armor shows up, surrounds them and force-marches them—'Hup! Hup! Hup! Get moving there!'—to Corridor CX, DOJ Sector. The leader of the troopers announces, 'Here you are! So long and good luck!' and then the whole bunch of them turn and start force-marching back: 'Hup! Hup! Hup!' If any of the players tries to ask questions or stop them, there are three possible answers:

'Sorry, buddy! Got a schedule to keep! Hup! Hup!'

'Beats the crap outa me, buddy! All I know is, you're going to Corridor CX, DOJ Sector! Hup! Hup!'

'A wise guy, huh?' (In this case, the PC gets a truncheon in the liver.) 'Keep moving! Hup! Hup!'

The corridor is three meters across, 2.5m high and 25m feet long. It is totally featureless. It is also white. It is also empty. (Are you *kidding*? It's Security Clearance ULTRAVIOLET!) The PCs are standing in a T intersection with an INFRARED corridor. There is occasional traffic on the INFRARED corridor, usually scrubots. The characters are beginning to sweat in their heavy winter clothing. So what do they do?

- **Report to The Computer that an INFRARED corridor has been improperly painted white:** The Computer asks the person making the report to identify himself. It then asks those nearby (the other PCs) to confirm the identification. Then, the characters hear a voice reverberating from every speaker in the Complex: '*[Name]* is a traitor! Terminate on sight!'

- **Report Cosmo-V-DOJ as a traitor who told the party to repaint Corridor CX black:** Cosmo-V is a trusted servant of The Computer. Troubleshooters are not sent on missions to paint corridors; maintenance bots paint corridors. Also, The Computer knows there is a Communist conspiracy to make it believe that Corridor CX is white. The person making this report is a traitor who deserves immediate execution. If the other PCs won't terminate him, another bunch of GREEN troopers shows up who will.

- **Request black paint:** 'What is your security clearance, please? —I'm sorry, the substance you requested is not available at this time.' If the requester insists, he receives a lecture on why black paint is classified—'A traitor might use it to paint an ULTRAVIOLET corridor black, thereby permitting access to The Computer's most precious secrets.'

- **Insist to The Computer something has gone wrong, and the team has not been taken Outdoors as the mission briefing indicated:** The Computer demands to know why the reporter is not at Outside Access Door 74-Q-stroke-17. If the reporter is not fast on his feet, he's terminated for not reporting to the Access Door as ordered. Otherwise, the GREEN goons are terminated for taking the PCs to the wrong place. In this case, a new lot of GREEN goons shows up ('Hup! Hup!'), takes the characters on a mile-long jog around DOJ Sector and brings them back to Corridor CX, leaving them panting, sweaty and extremely hot in their winter clothing.

  Anyone who tries to report the problem again is branded a traitor over the Complex PA system. The Computer's records show the characters have been taken to Outside Access Door 74-Q-stroke-17 not once, but twice. Anyone who claims differently is obviously a traitor. (More clever programming by Cosmo-V makes the orders to the GREEN goons change in transmission from The Computer to Internal Security headquarters.)

- **Kill one of the PCs (or a random passerby), claim he was a traitor who painted the corridor white and request a maintenance bot to repaint it.** Good paranoid thinking, but it won't wash. A Communist conspiracy of truly monstrous proportions, remember? The reporter is a traitor not only because he reports the corridor is white, but also because he murdered a loyal citizen as part of his plan to deceive The Computer.

So, is there a solution? Yes. It's quite simple, actually. Dirty up the corridor. Say, start a fire with the heavy winter clothing and the propane lighters—or lob a few grenades down the corridor. Then, report to The Computer that Corridor CX has become dirty and requires repainting. In order to test the loyalty of the person making the request, and because it knows about the Communist conspiracy and Corridor CX, The Computer asks the person making the report 'What color is Corridor CX, citizen?' The correct response is 'Black, friend Computer!' The Computer dispatches a maintenance bot—with black paint—at once.

Debriefing

A bunch of GREEN goons show up to take the characters back to Briefing Room AB. Cosmo-V awaits them. They enter, the door swings shut. Cosmo-V congratulates them and announces that each PC is promoted a security clearance level. He gives each PC a set of new coveralls of the characters' new clearance—lightweight, summer coveralls, comfortable in Alpha Complex's controlled climate. Let the players bask in your praise for a moment.

Then Cosmo-V-DOJ punches a control on his desk; the steel wall slams down. The door opens and Earl-B enters. He solemnly indicts the PCs with a variety of crimes, among them failure to retrieve the two-meter long and ten-centimeter diameter INDIGO cylinders, and the wearing of coveralls not appropriate to their security clearances. Immediate termination is in order.

(*Alternative ending for nice GMs:* When Cosmo-V punches the control, the door opens and in walks Earl-B. Cosmo-V indicts Earl-B for failure to acquire the INDIGO cylinders, then has the PCs terminate him for treasonously poor leadership. Don't forget to reward them for executing a BLUE-Clearance traitor.)

PARANOIA PrePARANOIA

Every new Troubleshooter's fun and educational orientation

JEFF GROVES
Mission design

BETH FISCHI
ALLEN VARNEY
Layout and editing

JIM HOLLOWAY
Illustrations

THE COMPUTER
Pedagogical guidance and grading algorithms

Introduction	244
1. To know you is to loathe you	245
2. Final exam	246

Charts, tables and resources

Firefight styles	247
Exam forms	248
NPC roster	252
Bonus dialogue for Willy	252

[Originally published in Mongoose Publishing's Signs & Portents *magazine as 'Killer Times at TSU']*

So you want to play ***PARANOIA***, but you've got jittery players? 'GM, we don't know how to play! You're going to slaughter us!' How do you deal with such perceptive players?

For starters, stop yourself from cackling when reading the mission notes. But more to the point, the players need an introduction, a pre-mission orientation to teach them about Troubleshooting alongside their PCs—an episode that takes the time to explain things and eases up on the casualty rate. (They'll still think it's astounding. Just wait until they go on actual missions!)

'Pre***PARANOIA***' follows novice characters (and players) as they complete the final steps to becoming full-fledged Troubleshooters. Along the way, they'll learn about life in Alpha Complex, the (extreme) care and feeding of equipment, the importance of intentional miscommunication and the joy of watching your miserable petty little teammates die in writhing agony.

Pre–mission summary

Our soon-to-be Troubleshooters have almost completed their training. On their last day, they must meet their future teammates, take their final exam and go through a mock mission, all while tolerating the perkiest little bot you've ever seen and hordes of trigger-happy classmates.

Pre-pre-mission preparation

PARANOIA has always relied on cheap gimmicks to immerse players in its unique brand of terror, from sticking a vacuum cleaner in their faces to making them perform real-life mandatory morning exercises. Although such ingenious ideas are beyond the scope of this pre-mission, we rely on a classic standby: form-filling. Yes, ***PARANOIA*** lets players indulge their secret yen for bureaucracy! They'll love it; it's just like filling out an insurance policy, only deadlier![*]

To pull off all of the gimmicks outlined in this mission, you'll need the following:

- Red pens for all players
- Copies of Exam Form HW7.06/FIGT for all players
- Black pens for you and all players
- A few copies of Communist Membership Exam Form RU827.CMT
- A bag of lollipops
- A camera to record embarrassing lollipop usage (OPTIONAL)
- Latex gloves (OPTIONAL)

This mission provides both forms for you to photocopy. Feel free to exercise that deep well of casually sadistic bureaucracy you *know* you've got somewhere deep down—perhaps not-so-deep-down—and create more forms. We recommend the R&D Experimental Equipment Testing Report Form, which you can find in the perfect ***PARANOIA*** XP *Gamemaster Screen* insert booklet.

If your mission uses pregenerated characters, you will need to make a few changes to the characters' equipment list. Temporarily cross out any unconcealed weapons and armor they have. If your characters' backgrounds say they have been Troubleshooting together for a while, revise their history (per standard Alpha Complex practice) to correct that. Whatever you decide, remember the GM is always right. Do not let your players bully you with whining about inconsistency or contradictions.

Secret meetings

After your players receive their character sheets but before the game begins, pull each individual aside (preferably in a separate room) for his secret society contact meeting. The character won't have any special assignments (this is an introductory mission), but anything that promotes rivalries and bitterness is always useful. Because a typical training routine isn't a good source of gossip, give them plenty of rumors about their teammates. Properly done, this ensures a fitting start.

In all likelihood the characters have just reached Security Clearance RED due to the machinations of their various societies. Make sure each society contact stresses this to the PC. Emphasize the debt the PC owes his society, and the opportunity for further advancement if he serves their goals. Then get on with the show.

[*] ***WARNING:*** *We Famous Game Designers are not responsible for any physical harm resulting from running such gimmicks during stressful periods, such as tax season.*

1: To know you is to loathe you

You woke this morning to a beefy IntSec guard looming over your bunk. You managed to keep from wetting yourself.

'Come on, ya shmuck! Get up and get dressed. It's your final day.' After seeing your involuntary look of terror, he added, 'Of your training! Geez, paranoid lunatics, the lot of ya.'

An hour later, here you are, walking down a narrow RED-Clearance corridor, surrounded by complete strangers in Troubleshooter jumpsuits and flanked by IntSec guards. The only sound is the echo of their steps as they escort you.

Pause here and look at the players expectantly. If a PC naïvely tries to strike up a conversation, the IntSec guards shout him down until he's silenced. Attempts to do something—*anything*—elicit a sneer and a menacing grab for a truncheon. Continue beating the players into silenced submission until they are utterly confused about what they should be doing. Then, and only then, continue the narration.

Congratulations: You have just set the tone for the rest of the mission.

Death by lawn mower

Enterprising GMs can use props to make their players' first erasure memorable. A number of methods are available, depending on your income.

At the high end, we have the shredder. Send the erased character's sheet through and let the others play with the confetti. If you can afford that, though, why not go for a little pizzazz? Pull out your lawn mower and run over it a couple times. Tell the player his character gets an extra six clones if he can reassemble his character sheet. This works best if all you have available is duct tape and Elmer's Glue.

At the low end, we have lighters and straws. The lighter is self-explanatory, but only use it if you have fire insurance or are playing at someone else's house. If you have a straw, give it to the terminated player and order him to turn his character sheet into a supply of spitwads, which he can then use to torment his enemies from beyond the grave. If you are flat broke from buying all our wonderful ***PARANOIA*** books, you can always crumple up the character sheet and eat it. Or force the player to eat it, if you have been going easy on him. We've heard character sheets taste good with mustard on rye.

Finally, you come to a RED door at the end of the hallway. The guards herd you through at gunpoint and slam the door shut. A lock clicks behind you.

Some of your players might take offense at such railroading. If so, back up and let their PCs make a break for freedom or just whine about their treatment. The IntSec guards promptly beat them into submission and throw them into the room. (Feisty characters may need to be shot. Their clones are bound, gagged and thrown into the room.) Explain to the players that although *you* are always willing to give them a choice, irate state guards aren't so thoughtful. Any players who help drag their screaming companions into the room get Perversity points, especially if they comment cheerfully on how fun this will be.

The room they're in is **Tension level 4.**

You're in an empty RED room with another RED door in front of you. The only decoration is a banner above the door with a smiley face and the word 'SMILE' written in sharp black letters. The smiley's eyes seem to follow you as you move.

'Greetings, Troubleshooter trainees!' the wall speakers blare. 'Welcome to your last day of training. Aren't you excited to almost be ready to offer your lives in rewarding service to The Computer?'

Let the PCs respond enthusiastically.

'I'm sure you want to get straight to your equipment and the mock mission we have planned, but first you must introduce yourselves to your teammates. Your fellow Troubleshooter trainees will be your teammates in the missions to come. Your life will be in their capable hands. You must get to know them well. Failure to know your teammates well will allow the Commies to replace them with impostors on important missions! You don't want that, do you?'

Of course they don't!

'After the Mandatory Greeting Period is finished, a helpful tour guide will lead you through the final steps of your training. Until then, start talking. Don't be afraid to reveal your innermost thoughts! These conversations may be recorded for loyalty assurance.'

The speakers go dead.

Let the PCs chat. Wait until they get bored enough to spout something suspicious. Don't continue narrating until they start eyeing each other, asking loaded questions and scheming ways to frame each other. This usually takes about five minutes. (Gamers are not known for their patience.) If you're willing to wait, let the conversation simmer until they try to kill each other with floss and cans of Bouncy Bubbly Beverage.

The Computer only interrupts their conversations if they request intervention. It saves questions about their discussion material for the debriefing. No matter what they are discussing, take out a notepad and write notes. Occasionally ask them, as the GM, to repeat what they just said. Roll a few dice.

Player: What are you rolling for?
GM: Oh, nothing important. By the way, what's your Stealth rating?

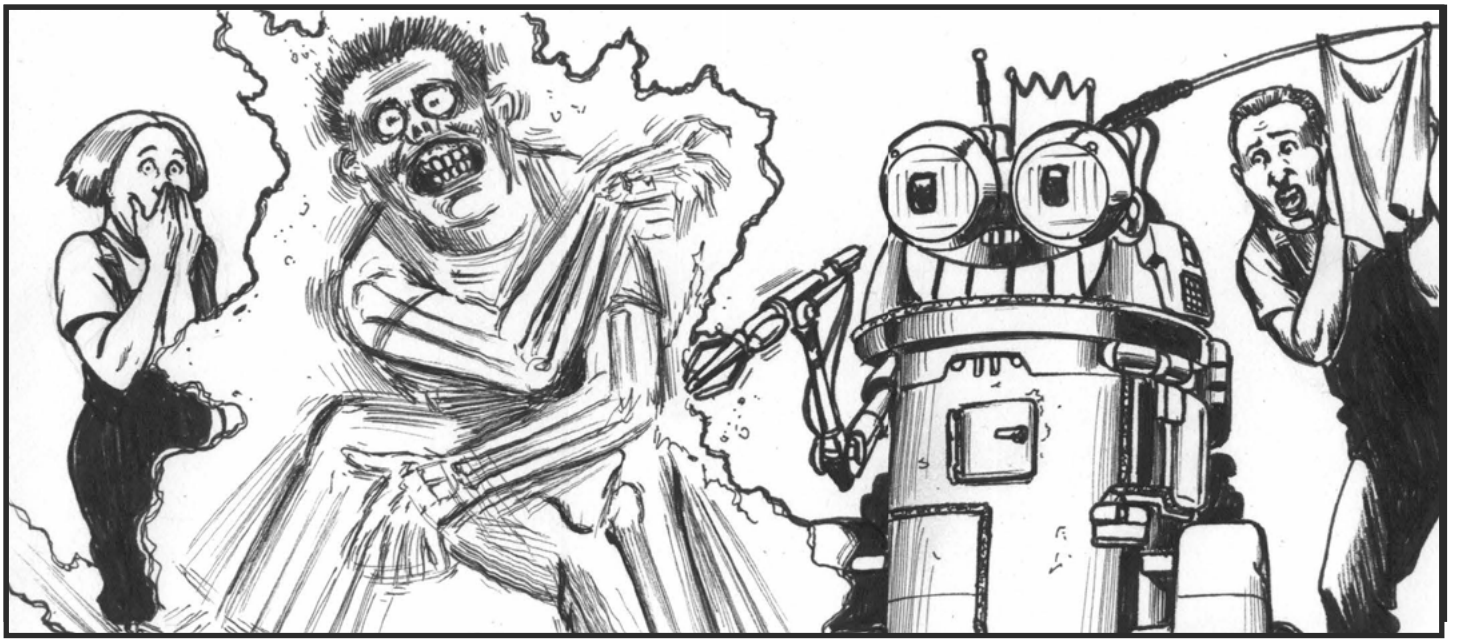
If they try to break out of the room, they discover both doors are locked. A Security Systems or Stealth check opens either door. This lets the PCs chat with the IntSec guards posted outside each door, who will have plenty of questions for them.

Once you've had enough entertainment, or all but one of the PCs are dead, move on to Episode 2.

Let the players entertain *you*

The Mandatory Greeting Period illustrates one of the joys of ***PARANOIA***: You can stick a team in an empty room and still be entertained. Typical Troubleshooter teams seethe with rumors, suspicions, assassination attempts, blackmail, smuggled contraband and sheer tension. No external conflict is necessary; these guys have enough internal conflict to occupy entire campaigns. Everything else is icing on the cake.

Smart GMs take advantage of this by constructing situations players can use in their internal conflicts; give them enough rope to hang each other with.



Why aren't you happy, Troubleshooter!?

2: Final exam

'The Mandatory Greeting Period time has expired! How was your conversation with your teammates?'

Let the PCs respond, either to explain how good it was or to ask for replacement clones.

'Good. Now, please step outside the Greeting Room. There you will meet your personal tourbot for the day. Be sure to listen to it, and don't get lost! Good luck, citizens!'

The opposite door swings open. Two IntSec guards peer in. 'Hurry up and get out before the next team arrives.'

If things got messy, the other door opens as well, letting in a swarm of scrubots. Anyone who doesn't evacuate fast gets cleaned up with the corpses. Once the PCs have exited, they get their first glimpse of the tourbot.

Out in the corridor, you come face-to-face with what looks like a garbage can on wheels. Barely reaching up to your chest, its round dome head is covered by two giant eyes and the biggest painted grin you've ever seen. A long, flexible rod topped with a small Alpha Complex flag sticks out of the top of its head. You notice a small hatch in its chest.

'Greetings, greetings, greetings, you *lucky* trainees! I am your tourbot for today, ID Code RH678 dot G dash 4, but *you* can call me Willy! Are we ready to have some fun-fun-fun?'

The proper reaction to meeting Willy is an urge to drop it down an elevator shaft.

Because the PCs must follow this tour guide for the entire mission, the natural outcome of Murphy's Law* is, it's as irritating as possible. Milk it for all it's worth. Repeat words three-*three-THREE!* times for emphasis. Point out *every* light post and door and Complex Appreciation Plaque, and drone on about what *[stupid insignificant thing]* happened there. Don't let up on the overjoyed routine. Listen to the players grind their teeth.

As a specialized tourbot, Willy has no limbs except the extensible arm in its hatch. This grip has two uses: using the shock prod on troublesome trainees and, to good trainees, offering lollibooms.

Lollibooms are a new food snack identical to Old Reckoning lollipops. An HPD&MC Marketing Panel changed the name to 'lolliboom' after deciding the word 'pop' sounded weak. Lollibooms are not actually explosive, although you should not tell your players that. 'Have you bitten into the chewy center yet?' 'Why?' 'Just asking.'

Whenever a PC earns a lolliboom, give his player a lollipop. If he doesn't stick it in his mouth immediately, ask him why he's not enjoying The Computer's generous offer. Is he afraid it's poisoned? Would he like to tell his irrational fears to a friendly IntSec agent? If a PC gets multiple lollibooms, bug him until he sticks all of them in his mouth. Not only does this make it easy to

Killing is easy. Tolerance is aggravating.

PARANOIA offers plenty of opportunities to frustrate players with problems they can't kill, from annoying companions like Willy the Tourbot to a gargantuan, labyrinthine bureaucratic process. Most ***PARANOIA*** conflicts require more creative solutions than a laser.

So how can the PCs deal with Willy? They could tolerate it, but what sort of a wuss puts up with that? They could laser it, but destruction of Computer property is treason.

A better idea is to get Willy involved in a little 'accident', which would still disappoint The Computer but wouldn't involve so many fines. If the PCs are cunning, they can destroy Willy and pin the blame on an annoying teammate.

If the players do manage to kill the chirpy tourbot, send them another one that is just as annoying. And another. And another. And then another, this time with an IntSec bodyguard. And another that is actually a reprogrammed tankbot. And another that is an ULTRAVIOLET's favorite bot. 'I'm sure nothing will happen to it, else all of you will end up scrubbing reactor control rods for a living.' Repeat until the players resign themselves to their fate.

* *Murphy's Law: Anything that can go wrong, will. This is one of the prime guidelines in creating* **PARANOIA** *missions and should be studied thoroughly by every GM. Expert GMs know it so well they can improvise new and improved catastrophes as soon as a PC utters a catalyst phrase like 'Things couldn't possibly get any worse!' or 'This plan is foolproof! Nothing could go wrong.'*

Firefight styles

Straight style: At the first sign of trouble, everyone around them stops. Half the NPC trainees pull out their laser pistols and point them at the PCs. The others whip out their notebooks and start writing, pausing only to glance at the PCs' nametags. One of them asks, 'I'm sure there isn't any trouble here, right?' Once the PCs ensure them there is not, they put away their guns and pads and continue on their way.

Classic: No one pays any attention to the PCs' dispute until a shot misses, hitting a passing trainee in the back. He gets mad and shoots back, only to hit another passerby, who turns to shoot and misses again, hitting another trainee…

The firefight escalates like an old-fashioned pie fight until the entire corridor is lit up by lasers. Smart PCs quit fighting and crawl out of the brawl unnoticed.

Zap: All the NPC trainees dogpile the group, shooting and punching. Ask the players whether they want to wait for you to make 100 attack rolls or just activate their next-of-clone now.

misinterpret his speech, but you can embarrass him for years with a well-timed snapshot (see 'Pre-pre-mission preparation' above).

The tourbot's shock prod sends a jolt of electricity through the troublemaker's body, causing him to collapse to the ground, twitching. It has the same effect as a stun gun.

Because Willy has no limbs, it can be incapacitated simply by tipping it over. If this happens, it screams for help, causing a racket that may attract trigger-happy helpers like the…

Savages in jumpsuits

The PCs aren't the only Troubleshooters here, as they realize while they follow Willy to their briefing room. Hundreds of Troubleshooter trainees fill the halls, walking to their next stop on their way to serving The Computer. Half of them are armed with laser pistols and reflec. The other half are itching to punch, bite and claw any traitors they encounter. Imagine *Top Gun*, but populated with homicidal maniacs. Any altercations the PCs get into as they travel from room to room will be solved quickly, brutally and messily. Or not—it depends on your chosen play style. See the box 'Firefight styles' nearby for advice.

The exam

Willy leads the PCs to a small briefing room resembling an elementary school classroom **(Tension 5)**. The only seats available are Junior Citizen-sized desks that make maneuvering tough in a firefight.

Karl-Y-GAN-5 lounges behind a large desk at the front of the room, idly chewing on a pen. (Be sure to gnaw on the black pen listed in the props while you play him—unless you're afraid of ink poisoning.) A small stack of forms sits on the desk.

As soon as the PCs sit down, Karl-Y-GAN begins to speak. He's clearly bored stiff by endlessly repeating the same briefing, and has given up trying to sound enthusiastic. His speech should sap all motivation from the PCs.

'Greetings, Troubleshooter trainees, and welcome to your final exam and first mission briefing. We all hope you have enjoyed your training as you prepare to become a full-fledged Troubleshooter. Troubleshooting is an exciting and fun job and a valuable service to Friend Computer and all of Alpha Complex.' *[Yawn.]* 'You should all be very proud of yourselves for having come this far.

'Before you advance to the last stage of your training, you must first pass a short exam on what you have learned during your time with us. I'm sure all of you, being loyal citizens, have studied extensively for it and will pass with flying colors. You have three minutes to answer all ten questions. Failure to complete the exam in the allotted time is treason. Failure to answer all questions truthfully is treason. Treason is punishable by fines and/or termination. Good luck.'

Hand each player either an Exam Form or a Communist Exam Form (opposite page), face down. They may turn the forms over and begin filling them out once you have distributed them to everyone. Divide your attention between them and the clock. Your stare should cause them to break out in a sweat.

We're sure the players are excited. It's their first time in an RPG where they get to fill out forms! Observe the tears of gratitude trickling down their cheeks. The players who received Communist Exam Forms should also be full of good cheer. Be sure to watch them carefully.

If a player actually reads and fills out the Communist Exam Form, make a Communist Propaganda roll for him. Treat anyone mentioning the form mixup like a plague carrier. Confiscate his Communist form (latex gloves are a plus), and order him to report to the nearest confession booth for interrogation and Communist infection tests. If he filled it out before reporting it, he is tainted and good as dead. If he didn't fill it out,

continued on page 249

Troubleshooter Trainee Aptitude Exam HW7.06/FIGT

Distributed by the Office of Information Collection and the Office of Forms and Vouchers, PLC

WARNING!

This form is classified RED Clearance! All citizens of INFRARED clearance examining this form must immediately report for short-term memory scrubbing at the nearest HPD&MC Memory Facility.

The Computer is your friend.

Answer all questions truthfully and to the best of your ability. You have a time limit of *[CLASSIFIED]* to complete this test. Failure to complete this test within *[CLASSIFIED]* is treason. Once done getting a perfect grade on the test, hand it in to the tester for immediate grading and filing. Cheating, bribery, forgery and assassination of fellow test-takers is treason. **Remember:** Pen ink is a rationed substance! Overuse of pen ink is treason.

Trainee name _____-___-_____-___

Service firm _____

Mutation _____

1. Your team's loyalty officer, equipment officer and happiness officer are all dangling above a giant chasm. You have enough time to save only one of them. Whom do you save and why?

   _____

   _____

2. Where is the best place to shoot a traitor and why?

   _____

3. What is your worst fear?

   _____

4. What was your worst act of treason?

   _____

5. Write a title for a vidshow about four Troubleshooters living in BIG Sector who in each episode meet and exterminate strange Commies in humorous ways:

   _____

6. What is your favorite flavor of BBB?

   _____

Draw a picture of a Commie mutant traitor.

7. Is your briefing officer a traitor? How can you tell?

   _____

   _____

8. Which of your teammates is least likely to be a traitor and why?

   _____

   _____

9. Which of your teammates is most likely to be a traitor and why?

   _____

   _____

Trrroubleshooter Trrrainee Membership Exam RU827.CMT

Distrrributed from Office of Information Collective and Office of Forrrms and Vouchers, PLC

Answer all questions truthfully. We know if you are lyink!

Trrrainee name _____-___-_____-___

Serwice firrrm _____

Mutation _____

Currrrent secrrret society _____

1. Are you happy with state of Alpha Complex?	Yes ☐	**No** ☐
2. Are you truly happy with state of Alpha Complex?	Yes ☐	**No** ☐
3. Are you sure?	**Yes** ☐	No ☐
4. Do you rrresent higher-clearance citizens?	**Yes** ☐	No ☐
5. Do you vish you vere equal to them?	**Yes** ☐	No ☐
6. Do you think Frrriend Computer might not be perfect?	**Yes** ☐	No ☐
7. Do you vant to overthrow capitalist Computer?	**Yes** ☐	No ☐
8. Are you oppressed and downtrodden?	**Yes** ☐	No ☐
9. Vould you like to be joinink like-minded comrades vorrrking to be buildink better Complex?	**Da!** ☐	No ☐

Drrrraw peecture of Capitalist pigdog scum.

Trrrainee Fingerprrrrints

Left Pinky

Rrright Pinky

Правда

If so, consider joinink of underground movement sveeping de complex! Throw off oppressive capitalist chain and join vith hardverking proletariat of Communist Rewolution! Vit your help, ve vill be owerthrowink corrupt bourgeois Computer and be transformink complex into true utopia, vhere Cold Borscht freely flows and all citizens vear werry comfy babushkas!

Правда

Workers of the world, unite! You have nothing to lose but your chains!
Turn in this application like nothing is unusual to join today!

continued from page 247

the interrogation ends just as the briefing finishes. Too bad they don't have make-up tests. The only graceful way out of this mess is to 'accidentally' ruin the Commie form and ask for a replacement. Give him a copy of the actual exam. No, he does not get any extra time for the delay.

When the three minutes are up or only one player is left working on the exam, announce that time is up and collect the exams. (What are they going to do if you didn't measure the time properly? Report you to The Computer?) Once you have all their exams, shuffle them. Hand one exam and a red pen to each player. Tell them to start grading. Why should you do the work when they can?

We're not doing this just to save you work. It also lets the PCs read each other's treasonous blather. Rather than being read by apathetic bureaucrats somewhere, their darkest secrets are revealed to a teammate with a chip on his shoulder. Smart PCs scribble down the good bits for later reference and blackmail.

These are a few of the actions during grading that deserve Perversity points:

- **3 Perversity:** Grader changes some answers on the exam he is grading.
- **3 Perversity:** Tester drew a portrait of another player in the Commie sketch.
- **6 Perversity:** Tester drew a portrait of the grader in the Commie sketch.
- **6 Perversity:** Grader receives a Commie Exam and grades it like nothing is unusual. He gets a Communist Propaganda roll, too. How lucky! Doesn't count if the grader is already a Commie.
- **6 Perversity:** Grader shows the exam to another player and whispers, 'Look what he wrote!'
- **9 Perversity:** Grader shows the exam to another player and whispers, 'Look what he wrote about you!'

Once they finish grading the exams, Karl-Y gathers them up without looking at them. So what do the exams influence? We don't know. You could toss them in the trash for all we care. Maybe you'll use them to determine who should be team leader during the actual mission. Maybe you'll use them to line your hamster's cage. We suggest you let them age until the PCs have forgotten them, then use them to make their lives miserable.

Mission briefing

Once Karl-Y finishes filing the exams, he tells the PCs about their mission. This monologue can be as short or as long as you want, depending on your patience and the players' ignorance. Whatever the length is, make it as boring as possible, and don't forget to continue chomping on the pen.

First, the PCs must go to the PLC Supply Center and pick up their laser pistols and reflec. Then they go to R&D and obtain some practice experimental equipment. Once they are outfitted, they will head to Training Room 101 and complete their assignment. Finally, they report back here for debriefing. Any questions?

Answer any questions they have about the procedure, even the stupid ones. Remember, you're dealing with trainees here. They don't know any better. If they ask how to get there, reassure them their tourbot knows. Once they are done, they should feel they know what to expect. It is your job to shatter that illusion, preferably now.

Saving ink

Before the PCs leave the briefing room, a heavily armed squad of IntSec troopers bursts in, leveling their guns at the stunned occupants. 'Nobody move!' they shout as they barge up to the front, lift Karl-Y-GAN up by his uniform and carry him kicking and screaming out of the room.

Now. You *could* just have the troopers exit, leaving behind a group of stunned Troubleshooters, but we're sure you'd rather have them come back to interrogate the Troubleshooters on everything they know about potential traitor Karl-Y-GAN.

Actually, the IntSec officers don't want to know everything. They just want to know about Karl-Y's pen-chewing habit. PLC has contracted these service-firm troopers to reduce the amount of product waste in the sector. After days of surveillance and eyewitness testimony, they're sure Karl-Y-GAN has mutilated enough pens to justify termination. They need more evidence, though. Their grilling goes something like this**:**

IntSec Trooper: Listen up and answer these questions, sleazebags. Number one: Does Karl-Y-GAN now, or did he ever, chew on the tip or the head of his pens?

PC: Uh, I wasn't paying attention, but I did notice some suspicious Communist forms slipped in the—

IntSec Trooper: Quit trying to change the subject! *[Pow! Crack!]*

PC: Agh! My arm! You broke my arm!

IntSec Trooper: Maybe you'll pay more attention now. Number two: Does Karl-Y-GAN now, or did he ever, try to eat any Alpha Complex pens?

Continue asking absurd pen questions until your players recover from the shock. Once you are satisfied, the IntSec troopers leave. Give the players time to contemplate their newfound hatred of IntSec before Willy herds them to PLC.

PLC

The characters head to PLC to obtain their official Troubleshooter laser pistol (charged, of course) and RED reflec. So is every other Troubleshooter trainee they see. The line to enter PLC stretches eight blocks. Be sure to note the order in which they queue.

Their wait to get into PLC is four hours. Assuming you don't want to actually make the players wait that long, your goal is to drive them nuts as fast as possible. Willy makes small talk the entire time. To really derange the players, throw in the 'Happy Teamwork' bonus lines from his dialogue loop (see footnote on the NPC roster). Comment on the outfitted Troubleshooters who point and laugh at the PCs as they walk by. Have IntSec troopers pull them out of the line to ask questions, then force them to go to the back of the line: 'No cutting.' Tell them the guy behind them is peeking at them from behind his datapad and scribbling something down. If you have a stereo system, buy an elevator-music CD and play it. (You can use it a lot while playing ***PARANOIA***. Trust us.)

So how can the PCs get their equipment without going postal?

- **IR market dealer:** 'Psst! Over here!' a seedy-looking citizen whispers, beckoning to them. He leads them down a dark staircase to a small room dimly lit by a single, flickering light bulb (**Tension 0**). He sits behind a battered desk, flanked by two thugs armed with flamethrowers. 'I can give you what you need, for the right price.' For 400 credits, he sells a laser pistol and RED reflec, barely used—'yeah, the scorch marks and blood wash right off. Sure!'

  Never-been-used RED laser barrels cost 50 credits apiece. The marketeer haggles over the price, especially with other Free Enterprise agents. Other than the cost, there is no catch. Instant satisfaction!

Treason *does* pay

Why do so many citizens turn to treason? Because it works. Following official procedure leads to frustration, stress and homicidal tendencies. Most citizens are uncomfortable with resorting to treason to get things done, but it beats the alternative.

Be sure to give the players plenty of bad decisions like this: Do they tolerate the excruciating faults of the system, or do they try the risky shortcut of treason? If they choose treason, which type of treason is the lesser of evils? Can they trust their teammates to keep mum about it? How do they explain their good luck to inquisitive citizens?

- **Undercover IntSec bust:** The situation plays out just like the IR market dealer, but once the PCs conclude their business, the 'dealer' gives the signal and his 'thugs' arrest the traitors. Troublemakers get flamed. Tack an MM offense (possessing unauthorized equipment) on their record, keep their money, retake their ill-gotten goods and send them to the back of the line. If only they had checked for cameras and bugs (High Alert or Security check) when they entered the room.
- **Lure 'n' loot:** The PCs may try to relieve less-deserving Troubleshooters of their pistols and reflec. Attacking them in public attracts too much attention (and firepower), so they should lure the other team away. The PCs might pretend to be IR market pawners and beckon the team into a dark alley—in which case, they still have to defeat a better-armed team. That might require teamwork. They may want to wait in the bathroom and jump any poor sap who enters; remember, bathrooms are **Tension 20**.
- **Steal:** Unlikely. A thief who can rip the reflec off a Troubleshooter without him noticing has better things to do. The PCs would have to pry the laser pistol from the RED's cold, dead fingers. Literally.
- **Gamble:** More likely to work than you would expect. Some citizens will do anything for a quick buck. It wouldn't hurt for the PCs to rig the game. Just make sure IntSec isn't watching.
- **Cut in line:** Only for those with obscene Chutzpah. If it comes down to fists, guards break up the brawl and send the PCs to the back of the line—if they're lucky.
- **Cause a commotion:** It takes a lot to terrify a Troubleshooter into running out of line. Extraordinary feats of sabotage, perhaps? Maybe the PCs can even take advantage of the turmoil before the NPC recruits do.
- **Sneak into PLC:** Find a back door, sneak in and bribe a worker to give you the pistols and reflec. Or just steal it yourself. Wearing a PLC uniform couldn't hurt either. To get one, jump a PLC worker on his way to the restroom.
- **Cash in favors:** A PC's secret society may give him the equipment if he grovels enough, cashes in IOUs and promises to be a good little agent in the future. If he asks for more than just one set, roll an Access check. He still has to explain where he got his equipment to his teammates.
- **Wait like good little citizens:** Ugh, the boring saps. Make them pay. Annoy them for good measure, and when it is finally their turn, have PLC run out of supplies. Only the first two PCs in line get their pistol and reflec; the others get zilch. 'Our next shipment will be in 16 hours. Please wait.' Start the muzak again and ask if anyone brought sleeping bags. Maybe now they'll get the hint and try one of the methods listed above. If not, the PCs overhear a nearby NPC recruit planning one of the above tactics with a teammate.

Regardless of whether they succeed or not, any borderline treasonous and interesting actions deserve Perversity points. Reward them not just succeeding, but for *trying*: Take chances! Make mistakes! Please your GM!

Note that the PCs get *only* their pistols and reflec. They gain the other starting gear (the stuff you crossed out for the pre-mission) when the pre-mission ends.

Once they get their equipment or they give up, it's time to head to R&D.

R&D

Compared to the line waiting outside PLC, R&D is abandoned. Most Troubleshooters spend as little time as possible in this deathtrap. Hearing explosions echo through the hallways jangles the nerves of even freshly minted Troubleshooters.

Willy leads the PCs to a small room, devoid of decoration except for scorch marks seared onto the room's surfaces, a table overflowing with cool-looking weapons and a room-spanning foot-thick plexiglas barrier between them and a meek little ORANGE scientist **(Tension 9)**. Wallace-O-RLF is not enthused about guiding novice Troubleshooters through their experimental equipment assignment, even with a barrier:

PC: What's this? Looks nasty.
Wallace-O: Hand flamer.
PC: Whoa. How does it work?
Wallace-O: You shoot things with it. They burn.
PC: Do I hold it like this—?
Wallace-O: DON'T POINT IT AT ME! *[Cowers.]*

The 'experimental' equipment assigned to the PCs is just placeholder stuff. Why assign real equipment requiring real experimentation to a practice mission? Everything here is just exotic but well-tested weaponry: cone rifles, hand flamers, ice guns, sonic pistols and all the other nifty weapons on the equipment list—a grab bag of destruction.

As the PCs finger the weaponry, Wallace-O reminds them the stuff must be thoroughly tested, and the Troubleshooters must give a full report during their debriefing. If you have copies of the R&D Experimental Equipment Testing Report Forms, order the PCs to grab one apiece as well. Insist each PC take only one gun. 'There's only so many to go around.'

Near the end of the equipment assignment, Wallace-O passes out from oxygen deprivation. (The technicians who installed the plexiglas barrier forgot to install proper ventilation.) PCs who don't take the opportunity to swipe as many weapons as possible are either loyal pantywaists or smarter than you thought.

These cool guns are broken guns—dressed up to look good as new, but one step away from spontaneous disassembly. The PCs would quickly figure that out if they used them. Too bad they didn't get any ammo. The Computer rarely lets mere trainees use such terrible weapons.

So how are they supposed to report on the performance of equipment they can't use? Well, it's never too early for them to work on their fabrication skills.

Smart PCs try to sell the excess guns. Even smarter ones try to sell them to ignorant dweebs. (NPCs with related weapons knowledge recognize the guns as junk and smack around the offending PCs for trying to rip them off). That's assuming they can sneak the extra guns out of R&D and through the crowded hallways; how do they plan on smuggling something the size of a bazooka anyway? (Anyone who manages this deserves some Perversity points and a cameo in a future ***PARANOIA*** supplement.)

Once the PCs take care of their experimental equipment needs—off to Training Room 101!

Team building exercise

The large room Willy ushers them to next (**Tension 3**) looks like a disaster area. Rubble and bodies lie everywhere. Sparks fly from cut wires. The lights flicker. Deep ruts gouge the concrete floor. As the PCs wonder just what they got themselves into, Willy explains the exercise.

'Don't fret, loyal Troubleshooters! This is a mock disaster area designed for training exercises. Rest assured The Computer would never let any area stay in actual disarray for long.

'To operate as a team, you must learn to trust each other. Your final training exercise will build the bonds of your team until you feel safe putting your lives in each other's hands! Remember: There is no "I" in "TEAM"!

'The goal of this exercise is to save as many citizens in distress as possible. You'll need to cooperate to deliver them safely to the exit. I'm sure you'll pass with flying colors.

'Good luck—and be sure to remember the Troubleshooter motto: Stay alert! Trust no one! Keep your laser handy! I'll be waiting here for you to finish.'

Willy quickly moves to the safest corner in the room and keeps a wary eye on the Troubleshooters.

The 'citizens in distress' are dumb humanoid crash test bots programmed to shout for help until they are rescued. They can't move by themselves and need someone to carry them out. They also scream in agony if they are handled roughly. It should be quite a shock the first time the PCs hear it. They might even let go of something important.

So how many crash test bots need saving and from what? That's for you to decide. A few examples are outlined below. We suggest you mix and match them with your own devious ideas. Don't worry, we won't be offended if you reject some of our brilliant suggestions. Just be sure to follow these two principles when designing replacements:

1. They require more than one PC to rescue them, forcing characters to work together.
2. One PC can screw up the whole gig, either accidentally or on purpose. It's funny how similar the two can seem.

- **I've fallen and I can't get up:** A bot is stranded on a small ledge 5 meters below the edge of a chasm. If the PCs were smart enough to bring rope (dental floss works in a pinch), it takes two PCs to rescue the bot: one to pull up the rope and one to hold onto the bot. If no one brought rope, the PCs just have to link arms and become a human rope. Can you imagine how far down they would tumble if the person on top lost his grip? (Violence check.)
- **Door opener:** A bot is trapped behind a malfunctioning garage door. The door is stuck in the down position and wants to stay that way. Two strong PCs must strain to pull the door up for a few seconds (Violence checks). A brave Troubleshooter can then rush in and try to retrieve the bot before they lose their grip (Violence/Agility check). The door drops with enough force to decapitate a slow PC. Smart Troubleshooters might try to fix the door, but that requires some tinkering (Mechanical Engineering or Hardware check) from the inside. Smarter Troubleshooters might try to prop up the door with something. Willy looked pretty sturdy. The door should hardly dent it, right? What could possibly go wrong?
- **Wired up:** A bot is entangled in live electrical wires. PCs must cut off power to the room before rescuing it. A nearby power conduit lets a PC temporarily turn the room's power on and off (Electrical Engineering or Hardware check). Shutting off the power shuts off the lights as well. We hope no one falls down one of the crevices in the dark. While the power is out, a PC must dig through the wires, locate the bot in the dark and drag it loose from its wiring without getting tangled himself (Violence/Agility check). We hope the PCs coordinate their actions. It would be horrible if the rescuer were fried because the technician turned the juice back on a second too soon. Also beware of crafty traitors who might use the dark to commit heinous deeds unseen.

Once the PCs solve all your little traps, or die trying, they should be more suspicious of each other than ever. This is the perfect time to bring their potentially treasonous deeds to light! Once they tell Willy they're done, he congratulates them on their work and leads them back to the briefing room for accusations and finger-pointing.

Debriefing

When the exhausted PCs return to their briefing room (now **Tension 10**), they find a shaken and jittery Karl-Y-GAN sitting behind the desk. He no longer chews a pen. Go through usual debriefing procedure: mission discussion, revelations of treason, experimental weapon reports, etc.

Once you are done, all that's left is for Karl-Y-GAN to sign the Troubleshooters' training diploma. He looks through his desk drawers, searches under his desk, then asks the Troubleshooters if they have a pen he can borrow. If any of them offer him one, just before he grabs it:

IntSec Agent *[via room speakers]:* DROP THE PEN, KARL-Y!
Karl-Y-GAN: Aaagh!
IntSec Agent: Breaching the terms of your probation is treason! Do you want to be executed?
Karl-Y-GAN: No, not at all, sir!
IntSec Agent: Good! We'll be watching you.

Karl looks at the PCs, an awkward grin plastered on his face. He rummages through his pockets and pulls out a needle.

Five minutes later, the Troubleshooters march from the room proudly displaying their blood-signed diplomas. Now they can get to the dangerous stuff! Aren't they excited?

Alternate ending of torment: If you're having too much fun with the PCs and can't bear to see them get off easy, make them figure out how to solve the problem. They need their diploma signed by Karl-Y-GAN to become Troubleshooters, but Karl-Y-GAN is banned from using pens. Maybe they can find the hidden IntSec camera and obscure it while Karl-Y-GAN signs it. Maybe they will just find an excuse to terminate Karl-Y-GAN and have his clone sign the diploma. They might even try forgery. Oh, the treasonous possibilities! Just remember to reward their increased efforts with Perversity points. Perversity: It makes the Complex go 'round!

NPC roster

Name	Relevant skills & specialties	Weapons	Armor	Mutation	Roleplaying notes
GREEN IntSec goons	Management 04, Intimidation 12, Sense of Humor 00, Violence 14	GREEN laser pistol (W3K energy) Truncheon (S5K impact)	GREEN reflec (E1)	GM discretion	Corrupt and mean-spirited Stormtroopers.
IR market dealer/ Undercover IntSec agent	Management 10, Con Games 14, Stealth 06, Concealment 10, Sneaking 10	None	Illegal GREEN reflec (E2)	Ventriloquist or Rubbery Bones	Cronies (2 FreeEnt thugs/ Undercover IntSec thugs—see below) do the fighting for him.
FreeEnt thugs/ Undercover IntSec thugs (2)	Management 04, Intimidation 08, Stealth 06, Spot Cretin Swiping Goods 12, Violence 08, Field Weapons 12, Light Cigar with Flamethrower 14	Flamethrower (S3K energy)	ORANGE reflec, Kevlar, Asbestos clothing (E1/I3/E3)	GM discretion	*The Godfather* meets *The Sopranos*.
Willy the Tourbot	Management 06, Annoying Prattle 18, Say Something Useful 01, Violence 05, Shock Prod 11	Shock prod (Stun)	1	—	Irritating, repetitive and *far* too perky. 'Remember, if we get separated, just look for our flag!' *[Points to flag on top of his domed head.]* See dialogue below.*
Troubleshooter trainees	Management 06, Accuse Traitors 12, Stealth 06, High Alert 10, Spot Suspicious Activity 12, Violence 06, Energy Weapons 10, Shoot Someone Other Than Target 17	RED laser pistol (W3K energy) Fists (O5K impact)	RED reflec (E1) or None	GM discretion	Savages in jumpsuits.
Karl-Y-GAN	Management 02, Oratory 01, Bore Listeners 16, Gnaw on Pens 08	None	YELLOW reflec (E1)	Empathy (limited)	*Monotonous Voice of Sleeping*—Has Empathy mutation limited only to causing boredom in others.
Wallace-O-RLF	Hardware 02, Explain How to Use Experimental Equipment 01	None	Improperly ventilated plexiglas 2	Bureaucratic Intuition (limited)	Mutation is limited only to navigating bureaucracy within R&D.
Citizens in distress	Management 04, Scream for Help 10, Scream in Agony 12, Violence 00, Fall to Pieces 12	None	None	GM discretion	A roomful of extras with targets on their chests.

* **Bonus 'Happy Teamwork' dialogue loop for Willy the Tourbot:** *[Insert the following teamwork sayings into Willy's cheery dialogue with the PCs at appropriately irritating intervals.]* 'It's amazing how much you can accomplish when it doesn't matter who gets the credit! There is no "I" in "TEAMWORK". Teamwork: Simply stated, it is less me and more we! TEAM = Together Everyone Achieves More. Teamwork is working together—even when apart. A job worth doing is worth doing together. Coming together, sharing together, working together, succeeding together. A successful team beats with one heart. Teamwork divides the task and doubles the success!'

PARANOIA in the real world: Returning Fallujans will face crackdown

By Anne Barnard, Boston Globe Staff—December 5, 2004

FALLUJAH, Iraq—The US military is drawing up plans to keep insurgents from regaining control of this battle-scarred city, but returning residents may find that the measures make Fallujah look more like a police state than the democracy they have been promised.

Under the plans, troops would funnel Fallujans to so-called citizen processing centers on the outskirts of the city to compile a database of their identities through DNA testing and retina scans. Residents would receive badges displaying their home addresses that they must wear at all times. Buses would ferry them into the city, where cars, the deadliest tool of suicide bombers, would be banned.

Marine commanders working in unheated, war-damaged downtown buildings are hammering out the details of their paradoxical task: Bring back the 300,000 residents in time for January elections without letting in insurgents, even though many Fallujans were among the fighters who ruled the city until the US assault drove them out in November, and many others cooperated with fighters out of conviction or fear.

One idea that has stirred debate among Marine officers would require all men to work, for pay, in military-style battalions. Depending on their skills, they would be assigned jobs in construction, waterworks, or rubble-clearing platoons.

'You have to say, 'Here are the rules' and you are firm and fair. That radiates stability.' said Lieutenant Colonel Dave Bellon, intelligence officer for the First Regimental Combat Team, the Marine regiment that took the western half of Fallujah during the US assault and expects to be based downtown for some time. Bellon asserted that previous attempts to win trust from Iraqis suspicious of US intentions had telegraphed weakness by asking, '"What are your needs? What are your emotional needs?' All this Oprah [stuff],' he said. 'They want to figure out who the dominant tribe is and say, 'I'm with you'. We need to be the benevolent, dominant tribe.'

'They're never going to like us,' he added, echoing other Marine commanders who cautioned against raising hopes that Fallujans would warmly welcome troops when they return to ruined houses and rubble-strewn streets. The goal, Bellon said, is 'mutual respect'. [...] To accomplish those goals, they think they will have to use coercive measures allowed under martial law imposed last month by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

'It's the Iraqi interim government that's coming up with all these ideas,' Major General Richard Natonski, who commanded the Fallujah assault and oversees its reconstruction, said of the plans for identity badges and work brigades. But US officers in Fallujah say that the Iraqi government's involvement has been less than hoped for, and that determining how to bring the city safely back to life falls largely on their shoulders. [...]

Back at their headquarters, the team debated the procedure for allowing civilians to return. Major Wade Weems warned that there should be a set number per day so that a backlog would not form behind the retina-scanning machine, fueling resentment.

Converting older skills to XP

by Paul Baldowski

Though *Flashbacks* reprints the best classic ***PARANOIA*** material, there is more out there. If you use old West End products we did not update for this book, you'll see certain skills not mentioned in the XP edition. You can, of course, ignore or replace these aberrations. But in case these old skills intrigue you, this appendix offers fully upgraded XP-equivalent skills and specialties.

Each edition of ***PARANOIA*** has successively reduced the number of character abilities by condensing them into broader meta-options. This approach lets individual Troubleshooters face wider challenges without particular expertise, thereby reducing the need for cooperation with their fellow PCs. However, you may want to retain these older ***PARANOIA*** skills to offer your players additional choices, individualize their characters or even increase cooperation (horrors!). But don't spoil your players too much, or they might think you're going soft. If you wish to keep their options broad, each description here suggests an existing specialty you can substitute for the old product's listed skill.

Certain skills are marked Secret. In the old material these abilities are primarily treason-free, but in XP they work best as Secret skills, either Uncommon, Unlikely or Unhealthy.

Survival

Each edition of ***PARANOIA*** has gradually assimilated an increasingly wide range of Outdoors skills into the all-encompassing Survival. If you plan to often take your Troubleshooters Outdoors, use the many Secret skills in this article to restore the original range.

'What good are they?' your players will ask. 'Why should I take all this stuff when I can just use Survival instead?' Here's one rationale you can use: Whereas the Survival specialty provides the information strictly necessary to stay alive in the Outdoors wilderness for more than a day, these skills let you not just survive but thrive. They offer detailed knowledge available only to Outdoors savages, high-degree Sierra Clubbers and certain high-clearance service firm operatives assigned to scout, prospect or do research Outdoors.

XP Specialties

Civil Engineering

Skill category: Hardware.

Dealing with the design and construction of public works—bridges, transtubes, dams, FunBall stadiums and other large facilities. The XP edition subsumes Civil Engineering into the Mechanical Engineering specialty.

Communications Engineering

Skill category: Hardware.

Dealing with transmission and focused emission devices—including radio, radar, fluctuating electronic transmission, microwave transceivers and laser communicators. The XP edition subsumes Communications Engineering into the Electronic Engineering specialty.

Computer Maintenance

Skill category: Software.

Tinkering with the inner workings of The Computer itself. The XP edition subsumes Computer Maintenance into the Operating Systems specialty.

Flora & Fauna

Skill category: Unlikely Secret skill.
Specialty combines: Animal Lore & Plant Lore.
Alternate specialty: Survival.

Alpha Complex hosts few real plants or animals, save for the odd poodle or houseplant in High Programmers' mansions and the rats in the sewers. The Computer teaches nothing about nature in basic Junior Citizen studies; most citizens never encounter any, so why worry them unnecessarily?

This specialty lets a character recognize common species of plants and animals. A successful check on viewing a specimen provides basic information, such as a name. Greater margins of success give information on danger levels, feeding habits, toxicity and so on. Failed checks result in amusing blunders, like mistaking a ferocious lion for a common bunny rabbit or eating a handful of stinging nettles.

Hunting

Skill category: Uncommon Secret skill.
Specialty combines: Trapping & Hunting, Fishing and Gathering.
Alternate specialty: Survival.

The character can forage and hunt for food, and create traps to capture animals (or people).

Foraging lets the character find (apparently) edible food. Roll 1d20 each half-hour the character forages. The margin of success indicates the number of extra people for whom the character finds food; if you roll the specialty rating exactly, the character finds only enough food for himself.

Trapping lets the character set traps, tailoring the device to the intended target. Though a successful check should capture any animal, note the margin of success for traps set for intelligent targets. A victim falls foul of the trap unless he succeeds in a Stealth check with an equal or greater margin of success.

The Hunting skill doesn't include knowledge of the safety of food gathered nor appropriate methods of preparation. Anyone care for blowfish in elderberry sauce?

Industrial Engineering

Skill category: Hardware.

Dealing with efficient production of industrial goods and the elements of plants design, materials management and worker integration that determine the efficiency of an industrial system. The XP edition subsumes Industrial Engineering into the Mechanical Engineering specialty.

Motivation

Skill category: Management.
Alternate specialty: Con Games.

A motivator perceives the benefits and rewards of a goal, no matter how minuscule, and convinces a target of these benefits. The motivator reinforces the beneficial and desirable aspects of the goal, and makes obstacles in its way appear surmountable.

When the motivator tries to convince a target to do something, make a secret Motivation check. Success means the target buys into the motivator's take on the task and sets to it with enthusiasm and purpose. Though a narrow success margin (0–5) could sell a target on the benefits of (say) filling out forms, the motivator needs a larger (10+) margin to demonstrate the merits of shoveling raw sewage or engaging in live ammo testing (as a target). The target's energy might be short-lived if the task is onerous or the success marginal.

Failure means common sense holds sway and the target does not buy the motivator's rhetoric. If the request was dubious or potentially treasonous, the motivator may now face potential blackmail or a late-night visit from Internal Security.

Motivation works best on targets of equal or lower clearance—though in practice higher-clearance citizens usually rely on Intimidation or just peremptory commands.

Organic Commodities Engineering

Skill category: Wetware.

Dealing with the efficient management, design and operation of organic commodity production and processing—including algae stewing, salt mining, Fun extrusion, Bouncy Bubble Beverage detoxification and ChocoLyke wrangling. The XP edition subsumes Organic Commodities Engineering into the Biosciences specialty.

Plastiform Engineering

Skill category: Hardware.

Dealing with extruded polymers and advanced plasti-alloys—including plasteel, plasti-glass, plasticrete and plasti-uri-glutonium332. The XP edition subsumes Plastiform Engineering into the Chemical Engineering specialty.

Primitive Weapons

Skill category: Violence.
Specialty combines: Primitive Melee Weapons & Primitive Aimed Weapons.
Alternate specialty: Hand Weapons & Projectile/Thrown Weapons.

The use, maintenance and fabrication of primitive weapons made from natural or comparable artificial materials. Such weapons include bows, crossbows, javelins, tomahawks, slings, swords, knives and big, gnarled sticks embedded with chunks of quartz.

Primitive weapons are often ineffective and delicate. Anyone wielding primitive weapons using standard weapon specialties suffers damage reduction of two steps and, with a failure margin greater than five, irreparable breakage.

Failure when fabricating weapons results in a poor and unreliable weapon, fragile and likely to break when used. A check with a small failure margin means the character recognizes the weakness in the weapon; otherwise, he remains oblivious until too late.

Psychescan

Skill category: Management.

Reading body language to assess another person's state of mind. The XP edition subsumes Psychescan into the Moxie specialty.

Rock Climbing

Skill category: Uncommon Secret skill.
Specialty covers: Mountain Climbing.
Alternate specialty: Agility.

The specialty reflects detailed understanding of negotiating sheer or difficult surfaces, outstripping the more generic Agility, which simply covers basic coordination. The character possesses detailed knowledge of hand and footholds, free-climbing techniques and mountaineering equipment. Lengthy or particularly perilous climbs may require multiple checks or negative modifications to a single check, whichever suits. Failure does not necessarily mean a fall to certain doom. The margin of a failed check should determine the severity of climbing mishap suffered. Though a considerable margin of failure (10+) may cause a damaging fall, lesser failure may result in delay, poor route choice, twisted ankles or the loss of vital pieces of equipment.

A character with Rock Climbing may choose to assist fellow climbers, allowing them to make checks against his Rock Climbing specialty value or their base Violence (whichever is higher).

Spurious Logic

Skill category: Management.
Alternate specialty: Con Games.

Bots in Alpha Complex generally act logically, if not rationally. A character can justify an unreasonable or illogical request to a bot (but *not* to The Computer!) through logical reasoning based on false data, or false reasoning based on correct data. For example, a Troubleshooter could theoretically use Spurious Logic to convince a Frankenstein warbot that no, he wasn't one of the warbot's targets—it's all those other people (i.e. teammates) over there.

Ask the player to describe what his character says to the bot, then make a secret check against the specialty, modified at your whim based on entertainment value. Success means the bot falls for the trick and becomes temporarily confused or alarmingly satisfied by the logical nonsense. Failure promptly alerts the bot, so that it questions the character's intentions and possibly alerts The Computer. At this point the character may want to find somewhere to hide, or perhaps feign delirium or a troublesome head wound.

A character facing a bot with disabled asimov circuits faces a different predicament. A bot with no asimovs may not be compelled to obey or serve. A character instead must seek to reason with or otherwise convince such a bot, assuming it hasn't gone psychotic.

Spurious Logic doesn't work on The Computer.

A player may select Confuse (Bot) with Spurious Logic as a narrow specialty applying to a particular bot—e.g. docbot X11-T or jackobot Cyril-R3.

Travel

Skill category: Uncommon Secret skill.
Specialty combines: Navigation, Orienteering, Tracking.
Alternate specialty: Survival.

The specialty lets the character use a map to aid travel, whether assisted or on foot, within Alpha Complex or Outdoors. Make map-reading specialty checks according to the circumstances of travel—roll more frequently when the character is traveling in darkness, foul weather or unknown wilderness. Marginal failure (5 or less) means the character gets lost but is aware of the error and can backtrack to reorient himself. More significant failure means the character gets hopelessly lost, or—worse yet—doesn't even realize he's lost and is heading into imminent peril.

Additionally, familiarity with trails and spoor lets the character track people or animals through the wilderness. (Hard surfaces and regular cleaning make chances to use tracking extremely limited within Alpha Complex.) Make rolls according to weather conditions, surface solidity and the age of a trail. Success means the character keeps to the trail, with significant success allowing Holmesian deduction of the nature and purpose of the quarry. Failure means the character wanders aimlessly for a half-hour before realizing

Without enough wilderness America will change. Democracy, with its myriad personalities and increasing sophistication, must be fibred and vitalized by the regular contact with outdoor growths—animals, trees, sun warmth, and free skies—or it will dwindle and pale.

—Walt Whitman

the trail has gone cold. Significant failure (greater than 5) may result in the character picking up a very different trail or mistaking the true trail for something else.

For example, David-R, tracking a gang of Commies through the wilderness, achieves a success margin of 10. As a result, his keen tracking senses tell him the Commies travel without suspicion of pursuit, and two of them appear to be carrying something heavy, perhaps the missing warbot prototype. Had David-R failed the tracking check, he might have decided the trail belongs to a group of Vulture warriors on parade, two of whom appear to carry big bass drums.

Wild Foods

Skill category: Unlikely Secret skill.
Specialty combines: Eating Wild Foods and Identifying Wild Foods.
Alternate specialty: Survival.

This specialty lets the character recognize nutritious natural food in the wild. Given that the majority of Alpha Complex food is heavily processed, textured and flavored, knowing good food from bad in the wild presents a challenge. A successful check lets the character identify a potential food's nutritional value and edibility—though it doesn't help the character find potential food in the first place. A character who fails the check cannot assess the nutritional value or possible toxicity of potential food. A failure margin greater than five means the character assesses potentially dangerous foodstuff as safe and desirable.

Roll 1d20 on the following table to determine the effect of eating pieces of unsuitable food:

01–08	The food is adequately nutritious.
09–12	The food is adequately nutritious but mildly poisonous. Character feels awful for four hours.
13–16	The food is neither nutritious nor poisonous. The character remains hungry.
17–18	The food has no nutritional value and mildly poisonous. Consider the character wounded.
19–20	The food has no nutritional value and is poisonous. Consider the character down.

Wild Foods also readies characters for the experience of natural food. Low-clearance Alpha Complex meals generally consist of pastes, gruel and a few chewable nutritional supplements. The average citizen of Alpha Complex would find the idea of eating cooked, dead animal and muddy tubers utterly repulsive. A character with the Wild Foods specialty has the stomach to eat this stuff. Characters without the Wild Foods specialty would make a Violence check to keep the food down.

Wild Lore

Skill category: Uncommon Secret skill.
Specialty combines: Camping, Terrain Lore and Weather Lore.
Alternate specialty: Survival.

Most of Alpha Complex consists of endless sterile, climate-controlled rooms and corridors made from plasticrete and unyielding metal. It's like living in a Social Security office. To most citizens the wild, chaotic realities of the Outdoors come as a brain-curdling surprise. Wild Lore provides the necessary grounding to prevent messy, embarrassing panic attacks.

A successful check lets the character judge weather patterns, assess the hazards of terrain, and secure a protected and safe campsite. Success might allow a PC to light a fire without special materials, recall a vital link between knitting and cold weather, or realize the shelter potential of trees or caves. Failure likely leaves the character cold, wet and vulnerable, mewling like a newly decanted clone.

Even *more* old skills!

If we've done well inspiring a proper ***PARANOIA*** Gamemastering philosophy, you're already shuddering at this long list of gratuitous specialties. Earlier ***PARANOIA*** editions subdivided character abilities even more finely. We either subsumed them into these new specialties, renamed them or occasionally just blew them off. Here's a list of more skills you might encounter in old ***PARANOIA*** products, with pointers to the specialties where they now reside:

Animal Lore. *See:* Flora & Fauna.
Camping. *See:* Wild Lore.
Civil Engineering. *See:* Mechanical Engineering.
Communications Engineering. *See:* Electronic Engineering.
Computer Maintenance. *See:* Operating Systems.
Eating Wild Foods. *See:* Wild Foods.
Hunting, Fishing And Gathering. *See:* Hunting.
Identifying Wild Foods. *See:* Wild Foods.
Industrial Engineering. *See:* Mechanical Engineering.
Mountain Climbing. *See:* Rock Climbing.
Navigation. *See:* Travel.
Organic Commodities Engineering. *See:* Biosciences.
Orienteering. *See:* Travel.
Plant Lore. *See:* Flora & Fauna.
Plastiform Engineering. *See:* Chemical Engineering.
Primitive Aimed Weapons. *See:* Primitive Weapons.
Primitive Melee Weapons. *See:* Primitive Weapons.
Specific bot skills. *See:* Bot Ops and Maintenance.
Specific weapon skills. See the weapon chart in ***PARANOIA*** XP for the appropriate weapon specialty.
Terrain Lore. *See:* Wild Lore.
Tracking. *See:* Travel.
Trapping. *See:* Hunting.
Weather Lore. *See:* Wild Lore.

Appendix: Pun name substitutions

Yeah, we're killjoys. The original designers of the classic ***PARANOIA*** missions reprinted in *Flashbacks* went to great lengths to devise amazing, spectacular, show-stopping pun names for their characters. Players would hear these and just have to stop playing for a minute. Punning character names were a ***PARANOIA*** hallmark. And now here we are, changing them to boring believable names actual people might actually have. What's with us? Are we totally devoid of humor?

Possibly we Famous Game Designers have grown cranky as we age, but our main purpose is to broaden the range of experiences players associate with ***PARANOIA***. It can inspire fear and suspense as well as comedic mayhem. But if every character the players meet has a name like Grade-B-DUD, to say nothing of Loxanne-B-GLZ, everyone moves promptly into Zap play style whether the GM wants it or not.

We do recognize some of these names have a certain, um, poetry. You meet a guy named Fyur-I-OUS and you already know something about his narrative role, before the GM has to say anything. It works as shorthand. But this convenience comes at, in our judgment, too great a cost.

Still, a lot of fans—possibly *most* fans—love the puns. If we just excised them altogether like The Computer's History Purifiers, we'd never hear the end of it. So in this appendix we list the character names we changed, along with the original vile puns. Enjoy (if that's the word we want).

As for the charge that we lack a sense of humor, we firmly deny this vile slander. Every ***PARANOIA*** product has clearly shown—uh—

(Wait a minute, be right back—)

Hey! You kids! Get off my lawn!

Vapors Don't Shoot Back

PCs

Amos-O-BYA	Amos-O-NUS
Bobby-O-SYE	Bobby-O-DUR
Cain-O-ATW	Kay-O-AYE
Mortimer-O-TBI	Mort-O-BIT
Roger-O-CWE	Roger-O-VER
Terry-O-EUZ	Terry-O-RIZ

NPCs

Ben-B	Bruno-B
Buck-U-XVB	Black-U-BRD
Bud-O-NDI	Bub-O-NIC
Deke-G	Beeg-G
Frank-O	Fiber-O
Gary-V	Gore-V
Glen-G-ESE	Grill-G-ESE
Neil-U-RSB	Nevo-U-MYN
Reggie-G	String-G
Rip-G	Grip-G
Steve-G	Squee-G
Willy-Y	Whimp-Y

YELLOW Clearance Black Box Blues

PCs

Brett-Y-WYD	Bud-Y-ZER
Donald-Y-EIN	Don-Y-BRK
Eric-Y-KTH	Epic-Y-CLE
Miles-Y-LOM	Miles-Y-DER
Tex-Y-DBF	Texun-Y-AHU
Wyatt-Y-VSC	Welsh-Y-BTT

NPCs

Al-B-MNU	Al-B-MUN
Angela-G-DRQ	Angela-G-OGO
Betty-U-YFL	Bette-U-LYF
Brian-B-IWR	Byre-B-WER
Dan-V-OSD	Doss-V-DAN
Ned-G-RFB	Neddy-G-OON
Victor-I-VGF	Victor-I-VGF
Willis-G-PLJ	Willis-G-EEP
YCA Sector	CYA Sector
Zach-I-VLI	Zeno-I-VIL

Send in the Clones

PCs

Chuck-O-VKJ	Chock-O-BLK
Elmer-R-DYS	Elm-R-FUD
Eve-R-SWB	Eve-R-DEN
Sam-R-JBS	Sam-R-KND
Tammy-Y-BWR	Tammy-Y-NET
Walt-Y-QGI	Watt-Y-WHO

[**Note:** A 1988 update of *Send in the Clones*, collected with *Orcbusters* as *The Computer Always Shoots Twice*, gave two PCs the names Jump-R-CBL and Jess-Y-BEL.]

NPCs

Ben-Y-FGH	Bab-Y-BOY
Brian-I-HIG	Bulls-I-HIT
Dan-Y-FGH	Bud-Y-BOY
Don-Y-YYY	Don-Y-OSM
Hal-Y-OOO	Hall-Y-WUD
Morrie-G-III	Morrie-G-LSE
Ned-G-MNB	Nerd-G-OOO
Oscar-R-DES	Scar-R-EDY
Ozzie-R-DFP	Ozzie-R-DIP
Roy-Y-TWQ	Rok-Y-TWO
Sonny-Y-TLS	Sunn-Y-LST
Zhon-B-VLJ	Kept (deemed sufficiently obscure)

'Me and My Shadow Mark 4'

Anne-U-JXT	Anne-U-MAT
Butch-U-VFV	Butch-U-BLK
Cal-U-RXT	Cal-U-DER
Dan-U-BHC	Dan-U-BAH
Fred-G-ANM	Fed-G-MAN
Jess-U-TWE	Jess-U-WAT
Joseph-B-DGU	Jonnie-B-GUD
Kim-U-FXJ	Kim-U-CAL
Lot-U-DJI	Lot-U-FUN
May-NTA	Aunt-MAY
Rich-U-FTC	Rip-U-PRT
Rob-Y-QED	Robb-Y-RBT
Vlad-G-ADR	Volga-G-RAD

Alpha Complexities

PCs

Elmar-G-TKE	Elmer-G-LUE
Fenella-G-RLP	Funny-G-IRL
Isaac-G-DHC	Islamic-G-HAD
Richard-G-KLN	Richard-G-ERE
Roy-G-BIV	Okay, we kept one...
Steve-G-XYR	Schwartzenne-G-GER

NPCs

Amy-G-NGL	Avon-G-NGL
Betty-R-LFJ	Betty-R-LIF
Bill-Y-BCO	Bill-Y-BOB
Bree-Y	Bamb-Y
Chet-B-CSU	Chest-B-CUS
Cliff-Y-GRN	Cliffha-Y-NGR
Dan-U-BHC	Dan-U-BAH
Dean-Y	Deedubblyu-Y
Dolph-V-RDA	Darth-V-ADR
Finn-Y-YGU	Fun-Y-GUY
Floyd-I-OSU	Fyur-I-OUS
Geneva-G	Djee-G
Gil-I-DCU	Gill-I-GAN
Gladys-B-DDU	Grade-B-DUD
Gomer-I-THA	Gol-I-ATH
Harper-Y	Houston-Y
Ivar-U-DED	Iwant-U-DED
Jeff-I-OIB	Jed-I-OBI (later Jed-U)
Jill-R-RRE	Gib-R-ERR
John-Y-BCO	John-Y-BOY
Kenny-R-MOT	Kenny-R-OGR
Kip-Y-MTV	Kit-Y-HOK
Lenore-B-GZL	Loxanne-B-GLZ
Lou-Y-TNU	Loon-Y-NUT
Luis-Y-OOY	Limpid-Y-OYO
Parker-I-ZRE	Plagiar-I-ZER
Rich-U-FTC	Rip-U-PRT
Stan-U	Snaf-U
Tate-I-RTV	Trey-I-TOR
Trish-U	Tarf-U

'Whitewash'

Cosmo-V-DOJ	Kosmic-V-OID
Earl-B-DOJ	Urly-B-OID
Raven-B-DOJ	Raven-B-OID

PARANOIA™

FLASHBACKS!

***PARANOIA*'s greatest hits, back in print!**

Mongoose Publishing's ***PARANOIA*** XP roleplaying game has earned an *Official Commendation* from your friend **The Computer.** Now Mongoose gains the illustrious status of *Hero of Alpha Complex* for ***PARANOIA Flashbacks,*** **eight classic missions** collected in one 256-page volume, updated for the XP edition.

These riotously funny works from ***PARANOIA***'s Golden Age revolutionized the roleplaying field. They're all here: the harrowing **mission alerts,** the arduous **outfitting trips,** the thrice-deadly tests of **experimental equipment from Research & Design** and the brilliantly staged, surpassingly ridiculous, stupendously auto-ramifying **deathtrap fiascos** that made ***PARANOIA*** a huge success.

Still far and away the funniest roleplaying products ever published, these stress-inducing missions will take your players into sections of **Alpha Complex,** and probably areas of their own lizard hindbrains, they never could have imagined. And they'll love every moment of it—or else.

You need the *PARANOIA* XP roleplaying game to use this book.

The best missions ever written for *PARANOIA!*

Me and My Shadow Mark 4
by **Steve Gilbert** and **Peter Corless**
The Troubleshooters guard a giant cybernetic warbot that definitely doesn't like being guarded. Many longtime fans rate **Mark 4** their all-time favorite *PARANOIA* mission.

The YELLOW Clearance Black Box Blues
by World Fantasy Award winner **John M. Ford**
What's in the black box, and why are all the secret societies after it? The award-winning **YCBBB** stands high on most lists of the best-written roleplaying adventures ever.

Send in the Clones by **Allen Varney** and **Warren Spector**
Someone is singing treasonous old song hits on the Alpha Complex public address system, so the Troubleshooters must track the Commie traitors through—yes—the sewers.

Vapors Don't Shoot Back by **Curtis H. Smith**
The Troubleshooters head Outdoors to rescue and/or destroy a treasonous minicomputer and incidentally take their first skydive!

Alpha Complexities by **Edward S. Bolme**
The colossal Mark 4 warbot returns—serving an enemy Complex! Too bad the Troubleshooters are busy hunting invisible Commies.

'Robot Imana 665-C,' 'The Trouble With Cockroaches'
and **'Das Bot'** by **Ken Rolston**
Troubleshooters face a mysterious robot, a load of heavy weapons and a mini-submarine—all sadly lacking instruction manuals.

BONUS! Three 'Code 7' mini-missions, including the terrific **'Whitewash'** by **Greg Costikyan.**

BONUS #2! 'Pre-***PARANOIA***' by **Jeff Groves**, a *new* orientation mission for freshly shanghaied Troubleshooters!

Illustrated by JIM HOLLOWAY

A world fit for Kafka, Orwell and the Marx Brothers

PARANOIA is a satirical roleplaying game set in a darkly humorous future. A well-meaning but deranged Computer desperately protects the citizens of an underground city from secret societies, mutants and all sorts of real and imagined enemies. You play a *Troubleshooter*, one of The Computer's elite agents. You track and destroy the enemies of The Computer. You hope The Computer and your fellow Troubleshooters won't find out *you* are one of these enemies.

PARANOIA: a lighthearted game of terror, death, bureaucracies, mad scientists, mutants, dangerous weapons and insane robots, which encourages players to lie, to cheat and to backstab each other at every turn.

Originally published in 1984, ***PARANOIA*** sold over 150,000 copies. The ***PARANOIA*** XP edition updates Alpha Complex for this new and more paranoid time.

For use with *PARANOIA* XP

For Gamemasters, *not* players!

ISBN 1-904854-40-0 **$34.95** **MONGOOSE PUBLISHING—SWINDON, UK** **MGP 6635**

Copyright © 1983, 1987, 2005 by Eric Goldberg & Greg Costikyan. PARANOIA is a trademark of Eric Goldberg and Greg Costikyan. All rights reserved. Mongoose Publishing Ltd., Authorized User