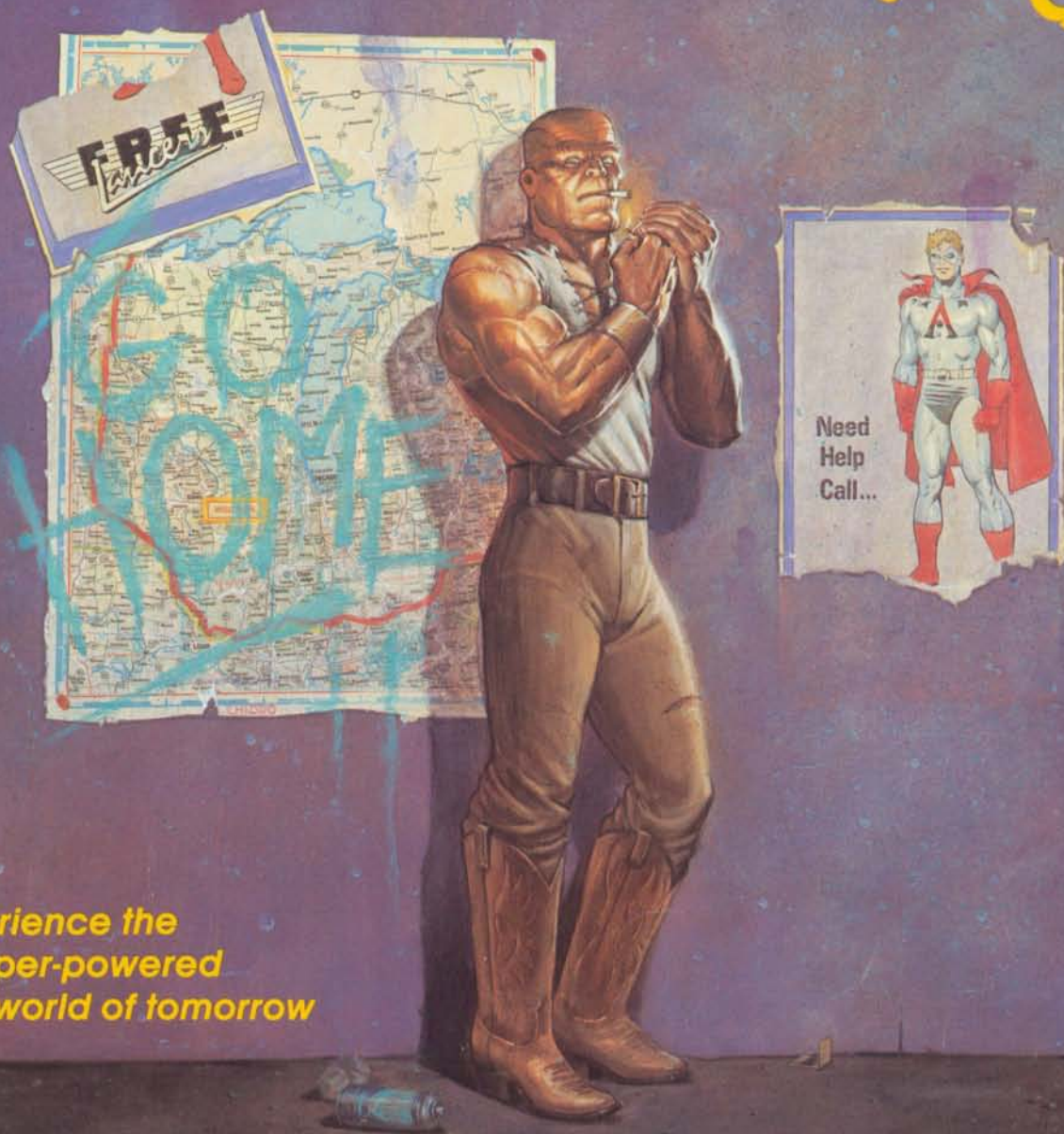


TOP SECRET/S.I.

F.R.E.E. America

by Scott Bowles



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OFFICIAL GAME ACCESSORY

F.R.E.E.America

By Scott Bowles

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The Fine Print

Distributed to the book trade in the United States by Random House, Inc., and in Canada by Random House of Canada Ltd.

Distributed to the toy and hobby trade by regional distributors.

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Printed in U.S.A.

0-88038-725-4



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Introduction

Scholars will be able to look back and determine the precise date the American federal government began to disintegrate: Feb. 11, 1994, the day Jim Bob Culpepper began building his wall.

Culpepper had successfully run for governor of Texas the previous year, promising, among other things, "to keep the Mexicans in Mexico." To this end, he took his lead from Berlin and proposed building a 12' high wall along the entire length of the Rio Grande, topping it with concertina wire, planting land mines in the area just north of the wall, and spacing guard towers, to be manned by Texas National Guardsmen, 150' apart.

Nobody outside the state of Texas really expected him to do it, so when the first prefabricated blocks of concrete were dropped into place, federal authorities were taken by surprise. Justice Department officials were granted an injunction against the wall's construction by a federal district court judge—much of the wall had to be built on federally owned land, and Culpepper was throwing it up willy-nilly, disregarding niceties such as the land's ownership. Culpepper ignored the injunction. According to legend, he guffawed when he received it and used it to light a cigar. And the wall continued to expand.

The judge who issued the injunction found Culpepper in contempt of court. But, by then, Culpepper had started surrounding himself night and day with 50 heavily armed Texas Ranger bodyguards with shoot-to-kill orders. He dared the federal marshals to come and arrest him, but they declined, and the wall continued to expand. Federal authorities next decided to move against the construction crews, but Culpepper had anticipated that move as well, and mobilized the Texas National Guard to protect them.

Federal officials were at a loss as to what to do next. A senator from Massachusetts introduced a bill specifically to prohibit state officials from constructing walls along international borders, but both the senators from Texas began a filibuster against it, and the legislation was eventually tabled. Everyone agreed that had the measure passed, Culpepper would have ignored it as well.

There was some talk of mobilizing armored units from Fort Hood and sending them down to the border, but the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, after a meeting with the Texas congressman who headed the military benefits subcommittee of the House Armed Services Committee, counseled that would be too drastic a measure. So the president called a Cabinet meeting.

A couple of Cabinet officers argued that whatever force was needed to remove the wall should be employed. Several more thought the wall was a darn good idea and wondered why somebody hadn't built one earlier. But most of the Cabinet officers thought since Culpepper was a loyal member of their own party, and since they would need Texas' Electoral College votes in the next election, that, well, maybe they should just let it go. After listening to all these arguments, the president reached a decision as to what to do. He decided to do nothing. And the wall continued to expand.

Needless to say, the wall created a furor among the Hispanic community in Texas. Many felt, and rightly so, that the wall was blatantly racist. In order to quell the outcry from the Hispanic community, Culpepper issued a statement allowing all Mexican-Americans living in Texas to bring their families over from Mexico. This seemed to placate them and the wall continued to grow.

The governor of Arizona, who'd always wanted to build his own wall but hadn't had the nerve to do so, decided to outdo Texas and began building one 15' high. Then the governor of California, who wasn't even a member of the same political party as Culpepper and the president, reacted to the drastic increase of illegal aliens crossing into his state—and ordered a wall built on his border as well. By the time the governor of New Mexico began building his wall, federal officials weren't even obtaining injunctions against such actions.

The activities of the Southwestern governors infuriated folks in other parts of the country. When a medical malpractice reform bill, which had been introduced by a California congressman and which enjoyed bipartisan support, came up for a vote in the Senate, a Michigan senator, out of

spite, conducted a filibuster against it. Enough of his colleagues supported him that cloture was never invoked, and the measure was eventually killed. This angered the senators from the Southwest and they responded by blocking legislation proposed by Northerners.

It wasn't long until this factiousness spilled over into the House of Representatives and the entire United States Congress became absolutely deadlocked. Soon, no piece of legislation, no federal appointment, no resolution could get through either house; even a joint resolution commemorating Mother's Day was blocked by a Colorado senator who'd had a particularly traumatic childhood.

The president stepped into this vacuum and attempted to run the country through a series of executive orders, a largely ineffective move. In the first place, he lacked the personnel to execute his directives. As federal power became more unwieldy, morale in the executive branch sank lower and lower. Officials were leaving in droves for private sector jobs, and the president couldn't get the Senate to confirm anyone to replace them. The federal government was becoming irrelevant.

The states' governors learned that they could abide by federal law as it behooved them: If they chose to ignore it, the president lacked the will and the resources to do anything about it. Justice Department attorneys routinely secured injunctions against the various governors' actions and Supreme Court rulings, declaring those actions illegal, but to no avail.

The Federal Government in F.R.E.E.America

The federal government is falling into virtual ruin. Both houses of Congress were so laughably inefficient that several states are considering not sending senators and representatives to Washington. In the judicial branch, those judges who

haven't defected to the private sector are overwhelmed by the workload. Even the most routine of cases take three or four years to try, and it would take at least a decade to exhaust all appeals, since over half the appellate judges have died and haven't been replaced.

The executive branch is in the worst shape of all. It's been years since a budget, or even a continuing resolution has been approved, so whole departments have been effectively dismantled, those which remain lack the resources to accomplish much. The government's social spending has ground to a halt, and the conditions those programs were supposed to alleviate are worse.

There are more homeless people, but the number of housing units for them has dwindled to practically nothing. The infant mortality rate for the nation's poor is skyrocketing, and there is no more federal aid to ensure children get proper nutrition. The number of elderly is increasing, but it seems likely their numbers will fall as Medicaid or Social Security lose funding.

The federal law enforcement function is suffering a similar demise. Though the Coast Guard is still active, there is little they can do to prevent drug smugglers from bringing in product all along the Atlantic Coast. Without fear of repercussions from the Securities and Exchange Commission, Wall Street arbitrageurs have become more brazen in conducting insider trading, and the rich are significantly richer. Agents for a host of foreign powers are operating openly since the FBI is no longer in a position to prevent them from doing so.

Not all the federal government is immobilized. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are aware of the debilitating state into which the federal government is sinking and are offering the backing of the armed forces to the Internal Revenue Service—as long as the agency continues to levy and collect federal income taxes. Therefore, the Treasury Department's coffers are relatively full, enough so that the government continues to issue bonds and investors continue to buy them.

Since Congress can't reach a consensus on how this money should be spent, the chairman of the

Joint Chiefs of Staff and the Treasury secretary get together and decide how to spend federal revenues. Most of the money goes to servicing the crippling national debt and to maintaining the military.

Any money left over is conferred upon the president for discretionary spending. Though this procedure is highly illegal, and though it makes the president subservient to the military brass and one of his Cabinet officers, everybody agrees that the military should be maintained, and nobody says much about it.

State Government in F.R.E.E.America

With the collapse of the federal government, the states had to provide the governmental services Washington could no longer offer. As the states began taking over the federal government's role, local leaders began to realize that services could be offered far more efficiently if neighboring states with common interests formed regional alliances.

Such regionalism had its roots in early interstate rivalries, such as the discussion of the Rust Belt versus the Sun Belt, hostilities in the west over water rights, and legal conflicts between the Great Lakes states and those along the lower Mississippi during the drought of 1988.

Such an alliance was the Great Lakes Authority (GLA), established in the early 90's consisting of the traditional "Rust Belt" states: Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and Ohio. Later that same year, Iowa, sensing the growing regionalism and not wanting to be left out, petitioned to join the GLA and was admitted. In 1994, for strategic reasons, Missouri was admitted, as well.

In the mid-nineties, when the Middle Atlantic Alliance (MAA), which centered around New York City, was established, officials in western Pennsylvania and New York decided their interests would be best served by the GLA and joined as well.

With the initial success of the GLA, other regional groups began forming as well. In an effort to protect water rights, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana formed the Ohio-Lower Mississippi Basin Cooperative (OLMBC). Later that year, the MAA (Middle Atlantic Alliance), consisting of Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Connecticut, and eastern Pennsylvania and New York was formed.

Then, Massachusetts offered to incorporate the smaller New England states, Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island, into the alliance of the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts (MGM). The smaller states, fearful of going things alone, acceded. Then in '96, Virginia, the Carolinas, Georgia, and Florida, not wanting to be left out, formed the South Atlantic States Directive (SASD). The next year, Alabama, which had been excluded from other regional alliances, was admitted to the SASD as well.

In the late nineties, most of the Western states—Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma—formed the massive and loosely organized Rocky Mountain Alliance (RMA). The Pacific Coast states—Washington, Oregon, and California—have not, as yet, formed any sort of regional group, but they cooperate on many ventures, including Alaska and/or Hawaii in some of them.

Texas, independent as ever, has refused to join any regional group, but operates as, and is (for all practical purposes) a regional cooperative unto itself.

With the social safety net of programs left in tatters, the poor get poorer, and with virtually nobody left to regulate their actions, the rich get richer. But for most people, life in F.R.E.E.America continued to a large extent as it had previously, a little meaner and a bit more desperate perhaps, but more or less the same.

Corporate America was left largely unaffected by the political transformation; if anything, its standing was enhanced by the slackening of government regulation. People still had jobs, still earned

money from those jobs, and still demanded goods and services on which they could spend that money. The economy chugged along unabated, and Americans, as before, continued to leave home, form families, and plop on the couch with a cold beer in front of the TV every evening.

Life in F.R.E.E.America

The changes in Americans' lives are pervasive, but subtle. People might take an extra half hour each way to commute to and from work because the interstate highway system has fallen into such disrepair. People tend not to travel as much by air since, with the demise of the Federal Aviation Administration, the nation's airlines are dangerous to fly. When they can afford it, people purchase home generators, since power from federally owned hydroelectric projects are so unreliable.

The quality of life in F.R.E.E.America is dependent on where one lives and for whom one works. The Megastate of Greater Massachusetts, for instance, retains its traditional liberal governmental tendencies, and thus, now that federal government's social spending looks to be cut to the bone, the state is planning to pick up most of the functions Washington is abandoning.

On the other hand, states in the Rocky Mountain Alliance, steeped in traditions of frontier individualism, are doing little, if anything, to pick up the slack as federal welfare programs disappear. Furthermore, in many areas, corporations are required by local governments to pick up some of the costs of social spending; for instance, most of the regions in the North and East are making employee health insurance mandatory.

Many states are attacking the problem of reduced social programs by offering corporations and individuals tax advantages for donations to specific charities, which in turn provided services to the disadvantaged. In some areas, especially the GLA

and the SASD, local officials are convincing companies that maintenance of the infrastructure makes good business sense, and are trying to get them to assume responsibility for filling chuck-holes and ensuring that sewer lines are open.

In still other areas, corporations aren't required to fulfill any sort of public responsibility. In Texas and the RMA, especially, industry does little for the common good other than to sign paychecks and run amuck, ignoring all manner of environmental and worker safety guidelines.

As corporations, through an unbridled series of mergers, become more powerful, they become more authoritarian; but many of them are more paternalistic as well. Japanese industry is looked upon as a model of corporate behavior, and a nearly feudal sense of loyalty between employer and employee is developing.

Companies promise workers lifetime employment and don't just pay them a living wage, but offer generous retirement, profit-sharing, and college scholarship programs as well. Employees are expected to return the faith the corporation show in them by performing their jobs as well as they can for the hours they are supposed to work.

Companies are also taking a greater interest in the communities in which they are located, providing funds for parks, sponsoring theater, classical music, and art, and taking the lead in upgrading the quality of local schools. In short, corporations are performing a variety of functions that are being abandoned by the federal government.

In some areas, again mostly in Texas and the RMA, companies demonstrate no greater interest in the well-being of their employees. In fact, now that they don't have to worry about the federal Department of Labor, they are ignoring wage and hour laws and other basic concerns.

Law Enforcement

Law enforcement in F.R.E.E.America is also a hit-or-miss proposition. Since the federal government no longer provides the lead for local agencies, the

states are developing their own peculiar priorities in law enforcement. Furthermore, since judicial review of police actions are, at best, a long-off occurrence, police departments generally pay less attention to civil rights than they did previously.

Thus, in the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts, laws protecting the environment are the top priority, and litterbugs are dealt with severely. Whereas Florida, and the rest of the SASD, have declared war on drug smuggling, and institute the death penalty for such crimes, and carry out executions within a couple of weeks of obtaining convictions. And, as in other areas, corporations assume a greater role in law enforcement. Staffs of private security companies are expanded so they can perform law enforcement duties beyond plant gates, and they are given certification so they can perform full police duties. Elsewhere, police protection is deteriorating along with other governmental services, and life became tangibly more dangerous.

In MGM, they are pro-environment, pro-technology, and anti-federal interference. In the SASD, they are waging a war against drugs, and minor infractions of the law are treated with harsh, and swift, penalties. Texas and RMA businesses exploit the lands with the wildcat mentality of the oil-boom years.

Life in F.R.E.E.America is more dangerous, exciting, and nerve-wracking than it was in the previous 25 years. Yearning for the individualism of the wild west, which is so much a part of the American psyche, has been brought to fruition in the various regional alliances.

Throughout F.R.E.E.America, savantism and metabilities are on the rise. This trend is more obvious in some regions, such as the GLA, where people with such talents are collected in high-profile outfits such as FREELancers. In other regions, people with savant or metabilities are not as readily identifiable, and they appear to be highly efficient free-lance operatives and the like. This is just one more trend that, though it hasn't yet had a significant effect upon American society, portends great changes in the very near future.

The F.R.E.E.America Campaign

The Administrator who wishes to run a **Top Secret/S.I.**™ campaign in the near future world of F.R.E.E.America can go in a number of different directions. This supplement is an expansion of the game setting introduced in *F.R.E.E.Lancers*, and should be used in conjunction with those rules.

However, the intent of this supplement is to provide greater detail to the setting introduced in *F.R.E.E.Lancers*, and is based, in part, on the assumption that only the very most sophisticated organizations, such as the FREELancers, will have ready access to exotic weaponry such as MAPS armor or will have fully developed the metable talents of agents in their employ. Thus this supplement has deliberately been kept somewhat "low tech," the feeling being that weapons in wide use today will still be capable of blowing perfectly serviceable holes in opponents 10 years hence.

If an Administrator wishes to use this supplement in conjunction with a *F.R.E.E.Lancers* campaign in which PCs are running FREELancer characters introduced in the previous supplement or new characters with similarly powerful metable talents there should be no problem. The challenges presented in this supplement should be diverse and substantial enough to try the abilities of players running the most formidable of characters.

This supplement should be helpful for the Administrator who prefers a less structured game as well. If the Administrator wishes to run a campaign in a near future that's reasonably familiar, yet different enough to allow for more imaginative adventuring, or if the Administrator prefers the PCs in his campaign not be tied to a particular hierarchic organization, but rather, move from assignment to assignment as true free agents, then he or she should be able to make good use of this supplement.

Regions of F.R.E.E. America

The Megastate of Greater Massachusetts (MGM)

Few of the smaller New England states were enthusiastic about joining in an alliance with the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts. After all, since the time Roger Williams and his followers were run out of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and formed Rhode Island, the people of Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island have looked upon Boston with a great deal of suspicion. An alliance with Massachusetts, they thought with good reason, would strip them of their individual identities. But in the end, they had no choice. Then, as now, the states were hardly self-sufficient, and if they were to isolate themselves from Massachusetts, that left the MAA as their only link to the rest of the country. As unpalatable as Boston might be, New York City was considerably worse. Rhode Island, isolated from the rest of New England after Connecticut joined the MAA, was the first to agree to the new union, and in a matter of months, the other states gave in and joined as well.


What Massachusetts wanted out of the alliance was power, both political and hydroelectrical. Though the other states were loath to admit it, Boston had always been the cultural capital of New England, and a formalization of that relationship was a longtime goal of Massachusetts, even if it was largely unstated. On a more practical basis, there was the matter of electricity. The overwhelming political sentiment in Massachusetts was anti-nuclear power. Though the state could prevent any new plants from coming on-line within its borders (since the federal Nuclear Regulatory Commission had grown ineffective), it could not prevent them from being built elsewhere in the region.

Massachusetts was incapable of producing enough electrical power itself to run its high-tech industry and had to import power from elsewhere, logically from the other New England states. Scientists had determined that newer, more efficient hydroelectricity generating technology, combined with alternative energy sources and conservation, could provide for Massachusetts' electrical power needs well into the 21st century.

But Massachusetts didn't have the mountains to make that technology feasible, and the cost of implementing that technology was high enough that the northern New England states committed to nuclear power. Seabrook had finally come on-line in New Hampshire, and other nuclear plants were planned in that state, Vermont, and even Maine. Since federal court decrees had become a joke, the only way Massachusetts could decommission Seabrook, and prevent the other nuclear projects from coming on-line, was to exercise direct control over the entire region. That meant the creation of the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts, and by the mid- nineties the deed was done.

Though New Englanders' fears of seeing their regional identities become less distinct have come to pass, the trade-off is they live in the region of F.R.E.E. America which boasts the highest standard of living in the country. With the various calamities that hit the Pacific Coast, the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts has become the leader in high-tech industry in F.R.E.E. America, and, for that matter, the world. Jobs are plentiful and wages are high, so the state has been able to take over most of the sort of social programs formerly provided by the federal government. Though all of this has its downside—the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts has just about the highest taxes and cost of living in F.R.E.E. America—for the most part, the state's citizens are prosperous enough to accept the trade-off.

For years, the high-tech industrial regions of the SASD (primarily Atlanta and the Research Triangle area in North Carolina) have been trying to usurp MGM as the high-tech leader of F.R.E.E. America. But with the destruction of Cal Tech in the earthquake of 1992 and the demise of



Stanford after the Mount Lassen eruption the next year, M.I.T. is the unquestioned leader among leading-edge research universities in F.R.E.E.America. Though high-tech companies in the SASD have been able to muscle in on the action of MGM concerns as technologies become older and more widespread, the constant innovation brought to the industry by a research dynamo the caliber of M.I.T. ensures MGM's dominance in the field, and its enviable standard of living.

Which is not to say there are not problems. Though Bostonians look upon the efforts of the SASD to overtake MGM as the leader of high-tech industry with condescending derision, they view the threat posed by the burgeoning corporatism of nearby MAA conglomerates with genuine fear. Many of the former giants in the Massachusetts high-tech industry have fallen prey to corporate raiders and have sunk into virtual ruin. MAA arbitragers only value the bottom line of the next quarter's financial statement and see little point in engaging in long-term, expensive research. Thus, when a MGM company is acquired by an MAA concern, invariably the research scientists it employs are let go, and the valuable technologies they developed are franchised to any company willing to pay for them. If the company retains a presence in MGM at all, it is usually as a low-tech manufacturer of high-tech components, offering employment which doesn't pay enough to afford the region's high cost of living.

This suspicion of the MAA in general, and New York City in particular, has created quite a dilemma for erstwhile high-tech entrepreneurs in New England. Research scientists who develop, or at least theorize, commercially viable technologies are fearful of raising capital, for if they make stock offerings, they leave themselves vulnerable to takeover attempts if they become successful. One unaffiliated Boston bank, identifying this problem, began offering bonding services to small high-tech companies and became quite successful. Unfortunately, the bank itself was acquired by a Wall Street broker in a leveraged buyout, and as a result, several companies that had been considered "safe" have been ravaged by MAA arbitragers.

Due to the corporate raiding indulged in by the New York arbitragers, MGM's companies needed the protection of a "white knight" (i.e., a person, or persons, who can protect a company from hostile take-overs). MGM acknowledges the debt the state and its industry owes to the Flanagan twins, Orville and Wilbur, MGM's white knights.

Orville saw economic benefit in the consolidation of the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts' high-tech industry, and, using a substantial portion of the family fortune, began bringing a number of small, leading-edge companies under the umbrella of his Cambridge United Technological Industries (CUTI, or, as it is widely known, "Cutey"). Wilbur, in turn, expanded the involvement of M.I.T.'s foundation in local industry, offering loans to new research companies and licensing the school's patents with favorable terms to MGM concerns.

The success of these ventures was phenomenal. M.I.T. helped get a company going, and, once it was successful, Cutey would acquire it, with the understanding that they would continue the research started by the company's founders. There was some grumbling, some complained that Cutey was becoming too big and powerful, but since the alternatives were accepting the paternalistic oversight of Cutey or being left vulnerable to attack by MAA sharks, most accepted the situation. True, some complained that Wilbur Flanagan, as the second-largest stockholder in the privately held Cutey, had a conflict of interests when he would allow the school he headed to fund the emergence of Cutey's takeover targets. But everybody seemed to be doing better as a result, and nobody said much about it.

By the late-nineties, Cutey was recognized worldwide as the leader in high-tech industry. It controlled close to three-quarters of the MGM leading-edge companies, including virtually all of the bio-medical concerns. But this presented another problem. With most of the world's leading-edge industry and research concentrated in one company, the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts rose to the top of the itinerary for all manner of spies, from those working for foreign governments to those working for competing companies.

Within days of MGM's incorporation as a state, the Soviet Union offered to recognize it as a sovereign country. The governor politely refused, since it was obvious all the Soviets wanted to do was establish an embassy from which they could more conveniently conduct espionage activity. (The Soviets instead quadrupled the size of their trade mission, and now its staff is larger than that of the Soviet embassy in Washington, D.C.)

The Japanese, before embarking on their adventures in Detroit, discussed buying up land in Rhode Island and moving their embassy there, but no consensus could be reached on how to distribute any information that might be gained, and the matter was dropped. China's tack was to "extend the hand of friendship across the oceans and the cultures" and establish a college exchange program with Northeastern University; while the Beijing University campus in Boston is teeming with "students," only a handful of Chinese culture scholars are enrolled at Northeastern's campus in Beijing. Many other countries have responded similarly; Libya, Israel, South Africa, Brazil, even Canada and European Community countries have sent their undercover agents to Boston in an effort to develop technology on the cheap. If anything, the influx of industrial spies (primarily from companies headquartered in the SASD) is even more pronounced.

The state government, which was never strong on law enforcement, simply has neither the will nor the resources to do much about the industrial spying. Crude attempts by unsophisticated agents from Third World countries are often thwarted, but for the most part, the espionage activity continues unchecked.

Initially, Cutey tried fighting the problem with its own hard-nosed, in-house security, but rather than protect the company, the operation became a clearinghouse for bribes, and espionage became easier, not more difficult. After a couple of years, Cutey pressed charges against every member of its security apparatus, disbanded it, and ever since, has been at a loss for effective countermeasures.

While Cutey fumbles around for a way to keep its vast store of military and technological secrets

secure, those who would pilfer them are becoming increasingly proficient. Of those agents who are in the employ of foreign governments, Sergei Petrokov, the high-ranking KGB officer who's nominally the head of the Soviet Union's trade mission in Boston, is unquestionably the smoothest.

Glasnost and *perestroika* altered the structure of the Soviet Union and brought about fundamental changes in U.S.-Soviet relations. But the most significant change was the transformation of Soviet bureaucratic culture. Being able to spew forth the party line in perfect cadence no longer counts for much in the Soviet Union; charisma and pragmatism are far more important qualities for career-minded bureaucrats. Petrokov is the culmination of the changes *glasnost* and *perestroika* have brought about.

To say that underneath his jovial front, Petrokov is utterly ruthless would be to miss the point. Certainly, behind the refined glad-handing is a cold, calculating, scheming mind. But in his current position, ruthlessness gains him little. If it would, he'd display it, but since it doesn't, he plays the role of Soviet social gadfly to perfection. He carefully sizes up every MGM high-tech hotshot he encounters—his estimations of character are rarely off the mark.

Having laid the foundation for Soviet espionage activity, Petrokov leaves the rest of the operation to his underlings. This operation, the part hidden from public view behind the doors of the Soviet trade mission, is both extensive and efficient. Electronic files are maintained on virtually everybody working at a high-tech company in MGM. A computer evaluates the employees' educational background, credit history, and other factors to determine those most likely to be susceptible to Soviet undercover advances. The computer, when combined with Petrokov's personal judgments, is very rarely wrong, and thus, the Soviets manage to obtain most of what they seek.

Almost as efficient among the foreign agents is Ruriko Nakeshita, the "Emerald Dragon." Officially, Nakeshita is the special assistant to the Japanese consul in Boston. But in actuality, the consulate exists only to serve the needs of

Nakeshita and her spy organization. Consuls may come and go, but Nakeshita stays on as a "special assistant" to each of them.

Nakeshita is not technically in the employ of the Japanese government, at least not as a spy. The Japanese, notorious sticklers for legal detail, would find it absolutely abhorrent for someone working for the government to be stealing secrets from a principal ally. Instead, Nakeshita's services are paid for by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party and are furnished for the benefit of the party's major industrial patrons. Once a month, Nakeshita compiles a list of trade secrets she's recently acquired (or believes she'll soon have available) and how much she spent or estimates it will cost to get them. The various Japanese industrial concerns she serves then go through the catalogue and tell her which ones they can use. If Nakeshita accepted major bank cards, her operation would be nothing more than a mail-order spy business.

Nakeshita's methods are crude, but time-honored and effective: She keeps a retinue of professional escorts on retainer to assist her in her spying. Ranging from the grungiest back-alley streetwalkers to the most expensive, sophisticated courtesans, they charm or blackmail the desired information out of a target, depending on what method seems most expeditious. Nakeshita, when she deems it the most effective way to secure a bit of information, will do the dirty work herself. When she was first establishing her reputation in the espionage trade, she did most of the work herself. She juggled two or three encounters a day. Now, her administrative duties take up most of her time and she has restricted herself to the most critical assignments, working on only one or two cases at any given time.

The preponderance of espionage activity in the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts has caused Cutey and other high-tech companies to make some sort of response. More and more, companies have been turning to independent operators to handle their security matters. These IOs, being loyal only to themselves, are, of course, completely untrustworthy, but then, companies' in-house security forces proved to be horrible security risks

as well. Most companies decided it was better to deal with IOs whose motives they suspected than with corrupt security departments whose trustworthiness they expected.

The most prominent security consultancy agency to rise out of this situation is Hammer Associates, founded and led by Thor Bjornsen. Bjornsen was a deputy chief of security at Cutey until he was thrown out along with the rest of the security force a few years ago.

Bjornsen is remarkably candid about how he does business: He works exclusively for the highest bidder. This means if a foreign agent or industrial spy is willing to pay more for a secret than he is receiving for guarding it, he'll sell the secret. What makes Bjornsen unique is his complete honesty about his corruption. He openly conducts bidding wars for the secrets he's supposedly protecting and he always offers the companies for which he's working the right of first refusal on an offer.

Within these admittedly warped parameters, Bjornsen is completely trustworthy. Bjornsen never sells a secret without first telling his client that he's going to do so, and those secrets he does not sell he protects with a particularly effective brutality. Bjornsen and his men are well trained and heavily armed. And they always shoot first and ask questions later.

When Hammer Associates discover a breach of security, its source is always removed quickly and discreetly. On the few occasions where the source of a breach has turned out to be Hammer Associates employee earning a bit of free-lance income, Bjornsen has taken care of matters personally and in a particularly nasty fashion.

Hammer Associates dominates the security consultancy business in MGM because everyone is too terrified of Bjornsen to challenge his preeminence in the field. But Bjornsen's operation is chronically understaffed. He always has trouble finding people who meet his strict standards for training, and thus, often has to subcontract work to IOs in the area. Though he depends heavily on IOs and doesn't care if they handle security matters for

some of the smaller companies in the area, if any IOs start muscling in on what Bjornsen considers to be his action, Bjornsen will move viciously against them.

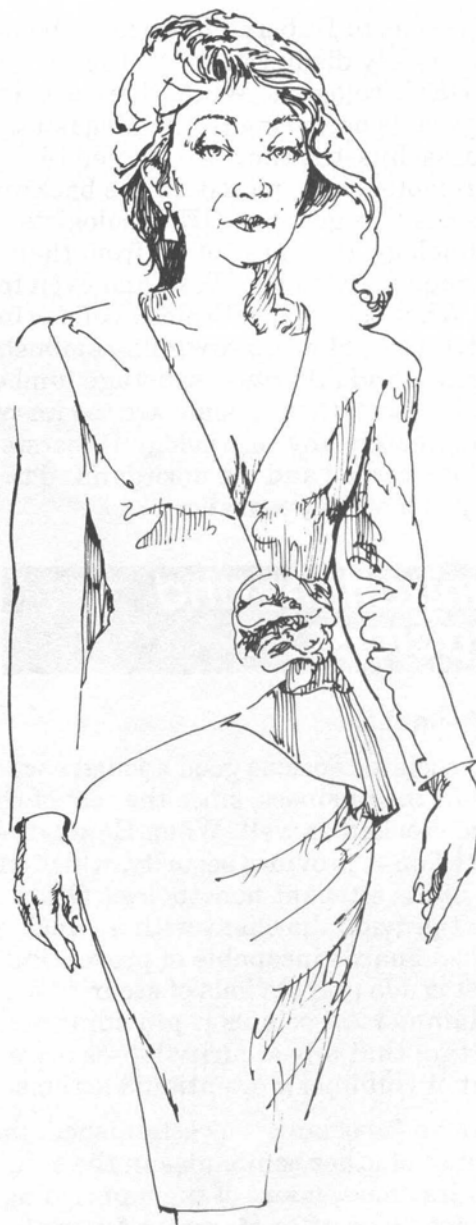
When Bjornsen first established Hammer Associates, there were probably half a dozen prominent security consultancy operations in MGM. Within six months of its establishment, Hammer Associates was the predominant company in the field, as the heads of the other outfits had all died mysteriously and, consequently, their operations had fallen into ruin.

Currently, the primary concern for Hammer Associates, as well as for every IO in MGM, is locating Dr. Harvey Duberstein. Until he disappeared six months ago, Duberstein was the head of biomedical research for Cutey and was rumored to be on the verge of a major breakthrough in genetic engineering. The exact nature of that breakthrough is unclear.

Duberstein was a loner and had been given a free hand by Cutey to pursue his research independently. When he disappeared, all of his notes disappeared with him. What happened to Duberstein can only be conjectured. He has no family, and nobody knows him very well, so the reasons for his disappearance are murky at best.

Rumors persist that he's working for the Chinese; whether he was a closet radical who joined them willingly or whether they grabbed him and his notes is anybody's guess. Others insist they saw him socializing with Sergei Petrokov (or that they saw him checking into a suburban motel with Ruriko Nakeshita) and suggest the rumor about the Chinese is merely a fabrication devised by the Soviets or the Japanese to cover their tracks. Old-timers insist something this dark and mysterious has to be the work of the Web, though they can't decide whether it's WebOne or WebTwo.

Some theorize that Duberstein had developed something of particular use to the GENEcology movement and he's joined up with them, perhaps against his will. Then there's the possibility so horrible that few even dare countenance it, that it wasn't somebody which took Duberstein, but rath-



Ruriko Nakeshita

er, *something*, a sentient product of his research that has gone terribly, terribly wrong.

Of the theories as to Duberstein's whereabouts, the one most easily dismissed is the theory tying him to the GENEcologists. While there are active GENEcology cells operating in the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts, they are located in extremely remote areas, mostly in the backwoods of Maine. Since this group of GENEcologists eschew technology, they are cut off from their far more numerous peers in the West, and even from each other. What these GENEcology cells primarily do is spike trees, blow up sawmills, ambush logging parties, and otherwise sabotage lumber operations. In short, these people are too unsophisticated to appreciate any technology Duberstein might have developed and too disorganized to have arranged his disappearance.

Organizations and Characters

Hammer Associates

Hammer Associates does as good a job at security as anybody in the business, since the rest of the agencies are crooked as well. When Hammer Associates is hired on it provides security, which may be corrupt, but is efficient nonetheless. Other agencies just provide the client with a bunch of poorly trained guards incapable of preventing any but the most crude and obvious of security breaches. When Hammer Associates is providing services, it's certain that any security lapses are a direct result of Hammer's intentional actions.

When Hammer Associates was established, there were a number of other companies in the security consultancy business, many of them providing quality service. Soon after Hammer Associates came on the scene, the other companies began losing contracts to Hammer. If they didn't lose contracts they suffered from mysterious accidents which caused irreversible declines in the companies' fortunes. Some say that Bjornsen has organized (and leads) a group of highly skilled Hammer Associates operatives who regularly

assassinate rivals and extort the presidents of their client companies into hiring or retaining Hammer. Others claim Bjornsen himself never gets involved and gains plausible deniability by hiring such work out to independent operators. However it's done, it's indisputable that Hammer Associates is involved in a lot of dirty business.

Hammer Associates is a place where down-and-out IOs can always find work. Bjornsen's standards are exacting; his organization may be corrupt, but it's efficient, and to maintain that efficiency, he only hires the best-trained individuals. Because there aren't many people like that around, Bjornsen is chronically understaffed. Though he prefers people with police training and a knowledge of security systems, Bjornsen will hire just about anybody with good combat skills. Bjornsen pays well, but not great—any IO with a free-lance gig will do better—but it beats the hell out of hanging around the office waiting for somebody to call up with a job.

Any IO who considers going to work for Bjornsen should keep one thing in mind: Bjornsen is not a man to double-cross. Bjornsen understands and accepts IOs leaving his employ to make more money elsewhere, but anybody who tries to make a little money on the side by dealing technological secrets will earn an enemy for life. When Bjornsen's the enemy, that life generally doesn't last long.

Rules Section

Thor Bjornsen

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
72	43	66	69	39	69	55
Sex	Male					
Race	White					
Nationality	U.S.					
Native Language	English					
Age	34					
Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (Low), Passion (Some), Piety (None), Sanity (High), Selfishness (High)						
Tags: Cold-blooded, obscene language						

Advantages: Eye-hand Coordination (3), Observation (3), Toughness (2)

Disadvantages: Allergies (2), Deep Sleeper (2), Gambling (2), Lechery (2)

Skills: Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3), Rifle (3), Submachine Gun (3), Shotgun (2), Basic Melee (1), Oriental Martial Arts (3), Ballistics (1), Concealment (2), Fingerprinting (1), Interrogation (3), Lockpicking (3), Safecracking (2), Shadowing (3), Stealth (2), Surveillance (3), Security Systems (3), Driving/Automobile (2), First Aid (2), Radio Operator (1)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Thor Bjornsen was the deputy chief of security at Cutey until Orville Flanagan got disgusted with the security leaks and fired his security staff, pressing various corruption charges against them. Though most of his fellow Cutey security officers wound up serving long prison terms, Bjornsen didn't. The witnesses against him either died or left the country before his trial, and the charges against him were dropped.

Once his legal problems were cleared up, Bjornsen started Hammer Associates, his own private security agency—after all, who's better at spotting security breaches than somebody who's been using them to his advantage?—and he now furnishes security guards to most of the Greater Massachusetts' high-tech firms.

Occasionally, other employees have gotten into free-lance information selling, stealing some secret or another that Bjornsen has vowed to protect. On these occasions, Bjornsen has taken matters into his own hands and removed the perpetrator in an unusually brutal fashion. Hammer Associates employees are acutely aware of this through the company grapevine, and nowadays, generally keep their noses clean. However, outsiders working for competing companies who might be enticed to do some free-lance espionage work are not as familiar with Bjornsen's reputation and don't have the combat skills to stand up to him.

Bjornsen's penchant for revenge has disrupted the espionage networks that Sergei Petrokov and Ruriko Nakeshita have taken such care to establish, and now, they both have longstanding contracts out on Bjornsen. However, Bjornsen's considerable law enforcement training makes him a formidable opponent in combat, and his proclivity for the trade makes him cautious as well, so he remains a thorn in the side for these two foreign agents. Conversely, Bjornsen knows that these two are the source of most espionage activity, so he keeps them under constant surveillance.

Rules Section

Orville Flanagan

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
63	104	26	58(48)*45(35)*	84	65	

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	46

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (Some), Passion (High), Piety (None), Sanity (Some), Selfishness (High)

Tags: Paranoid

Advantages: Light Sleeper (2)

Disadvantages: Cowardice (4), Phobias (2)

Skills: Electronics (1), Computer Technician (3), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3), Submachine Gun (3), Shotgun (1), Disguise (1), Security Systems (3), Driving/Automobile (2), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (3), Literature/Journalism (1), Basic Science (1), Astronomy/Math/Physics (3), Engineering/Electrical (3), Robotics (3), Foreign Language (French—2, German—1, Greek—3, Italian—4)

Metability: Enhanced intelligence. This increased intelligence has led, in turn, to a 10-point decrease in his WIL and CON.

End Rules Section

Background: The twin brother of Wilbur Flanagan, Orville comes from a prominent Boston Irish-Catholic family and performed with distinction as a student at the sort of exclusive private schools people of his social standing attend. However, once he enrolled at M.I.T. with his brother and began pursuing studies in high-tech electrical engineering, his real aptitude emerged.

Like Wilbur, Orville Flanagan found the academic environment comforting and stayed longer than he needed to, completing a number of degree programs. Upon finally completing his studies, Orville accepted a position on the M.I.T. faculty, and in just a few years, worked his way up to heading the foundation M.I.T. set up to oversee research and license the technologies the school develops.

Orville eventually left M.I.T. to establish Cambridge United Technological Industries (Cutey) so he could spend more time pursuing his particular research interests. Once he got in the private sector, he saw how undercapitalized a number of the region's high-tech companies were, and began consolidating them into Cutey to put them on firmer ground financially.

Soon, this activity took over his life. With the tacit help of his brother Wilbur, who by now was president of M.I.T., Orville soon built Cutey into the largest and most significant high-tech conglomerate in F.R.E.E.America, and for that matter, the world.

But the more powerful Cutey, and by extension, Orville, became, the more Orville withdrew from the public eye. Nowadays, Orville Flanagan is little more than a paranoid recluse, rarely leaving his suite of offices at the main Cutey building in Cambridge. Orville has developed a severe phobia about cleanliness, and has become so concerned about the ill effects of pesticides, that all the food he eats (he's become a vegetarian as well) is grown in a greenhouse on company grounds. Orville will still carry on a phone conversation—in fact, that's how he spends most of each day—but other than his personal assistants and bodyguards, the only person who has personal contact with him is Wilbur Flanagan, and even he is considering having Orville declared incompetent.

Rules Section

Wilbur Flanagan

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
58	103	33	59(49)*50(40)*	81	81	68

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	46

Psychology: Cruelty (Some), Loyalty (Some), Passion (High), Piety (None), Sanity (High), Selfishness (High)

Tags: Womanizer

Advantages: Sensuality (2)

Disadvantages: Deep Sleeper (2), Lechery (2), Vindictiveness (2)

Skills: Electronics (1), Computer Technician (3), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (2), Off-hand Shooting (1), Basic Melee (1), Oriental Martial Arts (2), Driving/Automobile (2), Driving/Motorcycle (2), Navigation (2), Sailing (2), Skiing (3), Swimming (1), Bureaucratics (3), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (2), Basic Science (1), Astronomy/Math/Physics (3), Chemistry (2), Engineering/Electrical (3), Engineering/Mechanical (3), Computer Programming (3), Robotics (2), Artificial Intelligence (3), Foreign Language (French—2, German—4)

Metability: Enhanced intelligence. As with his twin brother, Orville, this increased intelligence has led, in turn, to a 10-point decrease in his WIL and CON.

End Rules Section

Background: Wilbur Flanagan took even longer to complete his studies than Orville, and like Orville, once he finally finished up, he took a faculty position at M.I.T. Possibly the most brilliant member of an extraordinarily brilliant staff, Wilbur worked his way up to chairman of the engineering department, and from there assumed the presidency of the school.

As president of M.I.T., Wilbur began using the school's foundation resources to help develop MGM high-tech industry, giving start-up loans to entrepreneur/scientists (most of them M.I.T. graduates) who would locate in the region. This practice gave Orville the chance to determine which new companies would develop commercially viable technologies and thus, which ones to absorb into Cutey, at no financial risk. Since Wilbur is the second-largest stockholder in Cutey, this, of course, further enriched him, but if anybody noticed or cared, they didn't speak up.

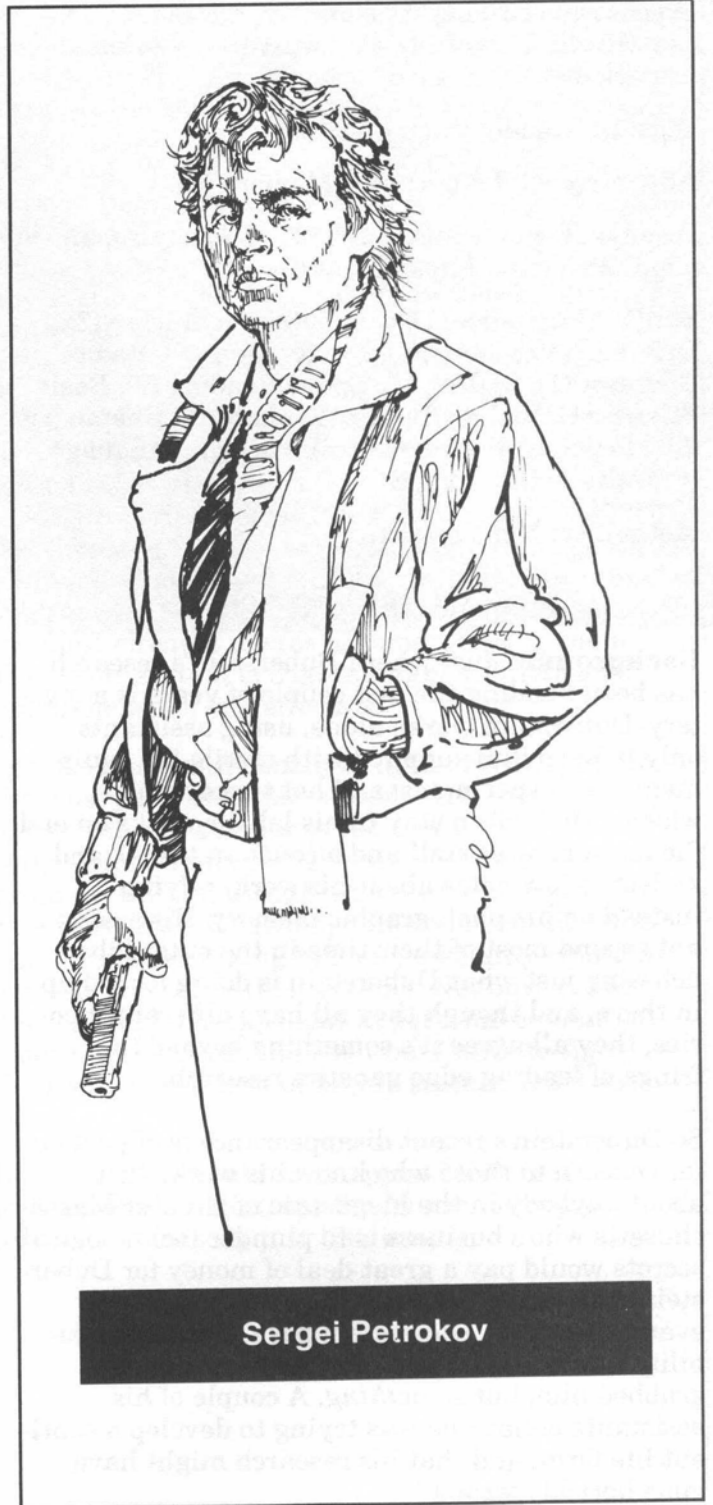
Wilbur Flanagan's ability to manipulate foundation money to aid local industry and help ensure the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts' position as F.R.E.E.America's high-tech leader has made him one of the most powerful men in the region; once, when he was being mentioned as a possible gubernatorial candidate, he remarked that he could hardly imagine that he'd take a position of diminished prominence.

Where Orville has become more withdrawn as he's become more powerful, Wilbur's done just the opposite, becoming a mainstay of the society gossip columns. He's become a notorious womanizer as well. He's maintained an on-again, off-again affair with Ruriko Nakeshita for several years, and she and her underlings have entrapped him so many times, it's become routine; Wilbur just laughs it off and phones Nakeshita every couple of weeks to feed her information. These actions haven't escaped the notice of Thor Bjornsen, and it would appear that he, or anybody else who wanted to really get at Wilbur Flanagan, could do so easily through an attractive female.

Rules Section

Harvey Duberstein

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
39	75	67	28	50	58	71
Sex	Male					
Race	White					
Nationality	U.S.					
Native Language	English					
Age	44					



Sergei Petrokov

Psychology: Cruelty (Some), Loyalty (Some), Passion (High), Piety (Little), Sanity (Some), Selfishness (Some)

Tags: Extremely thick glasses

Advantages: Photographic Memory (6)

Disadvantages: Clumsiness (2), Hearing Impairment (2), Vision Impairment (2)

Skills: Electronics (1), Computer Technician (2), Driving/Automobile (2), Lip Reading (3), Radio Operator (1), Sailing (2), Speed Reading (2), Basic Science (1), Biology/Botany/Zoology (3), Chemistry (3), Medicine (3), Genetics (3), Foreign Language (French—4, Russian—3)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Just where Duberstein's research has been heading the last couple of years is a mystery. Duberstein works alone, using assistants only to keep him supplied with sterile lab equipment, fresh specimens, and hot turkey sandwiches. He'll often stay in his lab for weeks on end (he has a shower stall and a couch in there), and he leaves few notes about his work, relying instead on his photographic memory. His assistants spend most of their time in the outer labs debating just what Duberstein is doing locked up in there, and though they all have different theories, they all agree it's something beyond the fringe of leading edge genetics research.

So Duberstein's recent disappearance is of particular concern to those who know his work. Just about anybody in the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts who's business is to plunder technological secrets would pay a great deal of money for Duberstein, and Cutey's Orville Flanagan would pay even more to get Duberstein back. But the possibility remains that it wasn't somebody who grabbed him, but *something*. A couple of his assistants believe he was trying to develop a sentient life form, and that his research might have gone horribly wrong.

Rules Section

Ruriko Nakeshita "The Emerald Dragon"

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
36	75	55	68	43	46	65

Sex	Female
Race	Oriental
Nationality	Japanese
Height	5'
Weight	95 pounds
Native Language	Japanese
Age	32

Psychology: Cruelty (Total), Loyalty (High), Passion (Little), Piety (None), Sanity (Little), Selfishness (High)

Tags: Cold and aloof

Advantages: Attractive Appearance (3)

Disadvantages: Mood Swings (3)

Skills: Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3), Off-hand Firing (2), Rifle (3), Sniper Rifle (3), Submachine Gun (1), Basic Melee (1), Oriental Martial Arts (3), Cryptography (3), Booby Traps (1), Forgery (2), Interrogation (3), Lockpicking (3), Safecracking (3), Stealth (2), Surveillance (1), Security Systems (3), Acting (2), Photography (3), Social Chameleon (3), Swimming (1), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (2), History/Political Science (3), Foreign Language (English—5, French—3)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Ruriko Nakeshita has practiced her trade in Boston for so long that everybody knows she is a spy. Yet that doesn't seem to hamper her effectiveness. All sorts of men in prominent positions, despite being warned about her, have gotten involved with Nakeshita, mistakenly thinking that they would have no trouble controlling the situation with such a diminutive woman. Every last one of them has been wrong: The Emerald Dragon always gets what she wants out of a relationship.

Though she is officially designated as a "special assistant" to the Japanese consul in Boston, she reports directly to Ambassador Masohiro Kinoshita. She's actually not an employee of the Japanese

government at all, but rather, she works for the ruling Liberal Democratic Party, which in turn provides her services to the Japanese industrial concerns whose interests the party represents.

There is nothing to directly link Nakeshita to acts of violence, but certainly, Nakeshita has the ability, and more importantly, the emotional makeup to kill without hesitation or conscience.

The best advice to give to an IO who is approached by Nakeshita is run away. Far away. Quickly. Nakeshita is absolutely emotionless, totally insincere, and possesses a degenerating grip on her sanity, making her just about the most dangerous single individual in F.R.E.E.America.

Rules Section

Sergei Petrokov

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
66	68	53	78	51	60	61

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.S.R.
Native Language	Russian
Age	42

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (High), Passion (Little), Piety (None), Sanity (Total), Selfishness (Little)

Tags: Engaging manner

Advantages: Observation (3), Presence (3)

Disadvantages: Deep Sleeper (2), Night Blindness (2), Vision Impairment (2)

Skills: Electronics (1), Computer Technician (2), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3), Off-hand Firing (3), Rifle (3), Sniper Rifle (3), Basic Melee (1), Knife (3), Oriental Martial Arts (2), Interrogation (3), Lock-picking (2), Safecracking (1), Surveillance (2), Security Systems (3), Acting (2), Fine Arts (1), Musical Instrument (Conductor—2), Parachuting (1), Skiing (2), Swimming (2), Gleaning (3), Persuasion (3), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Basic Science (1), Astronomy/Math/Physics (3), Foreign Language (English—5, French—3)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Sergei Petrokov is a shining example of the new breed of Soviet KGB operative—engaging, urbane, not rigidly dogmatic, and probably more dangerous than his predecessors.

Officially, Petrokov is the head of the Soviet trade mission in Boston, but practically everybody realizes he's a KGB spy. He's never been expelled because he's careful not to be directly linked to any operation and the authorities reason that they know Petrokov and his methods and would just have to start from scratch with his replacement.

Petrokov is a popular figure on the Boston social circuit, and though he's genuinely outgoing at these functions, he uses them to size up the important figures in the MGM high-tech industry. Petrokov then cross-references these impressions with computer evaluations of the same personnel and determines the vulnerability of key figures and the most efficient means of compromising them. The whole system is frighteningly sophisticated, comprehensive, and efficient.

Petrokov has many enemies in the MGM, but for the most part, he's unassailable. His interests have often run counter to those of Ruriko Nakeshita; out of mutual respect, they generally avoid each other, though when it seems mutually beneficial, they'll exchange information. IOs who might consider taking him on personally would be advised to rethink their actions: Not only is Petrokov a formidable opponent in personal combat, in order to get to him, the IOs would have to fight their way past a host of highly trained KGB operatives.

Besides, what would be the point? If Petrokov were to be taken out, the Soviets would replace him with somebody just like him.

The Middle Atlantic Alliance (MAA)

In the past, political demagogues of various stripes used to refer to a vague group they called the "Eastern establishment." What they meant by this term was never entirely clear, and its meaning changed according to the political leanings of the speaker. Sometimes the term would refer to the federal bureaucracy in Washington, D.C. At other times, it would be used to mean the powerful financial institutions situated in New York City. Others would use the term to attack both conservative and liberal "think tanks" which were located in and around Washington, D.C., which were influential, but not answerable to anyone. Still others would apply the term to the military-industrial complex centered in the Pentagon.

But no matter how one defines "Eastern establishment," it was, in effect, formalized as a political entity with the establishment of the Middle Atlantic Alliance in the mid-nineties. Made up of Maryland, Delaware, New Jersey, Connecticut, eastern Pennsylvania, and New York, the MAA lent credence to everybody's worst fear concerning the Eastern establishment, and, not surprisingly, it is the one regional alliance that people from every other regional alliance can find cause to fear and detest.

People in the high-tech industry in the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts are positively paranoid about the predatory acquisition practices of Wall Street stock traders. Those practices are likewise despised by people in the SASD, who deeply resent the frequent attempts by the federal judiciary to apply Constitutional precepts to the region's law enforcement apparatus.

Like people in MGM and the SASD, people in the GLA are also nervous about the MAA's arbitragers. Ever since the early nineties, when Wall

Street settled the problem of controlling the stock futures market by essentially hijacking the Chicago Mercantile Exchange to New York City, folks in the GLA have resented the fact that a bunch of Easterners were determining the price of Midwestern agricultural products. Those in the OLMBC blame the MAA's inefficient federal bureaucrats for the desperate economic circumstances in which they currently find themselves. People out in the RMA have long wanted bureaucrats to resolve their schizoid federal land use policies and either effectively manage the land or turn it over to the local governments. With good reason, nobody on the Pacific Coast thinks the federal government did nearly enough to help the region recover from an unprecedented string of natural disasters and ecological calamities. And as for Texas, well, Texans never much liked people from back East to begin with.

But the MAA still has its allure; those seeking wealth or power remain attracted by the possibilities it holds. The MAA is definitely the big time. A region for high rollers and hard-nosed operators, certainly not for the fainthearted. Yet, in a weird sort of way, the MAA is still a very egalitarian place. Anyone with sufficient drive, cunning, and unscrupulousness can come to the MAA and make a fortune.

As federal officials became more inefficient at regulating securities trading, practices on Wall Street became more outrageous. Nowadays, things have degenerated to the point where everybody working on Wall Street approaches deals from the perspective that all traders are fundamentally dishonest and will do anything possible to gain an advantage.

Professional conduct has become so reprehensible that even out and out scams such as pyramid schemes and sales of fraudulent securities are tolerated. The more imaginative schemes are actually admired by Wall Street players, while the crude ones are merely dismissed with a shrug—*caveat emptor*—and never mind if the victim was a now-destitute widow from Nebraska who didn't understand today's rules.

In other words, today's MAA, especially its center, New York City, is a mean and nasty place. It is an environment in which, more than at any other time in any other place, people's value as human beings is determined by the amount of money they have and the amount of power they wield. Consumption, the more conspicuous the better, is the primary pastime of those who choose to play the game in the MAA. This in turn, has created a variety of odd service jobs, for everybody from IOs gathering intelligence on rival traders, to hunters slaughtering songbirds so their tongues can be served up as hors d'oeuvres. About the only type of seamy operators who haven't found work in the MAA these days are blackmailers, because unless one is discovered slipping off to church on Sunday, there's no type of behavior the Wall Street crowd would choose to hide.

Needless to say, amidst all this decadent materialism, concern for the underprivileged has sunk to an all-time low. There still are frequent displays of private largess—this or that tycoon sponsoring the opera for a season or buying a Van Gogh for an art museum—but these actions are undertaken with the knowledge they'll receive a lot of media coverage, not because it is for the public good. Acts of genuine charity are not merely scorned, they're seen as signs of a weak character.

But for every action, there is a counteraction. The MAA's rampant materialism has been met head-on by an incredibly violent terrorist group—Migrant Revenge.

Migrant Revenge started during a demonstration by homeless activists on Wall Street. The demonstrators, led by activist Eleanor Perkins, were lying in the street to protest the lack of adequate housing for the homeless in the city. A prominent Wall Street trader, angered by the delay and not wanting to take the time to drive several blocks out of his way to avoid the protesters, ordered his chauffeur to drive his limousine over the demonstrators. After reaching the other side, the trader had the chauffeur get out and hand several hundred dollar bills to each of the policemen monitoring the proceedings. Perkins, who wasn't injured, demanded the police arrest the man. The cops at

first tried to ignore her, but as Perkins remained persistent and the on-looking businessmen's laughter grew louder, they threatened to arrest her if she didn't immediately leave the scene.

Perkins, though furious, gave in to the reality of the situation and returned to the homeless shelter she operated and fumed. She was still seething with rage three days later. Late that night, having traced the limo's license plate to an estate on Long Island, she drove there, shot the guard at the gate, broke out a back window, and entered the trader's bedroom. In her rage, Perkins committed an unspeakable act: The brutal and violent murder of the trader and his mistress. The details of this murder are too gruesome to repeat.

Needless to say, this act unhinged Perkins and the thought occurred to her: Though the wealth and power of this new breed of traders made them unapproachable in most regards, they would die just like anybody else. The course of Perkins' political protest was suddenly clear. The next day, a package arrived at the trader's brokerage house containing the head of the guard and a message, scrawled in blood, that read, "Migrant Revenge." The businessmen weren't laughing anymore.

Migrant Revenge's tactics are painfully simple: They don't issue demands or proclamations, they just kill, the more senselessly and brutally the better. Their guiding philosophy is only in death do people become truly equal, and anything they can do to hasten that process for the over-privileged class is just. With hundreds of thousands of homeless people living on the streets of New York, Perkins never has a shortage of recruits for her movement. Since these people have little to live for anyway, it usually doesn't much matter to them if they die while carrying out an assassination.

Compounding the problem, as far as the Wall Street heavy hitters are concerned, is that the police don't seem inclined to do anything about Migrant Revenge. If anything, the policemen tend to have similar attitudes toward the rich as Migrant Revenge, even if they don't have the movement's violent tendencies. Police, for the

most part, haven't been targets of Migrant Revenge violence. The only ones who have been victims of a Migrant Revenge assassination are high-ranking officers who demanded crackdowns on the movement.

With police protection wanting, the arbitragers have taken to hiring IOs as bodyguards. But it's work only the most inept or desperate of IOs will undertake. Since Migrant Revenge terrorists attack by surprise and without regard to personal safety, they're tough and dangerous opponents, and the risk to the bodyguards isn't worth the pay. Recently, a couple of abandoned warehouses were discovered containing the bodies of hundreds of homeless people, all of them shot in the back of the head. This lends credence to rumors that some of the wealthier members of the Wall Street crowd have been financing death squads, which nightly sweep the city's streets of the homeless. The effect of these actions apparently hasn't been to reduce the level of Migrant Revenge violence, but to increase it and radicalize more of the city's homeless population. So the big boys on Wall Street are running a bit scared. They've finally encountered an implacable foe who can't be bought off.

But there are still those who are unconcerned by Migrant Revenge's irrational violence. Those who are so rich and powerful they are beyond approach by even Migrant Revenge's actions. Or at least one is. Theodore "Teddy Boy" Herbst, the reigning golden boy of the leveraged deal.

Herbst never leaves the two floors of a skyscraper he's had converted into living quarters; the floors are about two-thirds the way up a 40-story building, and there are no other tenants. Nobody enters the building without passing through three separate checkpoints, the last of which includes a strip search. Nobody enters the elevator to Herbst's suite without being accompanied by four armed guards. At least 100 guards, all of whom are meticulously screened, patrol the building at all times, and their routine is varied from day to day to avoid predictability. Just to be on the safe side, Herbst always wears a Kevlar vest and has a sawed-off shotgun within easy reach. Paranoid?

You bet he is, but Herbst was acting like this long before Migrant Revenge started causing trouble.

And with good reason. There is nobody in the MAA, probably nobody in F.R.E.E.America with more enemies than Teddy-Boy Herbst. As the most wildly successful arbitrager in Wall Street history, he has cheated more people, brought more financial ruin, and acquired more wealth than possibly anybody in history. A good, but not exceptional student at the University of Michigan, he was able to catch on as a broker with a big Wall Street house straight out of college. Once he began working the phones, his talents came to the fore. Though he never was one to spend a great deal of time researching companies, he demonstrated an uncanny ability to know precisely how high and how low a stock would move, and when to buy or sell it accordingly. He also showed a remarkable talent with penny stocks, and was always able to predict which one out of twenty would take off.

The junior brokers at the firm traditionally ran a pool in which everybody would try to predict the final Dow Jones average at the close of every quarter. After Herbst got it correct to two decimal points six straight quarters, everybody else stopped playing.

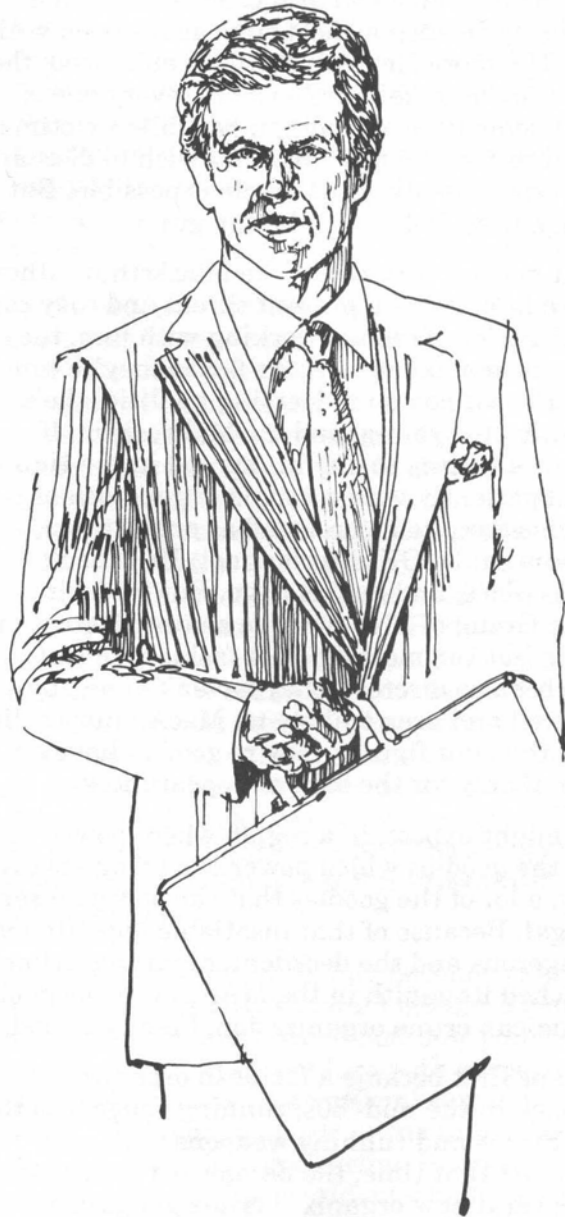
Within a couple of years, Herbst had amassed an sizable fortune—each of the last three quarters that he worked there, he earned more income than even the president of the brokerage house—he used a large chunk of that fortune to buy a seat on the stock exchange and go into business for himself. Freed from the encumbrances of clients, Herbst really began to wheel and deal. In two years' time, he was a billionaire, in another year, his worth had increased tenfold. These days, nobody hazards a guess as to Herbst's net worth (though at any given time, Teddy-Boy can give you a precise figure). Though he is far and away the world's richest man, and since wealth is all he appreciates, he is constantly trying to gain more. If that means throwing hundreds of thousands of people out of work after leveraged takeovers or swindling every last player on Wall Street, that's what he'll do.

Needless to say, Teddy-Boy has acquired a great number of enemies, many of them quite powerful. But none more powerful than Boswell MacArthur. MacArthur, of course, is the world's most famous, successful, and publicity-hungry real estate tycoon. His contempt for Herbst is somewhat surprising, since MacArthur avoids the stock market, and Teddy-Boy rarely has need to dabble in real estate.

Rumors persist that Herbst double-crossed MacArthur when he acquired the skyscraper in which he lives. But the probable reason MacArthur despises Herbst is a matter of style. Before Herbst came along, MacArthur was the media's darling of the financial world. When Herbst's success became more spectacular than MacArthur's, the media became more interested in Teddy-Boy. MacArthur became more active in seeking attention; such as making guest appearances on programs with the most combative talk-show hosts and even allowing reporters to sit in as he negotiated the purchase of a major hotel in New Orleans. (MacArthur insisted the reporters, to get a proper idea of how big-time deals go down, sit through the entire proceeding. When MacArthur and the hotel's owners began discussing how much it would take to pay off the local building inspectors so they wouldn't require a sprinkler system be installed, and the reporters still didn't leave, the deal fell through.)

But no matter how accessible MacArthur made himself to the press, the media, intrigued by Herbst's reclusivity, gave Teddy-Boy more coverage. So MacArthur has decided the only way to regain his proper place in the tabloids is to destroy Herbst, or at the very least, tarnish his whiz-kid reputation.

MacArthur's principal ally in his battle to bring Herbst down is a little-known organization called the Group of Five. There's nothing particularly mysterious or ominous about the Group of Five; they're not very well known because they're not very interesting. The "Five" in the group are the heads of the five largest multinational banks, all of which are headquartered in New York City. These five bankers act in consortium as the Group of Five, not to further their monetary interest per se, but to better represent the interests of the tra-



Theodore "Teddy-Boy" Herbst

ditionally most privileged and powerful people in America: East Coast "old money." They're concerned about so much wealth concentrated in a single entity in such a short time as it's been with Herbst. The more Herbst's status is enhanced, the weaker they become. Furthermore, every one of them, at some time or another, has fallen victim to one of Herbst's schemes, and they wish to discourage his type of dealings as much as possible. But primarily, they just don't like the guy.

For that matter, they don't like MacArthur either, but since he's less of a present threat and they can still make a lot of money working with him, they tolerate his obnoxiousness. As far as they're concerned, Herbst has no redeeming qualities; he's too wealthy, too young, and too Midwestern. If Herbst was willing to buy his spread in the Hamptons and patiently wait a couple of generations before expecting to be accepted as one of them, then he might be OK. But he's not. He doesn't know his place, and he has to go. But far be it from the Group of Five to move against Herbst in anything but the most discreet fashion. In fact, they've been so discreet, they haven't done anything at all and aren't likely to. MacArthur realizes all of this, but figures they're good to have on his side, if only for the sake of appearances.

As one might expect, in a region where power—and all the goodies which power can bring—is everything, a lot of the goodies that the powerful seek are illegal. Because of that insatiable appetite for the dangerous and the decadent, organized crime has reached its zenith in the MAA, in the form of the Jamaican crime organization, Family Dread.

Jamaicans first became a factor in organized crime back in the mid-'80s, running drugs into the United States and running weapons back into Jamaica. At that time, the Jamaicans were just one of several new organized crime gangs composed of various recent immigrant groups. But the Jamaicans quickly proved to be the most violent, and in time, the most successful.

Originally, the Jamaicans just worked out of Florida dealing in marijuana, but soon they switched to importing cocaine, since it was far more profit-

able. This put them in competition with the Colombians, who at that time found it most profitable to control both the production and the importation of the drug. Though the Colombians were no less violent than the Jamaicans, they were pragmatic as well, they soon reevaluated things and decided that the importation end wasn't worth the risk and restricted themselves to production, allowing anyone who could come up with the wholesale price to import their cocaine. A number of ethnic gangs began bringing the stuff into the United States, but the Jamaicans proved the most ruthless, and in a couple of years, controlled cocaine importation and distribution throughout the eastern two-thirds of the country.

But two rival street gangs from Los Angeles started expanding their base of operations, and eventually collided with the Jamaicans in Florida. Consequently, the most bloody gangland violence in American history ensued. Over 1,000 murders in Florida in the early nineties alone were attributed to the battle for control of the coke trade. But nobody could gain the upper hand, as the two California street gangs and the numerous Jamaican gangs kept sapping one another's strength.

When the two L.A. gangs agreed to the "Compact of Blood" and joined forces to pursue mutual interests outside of Los Angeles, things looked hopeless for the disorganized Jamaicans. But Hector Talisman, a gang leader working out of Tampa who headed the largest of the Jamaican gangs, called a meeting of all his hoodlum leader countrymen and laid out his vision, a vision of an all-powerful gang controlling the drug trade throughout the United States. The other Jamaican gang leaders liked what they heard, and though they didn't much like each other, the alternative seemed to be certain annihilation at the hands of the Los Angeles gangs. So the Jamaicans agreed to unite in a single criminal organization under the leadership of Talisman, and Family Dread was born.

Talisman's chief attributes were charisma and organization, and these qualities soon proved sufficient to overcome the California gang alliance. After a year or so of bloodshed, the Califor-

nia gangs slinked back to the other side of the Rockies, defeated and suddenly content with running the local trade. After that, all that stood between Family Dread and control of virtually all of the United States' drug trade were the Sicilians in the Northeast. The Sicilians proved to be a more difficult foe for Family Dread, as they were much more mercurial in terms of tactics and organization than the Jamaicans ever thought about being.

But like the Colombians, the Sicilians had trouble dealing with Family Dread's brazen violence. So after about a year of violence which spread from Minneapolis to Miami and from Austin to Boston, the Sicilians, pragmatic and sensing eventual defeat, approached Talisman with a deal: The Sicilians would give Family Dread their well-organized drug distribution network in exchange for 25 percent of the profits, while the Sicilians would continue to control heroin importation along the Eastern Seaboard. Talisman, realizing his forces were being stretched too thin, agreed, and shortly thereafter, pizza joints run by Jamaicans began popping up all over America.

Since cutting his deal with the Sicilians, Talisman has continued to consolidate Family Dread's power. First, he moved the gang's main operations base to its largest and most lucrative market, New York City. Because several years of gangland violence had sapped the gang's manpower, and to keep from becoming spread too thin, Family Dread got out of the importation business altogether, concentrating instead on drug distribution, the area with the highest profits. (Cocaine importation is now handled, with Family Dread's blessing, by Family Archuleta, a Texas-based Mexican gang.) Though the gang has never quite been able to extend its influence nationwide—it's never really been able to get past the Rockies—its power in the eastern two-thirds of the country is secure, and at this time, unchallenged.

As for the old-line Mafiosi, they've largely become irrelevant. There's not much money to be made from running numbers when every state has a lottery, and with the collapse of the union move-

ment, there's little money left in labor racketeering. Family Dread has muscled the old Mafia out of the drug trade, and smaller, more violent gangs now control the protection rackets. About all that's left these days for the old-line mobsters is prostitution, but they're only prominent in that field in a handful of cities along the East Coast, and even there, independent operators have a hefty share of the business. In short, the heirs of Vito Genovese and Al Capone have been reduced to working as pimps, and second-rate pimps at that.

Like the old-line Mafiosi, the Washington-based bureaucrats have largely grown irrelevant as well. Unlike the aging Mafia dons, federal officials still have to be reckoned with on occasion. Even though federal power has diminished immensely, Treasury Secretary Kenmore Malone and Army Gen. Foster T. Mullins, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, remain two of the most powerful men in the country, because they oversee the levying and collection of federal taxes and the distribution of the revenue produced. Both have taken great care to ensure the well-being of their home states (Malone's a Texan and Mullins is from North Carolina) as best they can, and in the process, themselves and their cronies as well. Any local official, at least any one from outside Texas or North Carolina, knows several palms will have to be greased if Malone and Mullins are going to free up any of the limited federal resources for discretionary projects.

As for the president, well, he's become about as irrelevant as the fallen Mafia bigwigs. Though foreign officials, unaware of just how pointless his job has become, still treat him with respect, about all he does anymore in an official capacity is keep the vice-president company at the funerals of foreign dignitaries. But the decline in prestige does have its rewards: The president's had enough time to work on his short-iron game that he's down to a 7 handicap. That's almost as good as the vice-president.

Organizations and Characters

Family Dread

Family Dread is the most well-known, influential, and notorious crime family in F.R.E.E.America. As Family Archuleta emerged from a particularly violent gang war for control of the illegal alien smuggling business, likewise Family Dread first overcame a consortium of L.A. street gangs and then the Sicilian Mafia for control of the drug distribution business in F.R.E.E.America. Though Family Dread has allowed Family Archuleta to assume control of drug importation in F.R.E.E.America, its grip on drug distribution east of the Rockies remains unchallenged.

The joke among the family is that Family Dread needs a common enemy, for without one, they'll only shoot each other, which isn't particularly funny, but it is particularly apt. All the individual gang leaders in Family Dread, including Talisman, continue to build up their local operations and move against those they perceive as weaker. For Family Dread, gang warfare continues, though on a lesser scale. Though there appear to be no external rivals willing and/or capable of challenging Family Dread's position in F.R.E.E.America, there's a good chance Family Dread's internal organization will be altered.

Rules Section

Hector Talisman

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
71	69	73	45	47	72	71

Sex	Male
Race	Black
Nationality	Jamaican
Native Language	English
Age	31

Psychology: Cruelty (Total), Loyalty (Some), Passion (Little), Piety (Some), Sanity (Some), Selfishness (Total)

Tags: Dreadlocks and a thick accent

Advantages: Presence (3)

Disadvantages: Short-winded (3)

Skills: Electronics (1), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (1), Rifle (1), Shotgun (2), Submachine Gun (3), Basic Melee (1), Knife (3), Silent Kill (1), Booby Traps (2), Forgery (1), Lockpicking (2), Driving Automobile (2), Persuasion (3)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Without Hector Talisman, there would be no Family Dread. In fact, without Talisman, there's be few, if any, Jamaican drug runners left alive in F.R.E.E.America. For without Talisman's vision and charisma, the Jamaican gangs would never have put aside their fractious behavior and joined forces to rebuff the L.A. gang-bangers during the Florida drug wars.

Whereas Family Archuleta seems to function without a clear leader, Family Dread would collapse without Talisman to lead it. Family Dread is a loose coalition of minor Jamaican gangs, the only thing keeping them from resuming their attacks on one another is the force of Talisman's personality.

Though Talisman has brought unparalleled prosperity to the Jamaican drug runners and is accorded a measure of respect by them, one mustn't forget that he has achieved his success through his ability to pragmatically inflict violence. As a result, Talisman has made a lot of enemies, both within and without the Jamaican organized crime community. If Talisman were to be eliminated, then it's likely F.R.E.E.America would be embroiled in another bloody gang war.

Migrant Revenge

There are several terrorist groups operating in F.R.E.E.America, but none are more violent, unpredictable, and feared than Migrant Revenge.

Migrant Revenge's guiding philosophy is straightforward: Death is the great equalizer, the only thing that ultimately brings the rich down to the level of the poor. Therefore, the group's goal is to

kill as many well-to-do people as it can. Migrant Revenge recruits from the ranks of the homeless of the MAA, and since the number is burgeoning, Migrant Revenge's numbers keep swelling.

Migrant Revenge pinpoints its attacks to kill only the over-privileged and their lackeys. Because of their violent tactics, little effort is made to curb their activities by law enforcement authorities. Though Migrant Revenge's activities are mostly confined to the MAA's metropolises, it seems to be slowly spreading into the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts and across the GLA. Fueling this growth has been the influx of funds provided by the leftists unions of the Reorganized American Federation of Labor. Migrant Revenge is looking more and more like an inexorable force that can probably only be held in check if the underlying conditions which gave rise to the organization are addressed. With an ineffective federal government, such action doesn't seem likely anytime soon.

Rules Section

Eleanor Perkins

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
38	73	46	27	51	42	60

Sex	Female
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	50

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (High), Passion (Total), Piety (High), Sanity (Little), Selfishness (None)

Tags: Uncontrollable anger

Advantages: Blandness (3)

Disadvantages: Mood Swings (3)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Carpentry (2), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (1), Rifle (3), Sniper Rifle (2), Submachine Gun (3), Hand Grenade (3), Basic Melee (1), Knife (2), Demolitions (3), Booby Traps (3), Lockpicking (1), Stealth (2), First Aid (2), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Anthropology/Psychology/Sociology (3), Foreign Language (Spanish—4)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section



Hector Talisman

Background: Eleanor Perkins always demonstrated a strong social conscience. Born in Washington, D.C., she earned a degree in social work from the University of the District of Columbia and did a couple of stints with the Peace Corps before moving to New York City. Her time there was spent hustling up grants and charitable donations, and opening up a shelter for the homeless.

The plight of the homeless soon became her principal concern, and she worked with a number of organizations to raise funds to shelter the homeless and stage demonstrations to focus public attention on the problem. But as time went on, Perkins became more and more discouraged with her efforts. In the increasingly materialistic atmosphere of the MAA, raising money for the cause became more and more difficult as the trendy crowd moved on to more exotic charitable efforts, such as saving the Arctic puffin. Press coverage of homeless demonstrations became sparser, as TV news crews sought something new to keep viewers entertained. In short, it seemed to Perkins, people had stopped caring.

Finally, when some Wall Street trader plowed his limo through a demonstration rather than take a few minutes to drive around it, Perkins snapped. In one act of violence, Migrant Revenge was born.

Migrant Revenge is, quite simply, the most feared terrorist group in F.R.E.E.America.

Any number of Wall Street arbitragers would pay handsomely for Perkins' assassination, but finding her is extraordinarily difficult. Nondescript in appearance, Perkins has a knack for being able to fade into a crowd and become just another body in the faceless mass. She moves around constantly, never spending two consecutive nights in the same homeless shelter, and the loyalty she commands among the homeless is such that the few who might actually know her whereabouts are unlikely to divulge them. Anybody who asks too many questions about her is likely to wind up in a back alley with a slashed throat.

So it may be that the best attitude to adopt toward her is the one the police seem to have: If she's not a threat to you, leave her alone and let the fat cats worry about her.

Rules Section

Theodore "Teddy-Boy" Herbst

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
38	63	46	53	19	42	55

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	35

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (None), Passion (Some), Piety (None), Sanity (Some), Selfishness (Total)

Tags: Diamond and gold pinky ring with his initials.

Advantages: Light Sleeper (2)

Disadvantages: Vindictiveness (2)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Carpentry (1), Electronics (1), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3)*, Off-hand Firing (3), Submachine Gun (3)*, Shotgun (3)*, Basic Melee (1), Boxing (2), Oriental Martial Arts (2), Disguise (2), Acting (1), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (3), Foreign Language (Spanish—2)

* Teddy-Boy Herbst's weapon of choice is neither a pistol, or a submachine gun, or a shotgun, but something in between: an Olin/H&K CAWS assault shotgun with the barrel sawed off (**Wt:** 9, **Cost:** \$1,000, **Dam:** 1d10, **Range:** 30/90/300, **Ammo:** 10, **Load:** 2c, **Mods:**—).

Because of his training in similar weapons, Herbst has gained a third level ability with the sawed-off assault shotgun, but because of his exclusive reliance on this weapon, his skills with the other weapons have deteriorated to second level.

Metability: Teddy-Boy Herbst is what could best be described as a stock-trading savant. He can look at a company's annual report, or any other reliable statistical evaluation of a firm, and intuitively understand where the stock for that company will peak and where it will bottom out. Where most good traders can look at such information and make a reasonable approximation of a stock's ultimate value, Herbst is able to instantly factor

in a variety of variables—trader interest in the stock, commercial acceptance of new product lines, effects of outside factors such as inflation and interest rates—and make precise projections for both the short and the long term.

If the information from which Herbst is working is not complete—say at least as extensive as what would be found in a report to stockholders—he cannot use his metability and make his projections. When working with incomplete information, Herbst is at a disadvantage, and for that reason, if he doesn't have sufficient data on a stock, he will not deal with it. Furthermore, Herbst's metability works in such a way that he would be at an enormous disadvantage if his information were inaccurate or intentionally falsified. Because of this, Herbst maintains an extensive research department in which all the employees work independently. Before making an evaluation of a stock, Herbst will have employees in his research department generate three separate reports for him to digest.

End Rules Section

Background: Theodore "Teddy-Boy" Herbst was a pretty good student as an undergraduate, good enough to get a decent offer from a decent Wall Street brokerage house upon graduation. But once he was working on the street, his uncanny talent for the business became obvious, and soon he was making more in commissions than the president of his firm was making in salary.

As amazing as Herbst's talent is, he demonstrated an even more remarkable unscrupulousness. On Wall Street these days, a certain level of underhandedness earns grudging respect, but Herbst is so deceitful that his cohorts hold him in universal contempt. Basically, Herbst believes that honesty gains him little and he'll be forthright in his dealings only so long as it's to his advantage to do so. If the opportunity arises for him to lie, cheat, or steal, and it'll gain him something to do so, he'll do it.

He's extremely distrustful, paranoid even, though not without good reason. The more successful he becomes, the more precautions he takes. Nowa-

days, he never leaves his well-guarded skyscraper suite, and though he's surrounded by guards, he doesn't fully trust them, either. He always keeps his assault shotgun within easy reach, even when he showers, and even sleeps wearing a Kevlar vest.

Though Herbst has lots of enemies—probably more of them than anybody else in F.R.E.E.America—few of them are powerful or crazy enough to mount an operation directly against him. Though Herbst's dirty schemes almost never involve physical violence, he still has a constant need for IOs, since he's always adding to the staff of his bodyguard contingent (and summarily dismissing those he capriciously decides are untrustworthy). However, any IO who goes to work for Herbst would have to be able to pass a thorough and extensive background check.

Rules Section

Boswell MacArthur

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
44	77	35	66	54	40	56

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	41

Psychology: Cruelty (Some), Loyalty (Little), Passion (Some), Piety (None), Sanity (High), Selfishness (Total)

Tags: Extraordinarily well-dressed, thin

Advantages: Observation (3)

Disadvantages: Color Blind (1), Vindictiveness (2)

Skills: Fine Arts (2), Lip Reading (2), Musical Instrument (Piano—2), Piloting/1-engine (3), Piloting/Jet (2), Sailing (3), Swimming (1), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (3), History/Political Science (1), Literature/Journalism (1), Foreign Language (French—4)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Boswell MacArthur inherited a small fortune and parlayed it into an enormous one. MacArthur's father left him several million, and by investing in Manhattan real estate, and eventually land worldwide, MacArthur was able to turn it into billions.

MacArthur used to dominate the pages of the New York City tabloids. He and his former beauty queen wife were always doing the sorts of high-profile, fabulous things that only the extraordinarily wealthy can afford. But then Teddy-Boy Herbst came along and spoiled everything.

Herbst is so wealthy and so reclusive, the media are utterly fascinated by him. The more MacArthur tries to crowd him off by increasingly strident behavior, the more desperate MacArthur appears.

So MacArthur has declared war on Herbst, as he's determined that, at the very least, Herbst's standing as the current Midas of Wall Street shall be sullied.



Boswell MacArthur

The South Atlantic States Directive (SASD)

All in all, the SASD is a mighty fine place to live. The people are friendly, and your neighbors will always meet you with a heartfelt greeting. You won't find any of that sort of new wave decadence you find up in someplace like New York City.

People here are plain, God-fearing folks, who go to church every Sunday and sincerely try to live their lives as though every day might be their last in this lifetime. People here are proud to be Americans, even if the federal government seems to have lost its purpose. They are even prouder to be part of their community, packing the high school gyms for basketball games and ensuring their schools are the finest they can afford. The reservoirs are kept stocked with bass, and the Fourth of July picnic in the town square is always the biggest event of the year.

And in the spring, when the magnolias are in bloom and the sun has yet to brush the morning dew from the grass and the smell of baking bread comes wafting into the still air from every kitchen window on the block ... well, it's just a mighty fine place to live.

Just as long as you stay in line.

For in the SASD, more than anyplace else in F.R.E.E.America, criminal punishment is swift, certain, and above all else, incredibly harsh.

It all started before the SASD was even formed. (The SASD is made up of Virginia, North and South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, and Alabama.) In the early nineties, during the height of the gangland wars for control of the drug trade, death row at the Florida State Penitentiary was filled beyond capacity. A federal court ordered the governor, Robert Navarro, to reduce the number of people incarcerated on death row from 114 to 72. He com-

plied right away, signing, serving, and carrying out 42 death warrants before dawn the next day.

Civil libertarians, liberal TV talk show hosts, and the usual worrywarts were appalled. One of the dead inmate's lawyers, citing 83 separate violations of his client's due process and other civil rights, sought and obtained a criminal contempt citation against Navarro from a federal district judge. (The client would have rested easier had he only known the attorney was going to go to such posthumous effort on his behalf.) Navarro's reaction to the citation was, simply, "So?" With the precedent set by the construction of Culpepper's wall in Texas the previous year, there wasn't anything a federal judge could do about it.

While Navarro's actions might have been universally condemned by academics from the Northeast, the people of Florida applauded his bold initiative, commenting it should have been done a long time ago. Navarro, a consummate politician, wasn't about to miss out on an opportunity to increase his popularity, especially if it was only at the expense of a bunch of murderers who'd be dead in a short while anyway. He began signing more death warrants, and executions became an almost nightly occurrence.

The usual procedure was for the death warrant to be carried out within hours of Navarro signing it. This meant there wasn't an opportunity for the criminal's lawyers to seek injunctions and block the executions. In at least one instance, an attorney correctly guessed when his client's death warrant would be handed down, and was waiting in the jail cell with a federal court order stopping it. But prison officials ignored the stop order, and the prisoner was executed anyway. In no time at all, there wasn't anybody left on death row.

The governors of Alabama and South Carolina looked to Florida and liked what they saw. They began doing the same thing, and the governor of North Carolina was eventually persuaded to act similarly. The governors of Georgia and Virginia steadfastly refused to be stamped into such illegal actions, and were soundly defeated when they

ran for reelection by candidates who did promise to carry out executions. It got to the point in the SASD, that once a jury handed a convict the death penalty, the sentence was carried out in a couple of weeks.

The only problem with this was it didn't make much of a dent in the crime rate, especially in Florida, where the gang wars were in full swing and the murder rate was the nation's highest. Navarro reasoned since most of the state's crime was directly attributable to the battle for the drug trade, it wasn't enough to have the death sentence just for capital murder, it was needed for drug trafficking as well.

That helped some, but Florida's crime rate remained high. So Navarro reasoned some more, and decided since the importation end of the drug trade had, by that time, largely moved to Texas, drug trafficking wasn't so much the problem as was drug dealing. So the death penalty statute was again expanded. The crime rate went down a little, but again, not enough to please Navarro, who now reasoned since there couldn't be drug dealing without drug consumption. The real problem was consumer demand. He argued with the other SASD governors that the crime problem wasn't just a Florida concern, it was a regional one, and got them to expand their death penalties to include drug possession.

While they were at it, the governors decided rape, kidnapping, robbery, and a whole host of things were at least as bad as drug possession, and established the death penalty for these crimes as well. Soon, the SASD states mandated the death penalty for just about any criminal behavior more serious than writing bad checks.

And at last, the crime rate plummeted, because in a couple of years, the states in the SASD had managed to exterminate all of their habitual criminals. Things got so slow in South Carolina they closed down their state penitentiary, and turned it into an industrial park. They sent their criminals north and began paying North Carolina to kill its felons.

Most, but not all, of the region's politicians marched lock step into this police state craziness. The prominent exception is Atlanta Mayor Charles Bradford, whose single-minded opposition to the death penalty craze has left him isolated among the region's leaders. While death penalty advocates may scorn Bradford and his city, the region's most progressive minds have swarmed into Atlanta to escape the oppressive mind-set of the rest of the SASD. As a result, Atlanta is something of an intellectual oasis in a region considered by most outsiders to be a crypto-fascist backwater.

If the SASD is ever going to seriously challenge the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts' preeminence in the high-tech world, it will be with leadership from Atlanta. Bradford's opposition to the death penalty has had more tangible results as well. Since the expansion of the death penalty statutes, at least two high-tech companies have moved their headquarters from North Carolina to Atlanta, and reportedly several others are considering taking similar action.

Of course, none of those firms considering a move from North Carolina to Atlanta are part of Associated Technologies. Those companies seem to like things as they are, and would prefer things as they were 50 years ago. Though it's prominent throughout the SASD, especially in North Carolina, Associated Technologies remains something of a mystery. It seems to be some sort of umbrella group loosely uniting the region's largest and most successful high-tech companies and a group of several low-end manufacturers located in the Carolinas. But the influence of Associated Technologies seems far too pervasive to be just that of a trade association of high volume, low profit margin manufacturers. The persistent rumor is that Associated Technologies is a front for United Weapons, Inc., or UWI.

Though most of UWI's domestic manufacturing is located in the SASD (there's a plant in Kentucky as well), nobody's been able to unlink the paper chain of dummy corporations and secret bank accounts to determine just who owns the company. But this much is known: None of the presidents of

any of the companies which form Associated Technologies know for sure where Associated Technologies is headquartered or who works there. Yet every one of these companies manufactures major components for UWI factories in other parts of the region.

Furthermore, a number of Associated Technologies' actions are political in nature and seem to stray far from the objective of promoting a consortium of high-tech manufacturers. These actions make sense if Associated Technologies was a front for an international gunrunner.

For instance, every year, Associated Technologies lobbyists try to convince Malone and Mullins to spend more on weapon procurement, even though Associated Technologies companies don't have a reputable enough of a research department to receive development contracts for new weapons systems. Also, Associated Technologies publicly supports and covertly funds a number of guerrilla movements, from leftists fighting in South Africa to right-wingers battling Central American socialist governments.

Associated Technologies has also been an early and consistent supporter of Navarro and the death-penalty movement. (This wouldn't seem to help the interests of a gun manufacturer, but UWI would want a stable situation wherever it had based its manufacturing. The expansion of the death penalty statute isn't going to end gangland violence; at worst, the hoodlums are going to move their war to another region, and will continue to need guns.) Since Navarro and Bradford don't get along, Associated Technologies has decided it doesn't like Bradford either.

Associated Technologies may dislike Bradford enough to make an attempt on his life. Last year, three Caribbean gunman failed in an assassination attempt on the mayor. The one survivor, upon being picked up, reportedly said he "was working for AT," and when he selected a lawyer, he called up the Atlanta law firm Associated Technologies had on retainer. The lawyer was able to post bail for the gunman, who immediately fled to the Grand Cayman Islands (where UWI is incorporated) and from there to points unknown. It should

be pointed out, just the week before, Bradford had decided to award the contract for new police weaponry to an arms manufacturer other than UWI.

If that wasn't murky enough, there may be some sort of connection between Associated Technologies and tobacco and space exploration tycoon Louis Lassiter as well. Lassiter's name has been showing up lately in context with Associated Technologies. Whenever Associated Technologies takes one of its increasingly frequent public stands in favor of some right-wing cause or another, Lassiter is always there, issuing virtually identically worded press releases at about the same time. When Associated Technologies buys a full-page ad in the national newspapers to rant and rave about this or that cause, Lassiter's name is on the ad as well. The law firm Associated Technologies has on retainer in Atlanta is the same one that has been handling Lassiter's legal work for several years. And, every one of UWI's factories in F.R.E.E.America is in a town in which Lassiter's former company, U.S. Tobacco and Snuff, had a major processing facility.

Lassiter is most well-known as the man who bought NASA. Back in '96, Lassiter owned the world's largest cigarette manufacturer, U.S. Tobacco and Snuff. Fearing the radical anti-smoking forces would wield greater influence in the regional alliances than they had in the federal government, he sold the company to a British consumer products conglomerate and received in excess of \$2.5 billion dollars.

A few weeks after the sale, the GLA became the first of the regional alliances to outlaw the sale of tobacco products, the MAA and the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts soon followed suit. Two months after the sale, U.S. Tobacco and Snuff was worth less than a third of what Lassiter received for it. (Because of the decline in value of U.S. Tobacco and Snuff, the conglomerate which acquired it in a heavily leveraged deal is having trouble servicing the debt and is looking to spin-off assets to raise capital. The conglomerate is desperate enough to sell just about anything it owns, and Lassiter has been in contact with them, discussing the possibility of reacquiring his old cigarette company.)

Shortly after Lassiter came into the cash from the sale of U.S. Tobacco and Snuff, the federal government, strapped for revenues and having difficulty maintaining funding for anything, decided to "privatize" NASA—essentially, sell it off. Lassiter offered most of what he'd received for U.S. Tobacco and Snuff, and Washington, not having any better offers, accepted it.

It's widely believed the timing of Lassiter's sale of U.S. Tobacco and Snuff and his purchase of NASA were not just lucky coincidences. It's probable that Lassiter's intelligence sources knew before the introduction of the anti-smoking measure that it would be approved by the GLA. Furthermore, it seems likely that the NASA offering, which had been discussed for a couple of years, was delayed until the U.S. Tobacco and Snuff sale was completed and Lassiter had the cash on hand. Considering Lassiter's historically close association with fellow North Carolinian Mullins, the shockingly low sale price for NASA, and the speed with which the deal was completed, there's little doubt the two were in cahoots on the transaction.

Regardless, Lassiter picked up a pretty impressive space launch capability for pennies on the dollar. He didn't get all of the traditional NASA operation; several years before, tired of federal cutbacks in the NASA budget, Texas appropriated the Johnson Space Center in Houston and used it to develop its own space capability. Nevertheless, the remainder of NASA was still the finest space launch system outside of the Soviet Union and Japan. It retained an impressive enough technological foundation, and with a little direction, it could very well surpass the Soviets' as well.

The only other country who might challenge NASA's preeminence in the field is Japan. The Japanese have a sophisticated mining operation in place on the moon as well as their own system of satellites.

Lassiter's first action as NASA's new owner was to hire Jean-Claude Cormier, the head of the European Space Agency and its sister agencies, the European Space Research and Technological Center and the European Space Operations Center. Cormier's first action as NASA's new president was to

junk the expensive shuttle technology in favor of a catapult-lifter system that the ESA had been perfecting. The new launch system was not only cheaper to operate, considering the Europeans had already paid for all its development costs by the time Cormier left ESA and took the plans with him to NASA, it was cheap to implement as well.

The new NASA used its cheap launch technology to send a series of telecommunications satellites into high orbit, a move that left most aerospace experts baffled. The satellites' orbits were too high to be geosynchronous, and additionally, the capacities they offered were redundant. Then a European Space Operations Center satellite spun crazily out of orbit and crashed into the Indian Ocean. NASA scientists were able to guide one of their units into the ESOC's satellite's orbit within a matter of hours, and telecommunications were hardly disrupted. A few days later, an American satellite wobbled off course and into a polar orbit, and NASA was able to replace it as well. Then another ESOC satellite fell to earth. And then another. And another. Soon, every satellite the ESOC had ever launched and all but a few American-launched ones had fallen out of orbit, only to be quickly replaced by NASA-launched devices.

Japan was the only major industrialized country which didn't lose satellites. This led to speculation that the Japanese and NASA were in league in the destruction of other countries' satellites. No evidence of this was found, but it remains a rumor in the political circles around the world.

Obviously, Lassiter has reaped enormous profits leasing out the transponders on his satellites. And, needless to say, the Europeans are highly suspicious. NASA suggested that unusual sunspot activity produced abnormally strong pulses of electromagnetic energy which fried the satellites' guidance computers. But the Europeans aren't buying it, since the communications satellites were the only satellites affected.

NASA's other new venture has been to launch a stationary platform, which it claims is a reusable research vehicle. Though it looks suspicious that the platform doesn't appear to have been designed

so other space vehicles can dock with it. The platform bears a strong resemblance to mock-ups of a proposed outer-space weapons platform which the Pentagon was pushing a few years ago, before federal money became so tight. If NASA launched the platform on spec, hoping the Pentagon would go for it, it's to no avail. Malone is furious over NASA's shenanigans with the telecommunications satellites, and is insisting that Lone Star Space be given the contracts for developing any new space-based weapons. Though NASA claims the platform is unarmed (and for that matter, empty), rumors persist that UWI put some sort of package aboard; just what that something might be is a matter of grave speculation.

While what Lassiter is doing (or plans to do) in outer space is a matter of debate, one thing that is indisputable is his attitude toward organized labor: He hates it. He more than hates it, he thinks unions are fundamentally evil, that they are the greatest manifestation of Satan's work on earth in the history of humankind. After all, it's his God-given right to pay people \$1.50 an hour to wash pesticides from tobacco leaves in poorly ventilated rooms. Lassiter has spent a great deal of his life fighting the evils of unions, at one point he even funded the publication of a book which purported to find Satanic messages in the AFL-CIO logo. So it's not surprising Lassiter was an early supporter of Kent Mertz and his Temporary People.

Mertz started out running a typical temporary agency, a local outfit in the Richmond area that was able to compete with the national franchises by keeping its overhead low. However, when he filled a contract for a half-dozen secretaries at a meat-packing plant, he had unknowingly stepped into the middle of a labor dispute. In an economic move, management had laid off six full-time secretaries and had replaced them with "temps" because it cost less. The meat-cutters union local at the plant argued that the secretaries were part of the bargaining unit, and under the terms of the collective bargaining agreement, couldn't be laid off arbitrarily. When management replied that the office staff had never been part of the labor agreement and refused to reverse its action, the meat-

cutters staged a wildcat strike. Management declared the strike in violation of the terms of the collective bargaining agreement and threatened to terminate any employees who didn't return to work.

When the meat-cutters stayed out on strike, and management followed through on its threat, Mertz saw a way to make a quick killing. Figuring anybody could stack beef carcasses in a meat locker, he contacted colleagues in Birmingham and Chattanooga, whom he knew had lots of factory hands on their temporary worker rolls, and persuaded enough of them to come up to Virginia to restaff the meat-cutting plant. The meat-cutting operation kept on operating, Mertz pocketed a big chunk of change, and went back to running his temporary agency.

A few weeks later, he got a call from Lassiter, who asked Mertz if he had ever thought about finding strike-replacement workers on a full-time basis. Mertz said he hadn't, that his business was mostly geared to office workers, and he doubted he could find enough out-of-work factory hands to meet the demand. Whereupon Lassiter offered to fund the establishment of a data base of available workers, tied into every unemployment office in the country, if Mertz would move into the field full time. It was an offer Mertz could hardly refuse.

The atmosphere toward unions in F.R.E.E.America at this time was extremely negative. There were enough employers who wanted to run out union locals that Mertz wasn't suffering from any lack of business. What he did suffer from was a lack of protection. The labor standoffs were becoming increasingly violent, and his workers were being caught in the middle of things. If the situation got hot, since Temporary People workers were not technically employed by the factory at which they worked, the plant's management would do little to protect them. Meanwhile, since Temporary People was acquiring a particularly bad reputation among union workers nationwide—it was derisively called "Scab, Inc."—its employees were subjected to particularly nasty abuse. This all culminated in a labor riot at a refinery in Cleveland in which eight Temporary People employees were killed.

Because Mertz couldn't count on local authorities to protect his people, if he was going to continue to recruit workers, he had to provide his own protection for them. So, working with a couple of security experts who Lassiter put him in contact with (and who were probably associated with UWD), Mertz began organizing squads to protect his workers. Then Mertz got to thinking: If just about anybody, with a little training, could handle most of these factory jobs, why couldn't people who were trained in security matters do the factory work, too? During a full-blown riot, his work crews were going to be more interested in saving their necks than operating factory equipment. When things were calm, the guards would just be hanging around, sort of waiting for something to happen. In either case, somebody would be getting paid just to stand around. So why not teach the guards to run the factory equipment? He would have to beef up the size of his squads—include some extra guards to stand watch all the time and a few workers who actually know how to run the equipment. But he could hire these squads out on a weekly basis, guaranteeing factory managers production would be maintained until things calmed down and full-time replacement crews put in place. If it worked, Mertz could eliminate almost half his labor costs.

The success of Temporary People's "strike shock troop squads" was beyond anything Mertz imagined. Lassiter's cronies had imparted particularly brutal methods of crowd control, so after a couple of encounters with angry strikers, the Temporary People acquired a notorious reputation and were feared by union members across the country. The mere threat of bringing in the Temporary People was enough to bring recalcitrant workers back to the bargaining table. The actual introduction of the Temporary People into a strike situation sent the union the message that negotiations were over and if workers wanted to return, they would have to do so on management's terms. Mertz is making so much money now, the only thing he regrets is not being able to train squads more quickly so he can make still more money.

Organizations and Characters

Associated Technologies

This loosely organized trade group represents a number of high-tech companies, all of them located in the SASD, most of them in North Carolina. The companies Associated Technologies represents are strikingly similar: They're all large, successful companies on the low end of high-tech industry, mostly mass-producing components for use by other companies.

Despite being a regional trade association, Associated Technologies seems far more interested in promoting right-wing political causes than the interests of the companies it purports to represent. Just what Associated Technologies is remains unclear—not even the presidents of the companies which make up Associated Technologies know where Associated Technologies is located, or who works there, or much of anything else about it.

There are persistent rumors contending that Associated Technologies is merely a front for United Weapons, Inc., the even more shadowy international weapons manufacturer and gunrunner. Every one of the companies in Associated Technologies manufactures some components for UWI plants in F.R.E.E.America (which, in turn, are almost all located in the SASD). But nobody has any firm evidence tying Associated Technologies to UWI (or UWI to much of anything). Furthermore, there is circumstantial evidence tying Associated Technologies to the recent assassination attempt upon Atlanta Mayor Charles Bradford and to SASD industrialist Louis Lassiter. But what, exactly, Associated Technologies is or does, remains the subject of conjecture.

Rules Section

Louis Lassiter

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
23	62	25	38	64	24	44
Sex						Male
Race						White

Nationality
Native Language
Age

U.S.
English
61

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (Some), Passion (High), Piety (Total), Sanity (Some), Selfishness (High)

Tags: Always has wad of chewing gum in his mouth

Advantages: Fearlessness (2), Presence (3)

Disadvantages: Short-winded (3), Uncouth (2)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Carpentry (1), Crossbow (2), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (2), Rifle (3), Shotgun (3), Driving/Truck (1), Driving/Boat (2), Piloting/1-engine (2), Sailing (2), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (3), Philosophy/Religion (2)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: The newspapers describe Louis Lassiter as "mysterious." Those who've met him call him "creepy." They're both probably right.

Lassiter attended Duke University and received a business degree, but after a few years as a certified public accountant in Greensboro, Lassiter decided to quit and enrolled in a seminary in South Carolina.

He was about halfway through his studies at the seminary when his father died suddenly, leaving Lassiter the principal stockholder in U.S. Tobacco and Snuff. Lassiter interpreted this to mean that God was summoning him back to the business world and that he was to evangelize in that venue.

Lassiter thought he could best witness to businessmen by becoming as successful as possible, but when he looked at U.S. Tobacco and Snuff, he realized this would be a much more difficult task than he might have imagined. Though Lassiter's father hadn't left the company teetering on the brink of bankruptcy, he'd failed to modernize his factories or eliminate unpopular product lines. It meant stepping on a lot of toes, but in a few years' times, Lassiter turned U.S. Tobacco and Snuff into a supremely efficient and successful company.

It's generally assumed that Lassiter's timing on the sale of U.S. Tobacco—he dumped it right before the GLA, and in turn, the MAA and MGM, banned smoking—wasn't merely fortunate coincidence, but that he had some sort of inside information. Similarly, it's believed that the NASA deal resulted from some sort of collusion with fellow North Carolinian Foster T. Mullins, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the communications satellites which fell out of orbit were sabotaged by Lassiter so he could replace them.

But none of that can be proved—Lassiter's careful not to leave his fingerprints on anything—and there are some elements of Lassiter's life that are even more ominous. There seem to be a lot of ties between Lassiter and Associated Technologies and UWI, which may be the same difference. Some think that Lassiter is actually the principal owner of UWI and Associated Technologies is merely a front, while others postulate Lassiter is just another of UWI's many lackeys. Regardless, most are too intimidated by the terrible power of UWI to ask many questions.

Through it all, Lassiter has retained his religious fervency, and he can somehow find Biblical justification for everything he's done. He appears to be responsible for organizing numerous bands of mercenaries to go fight "holy wars" of anti-communist suppression in various Third World countries. But for the most part, Lassiter remains a cipher, but there's enough known about him to know at the very least, he's not someone with whom to trifle.

Rules Section

Jean-Claude Cormier

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
21	75	51	69	60	36	63

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	France
Native Language	French
Age	55

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (None), Passion (High), Piety (None), Sanity (High), Selfishness (Total)



Louis Lassiter

Tags: High-pitched laugh

Advantages: Light Sleeper (2)

Disadvantages: Enemy (French intelligence—2)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Aircraft Mechanic (2), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (1), Rifle (3), Shotgun (2), Basic Melee (1), Fencing (3), Lockpicking (2), Safe-cracking (1), Stealth (2), Driving/Automobile (3), Driving/Motorcycle (2), Piloting/1-engine (3), Piloting/Multi-engine (2), Piloting/Helicopter (2), Piloting/Jet (3), Piloting/Multi-engine jet (1), Speed Reading (2), Basic Science (1), Astronomy/Math/Physics (3), Engineering/Mechanical (3), Foreign Language (English—4)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Jean-Claude Cormier headed the European Space Agency for nine years, during which time, he oversaw the launching of several new telecommunications satellites and nurtured the development of a catapult-lifter launch system. When Louis Lassiter purchased NASA from the F.R.E.E.American federal government, his first action was to make Cormier an offer he couldn't refuse—to come and head the newly privatized space giant.

French officials believe that Cormier and NASA engineers devised some sort of "dirty" satellite, something with a small radar profile which emitted enough electromagnetic radiation to fry the guidance systems to the communications satellites. As a result, rumors persist that French intelligence agents are offering \$1 million for Cormier's assassination, and though French officials scoff at such stories, there's probably nobody in France who'd be sorry to see him go.

The Temporary People

The Temporary People started out as just another temporary agency, mostly providing secretaries and other office workers to various business concerns in the Richmond area. When the firm unwittingly became embroiled in a meat cutters strike,

Kent Mertz, the founder of the Temporary People, saw a way to turn a quick buck providing strike breakers. And soon, with the urging and support of Louis Lassiter, anti-union activity became the Temporary People's main line of work.

It proved to be a dangerous one. The Temporary People soon became derisively known as "Scab, Inc.", and its employees became the targets of union violence. To protect his personnel, Mertz organized Temporary People units as work crews with large contingents of heavily armed guards. But this proved expensive, and Mertz soon economized, cutting down on the number of skilled workers in a squad and letting the guards themselves perform the non-critical jobs.

These "strike-shock-troop-squads" soon became the scourge of unions across F.R.E.E.America. The very appearance of the Temporary People during a walkout became an indication that management would not budge in negotiations and that the workers would be wise to capitulate.

Unions began forming paramilitary units to counter violence caused by the Temporary People, but these part-time fighters proved no match for the highly trained mercenaries in Mertz's employ. Then the unions changed their tactics, and started hiring IOs. Since the unions paid better than Mertz, they were able to hire many top people away from the Temporary People.

It's probably no coincidence that in the last six months, the incidence of accidental deaths among Temporary People employees has risen dramatically. As a result, a lot of the Temporary People's personnel has left in recent months, finding work that paid better and was less dangerous elsewhere. Because of this, the Temporary People isn't as fearsome as it once was, and since Mertz insists on paying bottom dollar, the Temporary People has become a repository for IOs who can't find any other sort of employment.

Rules Section

Kent Mertz

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
47	61	48	32	63	48	55

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	34

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (Little), Passion (Little), Piety (Some), Sanity (High), Selfishness (High)

Tags: Likes to use lots of military jargon, even though he's never been in the armed forces

Advantages: Subculture & Jargon (1), Toughness (1)

Disadvantages: Enemy (2—American Federation of Labor)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Electronics (1), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (1), Rifle (1), Sniper Rifle (1), Submachine Gun (1), Shotgun (1), Grenade Launcher (1), Basic Melee (1), Interrogation (2), Security Systems (1), Driving/Automobile (1), Driving/Truck (1), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (3)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Kent Mertz didn't start out to become F.R.E.E.America's leading anti-labor goon; he received a business degree from Virginia Tech and had spent a few years running a temporary agency in Richmond when he unwittingly found himself in middle of a labor dispute at a local meat-packing plant.

Mertz sided with management—he could make a lot more money working with them than by helping out the other side—and broke the strike by importing truckloads of scabs from Tennessee and Alabama. Having done that, he would have been content to go back to his temp agency, had it not been for a call from Louis Lassiter.

Lassiter, a rabid anti-labor advocate, envisioned a nationwide network of strike-breaking personnel. Lassiter figured since Mertz already had experience in strike-breaking, he was the logical person to head up such an effort. Mertz agreed—it would mean a lot of money for him—and the Temporary People was formed.

Mertz has really gotten into the military aspects of the organization. He loves to try to impress the former commando types who work for him with a lot of mercenary jargon mumbo jumbo, or his vast knowledge of weaponry. (Mertz is familiar with a number of weapons, having trained with each of them just enough to know how they work, but not enough to know how to make them work well.) The act doesn't really impress any of his charges, but Mertz isn't aware of their contempt for him.



Jean-Claude Cormier

Great Lakes Authority (GLA)

Consisting of Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Iowa, Missouri, and the western part of New York state, the Great Lakes Authority is the oldest, best-organized, and, for the most part, the most socially and politically stable of the regional alliances in F.R.E.E.America. Most political entities that were prominent in the '80s remain prominent today. The exception is the federal government, whose role has largely been assumed by the GLA. Though there are numerous powerful individuals in the GLA, there aren't any megalomaniacs the stripe of the OLMBC's the Rev. Blotto, and certainly nobody as wealthy as the MAA's Teddy Boy Herbst.

The GLA is the regional authority where the traditional American middle class is the most predominant, and the region that most resembles a traditional vision of middle-America. People in the GLA grow up, get married, start families, and worry about matters on the home front. They don't worry about whether that bum on the grate just ahead is pulling the pin from a hand grenade so he can launch a suicide attack or if those headlights in the drive at 1 a.m. are on a pickup driven by regulators looking for somebody they can call rustlers.

The ability of the GLA to preserve social order has been a result of organizing politically to fill the power vacuum left by the declining federal bureaucracy. The GLA was originally established as a joint authority to further the mutual goals of the states in the region. But as federal power eroded, the GLA's power was increased.

Formed in the mid-nineties, the GLA established a legislative branch, called the Executive. States were equally represented in the Executive. Initially, all the Executive did was ensure uniformity in the laws of the region's states, bringing into line judicial interpretations of Uniform Commercial Code sections, sentencing guidelines, trucking

regulations, and the like. But members of the Executive thought they needed to more effectively fill the power vacuum, so in a bold move, they created the Council of Governors.

The Council of Governors became, in effect, the executive branch of the GLA (and the choice of terminology continues to confound the region's junior high civics students). As the name implies, the council is composed of governors from each of the states of the GLA (including those of Pennsylvania and New York). The governors meet and determine broad policy goals for the alliance.

The governors then go to their individual state legislatures and persuade them to make the necessary delegation of authority that the Executive will need to implement these goals. If any state refuses to delegate authority to the Executive on a particular matter, the Executive is powerless to act in that area.

Whenever the Executive approves legislation, the measure is treated as though it had been passed by the legislatures of the individual states in the GLA. The individual governors must sign a measure for it to officially become law, but individually, the governors cannot veto a measure. (If the individual states wish to block an action, they do so by refusing to delegate power in that policy area to the Executive.) However, the Council of Governors can, by a simple majority vote, veto any measure passed by the Executive, and the Executive is not allowed to override the veto (though the Executive can repeatedly pass the same measure until it is accepted by the Council of Governors).

Judicial review of Executive actions is handled in the state court system, and each state is expected to give weight to interpretations of Executive measures made by courts in other states. In the late nineties, the Executive established the Regional Court of Appeals which considers appeals from the states' supreme courts in cases involving Executive legislation. Appeals can be made from the Regional Court of Appeals to the United States Supreme Court, but with the decline of the federal role, for all intents and purposes, the Regional Court of Appeals is the final arbitrator of Executive actions.

As this governmental apparatus evolved, the Executive moved from equal representation by state to proportional representation by population. A regional income tax, in the form of increased state income taxes, was eventually implemented. By the late nineties, the GLA, in effect, established its own armed forces by combining the various state National Guards into a single command. The GLA increased military spending and initiated an aggressive recruiting campaign. But basically, the Executive's actions are determined by what the federal government hasn't done, or isn't willing to do any longer. Like the federal government before it, the GLA seems to have gotten involved into everything.

The GLA is now involved in providing free day-care services for working mothers and promulgating worker safety guidelines, as well as maintaining the integrity of the highway system. Taxes are considerably higher in the GLA than anyplace else, except the Megastate of Greater Massachusetts. Though this causes a lot of grumbling, when people in the GLA compare their lot to that of people in the OLMBC or the RMA, they decide maybe their tax burden isn't so onerous.

All the regional alliances have, at least in certain respects, started to resemble mini-countries, as opposed to parts of the United States of America. But in no region is this tendency more noticeable than in the GLA—and it's getting progressively more pronounced.

From the beginning of the regionalism trend, the GLA instituted its own schedule of tariffs, ignoring those imposed by Washington. The GLA has over 50 trade missions scattered around the world. These offices have taken on the appearance of embassies, with trade representatives often counseling foreign governments to take courses of action at odds with those urged by U.S. envoys.

Japan accepts the governor of Michigan, whose post is now chiefly ceremonial, as the de facto ambassador from the GLA. So far, the GLA has chosen not to get involved in any sort of military adventurism, but with the beefing up of the region's National Guards, that's subject to change. And in some ways, GLA governmental controls

are more extensive than the federal government's. Agriculture is tightly regulated by the GLA Farm Authority. Members of the authority, selected from the faculties of the various agricultural schools around the region, make precise projections on commodity prices, rainfall, and the like, and estimate the most efficient crop mix and land use. Farmers are instructed on what crops to grow, how many acres to devote to each crop, and are given the seed to accomplish their projected crop totals.

Officially, the GLA has no capital. But everybody knows, for all practical purposes, the capital is Chicago. Chicago is where the Executive holds its session, it's where the most people and the most money are, and it's the city which people in the GLA have always looked to for cultural, if not political, leadership. Other branches of the GLA governmental apparatus are scattered around the region so that the alliance's bureaucracy isn't concentrated in a single state. The regional National Guard headquarters is in Indianapolis, the Regional Court of Appeals meets in Cleveland, and various bureaucratic departmental offices are spread throughout the region. Meetings of the Council of Governors are rotated among the GLA state capitals.

Chicago is also the home of an organized group of Independent Operators known as FREELancers. These individuals represent one of the first overt displays of a rising tide of talents-for-hire. They include in their ranks extremely capable individuals, most of whom have some sort of metability. The FREELancers have contracts with the local government and many of the major corporations in the area, as well as with different branches of the US government. (US government is cash in advance, thank you.)

The organization is incorporated under the control of Lee Won Underhill, daughter of the organization's founder. The most visible member of FREELancers is Captain Ares, a self-proclaimed hero and media darling who heads up the organization's public relations operations. The firm undertakes missions both overt and covert, and has to date shown an admirable judgment in its

missions. Whether this judgment is the result of careful media handling or a true reflection of the moral standing of the group and its founder remains to be seen.

The official status of Michigan in the GLA is somewhat murky. Michigan was a charter member when the authority was formed back in the mid-nineties, but that was back when Japan was just starting to get involved in the state. After the big earthquake left most of Southern California in ruins and the Mount Lassen eruption added to the ecological disaster, Japanese investors started to look at their United States real estate investments in a different fashion. The west coast markets had already started to level off before the disasters, and those whose entire holdings weren't lying at the bottom of the Pacific were interested in finding an area that was more stable, both economically and geologically.

The area they picked was Michigan. The Japanese already had substantial dealings with the American automakers, land prices were depressed thus bargains were plentiful, and the state didn't have any major fault lines or active volcanoes. So Japanese investors began snapping up land in and around Detroit.

But as regionalism grew more prevalent, so did protectionism. In most regions, there was an increased desire to go things alone, and Japanese industry, which had been welcomed in many areas of the United States in the '80s, now was being shunned. Japanese industry was soon confronted with a panoply of regulations, ostensibly designed to ensure worker and environmental safety, but which were actually designed to drive the Japanese out.

The Japanese didn't know what to do. They wanted to keep their toehold in F.R.E.E.America, but the trend in regulation didn't seem to hold any hope for them to maintain their American industrial base, and Japanese politicians were at a loss to reverse the situation. One day, as yet another Cabinet session accomplished nothing, an exasperated official lamented, "If the United States was Japan, we wouldn't have this problem." Another member jokingly said the Japanese investors were well on their way to making Detroit Japanese.

The Cabinet officers looked at each other and the same thing dawned on them simultaneously. Why couldn't they make Detroit part of Japan and do whatever they wanted there? Since the prestige of the federal government had begun declining, the Cabinet had already discussed moving the Japanese embassy to New York City to be closer to the financial markets. If they could move the embassy to New York, they could just as easily move it to Detroit. Who was to say what size an embassy had to be? Some countries, whose relationships with the United States were not nearly as significant as Japan's, had embassy complexes which sprawled over several acres, far more land than they needed to conduct foreign policy affairs. Why couldn't an embassy be as large as city?

The Japanese already controlled much of the metropolitan Detroit area, and it took them only a short amount of time until they controlled the entire Detroit area, proper and all surrounding suburbs. Since the population of Detroit accounts for about half of the population of the state of Michigan, the Japanese had a real stranglehold on the power structure in the state government.

As soon as the purchase was completed, Japan declared Detroit as its embassy in the GLA. This, of course, was highly irregular, but the government in Washington was too weak to resist the move and went along with it. Since Detroit is now an embassy—and embassies are considered part of their native countries—Detroit, in effect, is now part of Japan.

Japan has found this arrangement much to its liking. First and foremost, it gives the Japanese industrial concerns which had been discouraged from remaining in F.R.E.E.America a foothold in the country. Everything the Japanese companies manufacture in Detroit is designated as "unfinished goods" and shipped to Canada, where a button or sticker will be added. The goods are then sent along to the United States, which, under the terms of the 1988 Canadian free trade agreement, has to accept the goods duty free.

Secondly, such a large base of operations put the Japanese in a superior position for gleaning technological secrets from F.R.E.E.America. And

finally, acquisition of a major American city seems to have quenched, at least for the time being, the expansionistic hunger the Japanese felt as their economic might increased. At any rate, the Japanese feel the United States ambassadorship has gained so much in importance, that upon declaring Detroit as their embassy, they moved Masahiro Kinoshita from the head of the Finance Ministry to the U.S. post.

The situation in Detroit these days is a little confusing, to say the least. While large numbers of Japanese have migrated to the area, the majority of the population are US citizens. Though technically under Japanese rule, in order to keep the peace, the Japanese allow them a degree of self-determination. For instance, the Americans in Detroit are still allowed to operate their own school systems (the Japanese children have their own) and maintain a separate judicial system (to which the Japanese are not beholden). The native Michiganders are also still allowed to elect a mayor and vote for governor, but both these positions are largely ceremonial.

The economic base of the GLA remains what it's been traditionally—heavy industry and agriculture. Though the heavy industrial sector of the American economy declined precipitously in the mid-'80s, the introduction of new, more efficient technological processes arrested that trend, and F.R.E.E.American heavy industry—virtually all of which is located in the GLA—is once again a significant player in the world marketplace.

Though heavy industry is still vital, agriculture has surpassed it in terms of importance to the GLA economy. Nowadays, the GLA produces, processes, and exports more farm products than the rest of F.R.E.E.America combined.

Most people in the GLA will tell you it's largely been due to the pioneering work of Dr. Sherman Carter, a geneticist at Iowa State University. Iowa State owns thousands of patents for different strains of traditional Midwestern crops that Carter has developed, each developed to generate maximum produce yield depending on variables such as soil type, moisture, and air pollutant levels. These discoveries have allowed GLA farmers to

double their per-acre crop yields, and in some cases, triple and quadruple them. But perhaps Carter's most significant work has been in the development of strains of tropical and semitropical plants that can grow in the Midwest.

With the disasters that have hit California in recent years, traditional citrus and vegetable producing areas such as the San Joaquin Valley are no longer reliable sources of produce. Thus Carter's development of plants such as an orange tree that can survive a Minnesota winter or a pistachio that can thrive in a Chicago vacant lot is significant. Now the GLA doesn't just grow more produce than anyplace else in the country, it produces more of almost every type of crop grown in the country.

Iowa became part of the GLA as something of an afterthought, but now Carter's research facilities at Iowa State are considered to be one of the GLA's most valuable resource. Carter's budget requests are routinely OK'd by the Executive, so he always has the facilities and staff he needs. Carter is in the middle of a half-dozen projects at any one time, and his usual method of work is to see a development through enough of the initial stages that one of his assistants can finish it up.

For nine months a year, Carter puts in 12- to 18-hour days, not because he's your typical scientist recluse, but because there isn't anything he'd rather be doing. Except perhaps, watching basketball. Whenever the college basketball season begins, Carter slacks off on his work, scheduling lab time around the Iowa State Cyclones' home games and otherwise keeping an eye on the TV games which can be watched from any office in the facility.

The GLA goes to great lengths to protect Carter and his discoveries. Several years ago, the Executive established a special bodyguard detail—known as "Carter's Commandos"—that surreptitiously guards him 24 hours a day. For the most part, Carter thinks security concerns, at least in regard to him, are nonsensical—after all, who would want to harm a researcher at a small land-grant school?

One would assume that Carter is aware of the dozen or so armed men who are near him at all times, though they keep at a discreet distance (for instance, outside the door to his lab), they'd be hard to miss. But Carter acts as though they aren't there, and it's possible he doesn't know they're there. Whether Carter's aware of them or not, they're needed, because Carter's health is critical to the GLA.

Iowa State, at the urging of the Council of Governors, has placed licensing fees so high on Carter's developments that, essentially, they're unobtainable by agricultural interests outside the GLA. The rationale is as long as Carter's inventions are only available to GLA farmers, the GLA will retain its preeminence in agriculture. Unfortunately, the result of this action has been to force regions and countries to steal Carter's inventions to stay competitive.

So far, security has remained fairly tight—Farm Authority agents even oversee the planting of crops to ensure all seed is used and none is available for sale on the black market—but the more Carter's discoveries are utilized, the more difficult it is to keep them out of the hands of the rest of the world. Carter's Commandos fear that Carter himself, with his disdain for personal security, may be the weak link—and his insistence on seeing dozens of live basketball games a season creates particular security problems.

But a problem has come up with Carter's agricultural miracles, especially the exotic species; they need a lot of water to grow. The GLA is blessed with an abundant water supply, and generally receives a significant amount of annual rainfall. But projections show this won't be enough water to maintain the agricultural boom indefinitely. While Carter tries to develop plants which will grow in more arid conditions, the GLA has taken preliminary steps to build a series of reservoirs on the upper Mississippi.

This has created a furor in the OLMBC—the dams could be used to cut off the flow to the lower Mississippi—thus the plans have been placed on indefinite hold as an endless series of studies is conducted. However, farmers in the western GLA

who would stand to benefit most from the increased water supply are starting to make noise, demanding the dams be built. The water problem is going to have to be resolved, one way or another, in the very near future.

The other research field in which the GLA excels is cyborg technology. As medical breakthroughs made heart disease and cancer rarer and increased life expectancies, the major research hospitals in F.R.E.E.America turned their attentions away from catastrophic illnesses and toward quality of life concerns. They concentrated on restoring sight to the blind, mobility to the paralyzed, and similar endeavors. In particular, F.R.E.E.America's most famous hospital, the Dijon Clinic in Minneapolis, turned its attention to cyborg technology.

Unfortunately, with the collapse of the federal government, most of the research money these hospitals depended on dried up. Scientists at the Dijon Clinic were certain they were on the verge of several significant breakthroughs, and to keep the money flowing in, hired a highly regarded fundraiser named Nick Scemo and gave him free rein.

The clinic should have examined Scemo's resume a bit closer. True, he'd managed to make money with all the appeals he'd ever spearheaded, but his methods were a bit unseemly, to put it delicately. Scemo spent most of his promotional career sending out form letters enticing poor suckers with fraudulent condominium schemes. ("Come to beautiful western Nebraska and see our newest condominium development. For just visiting our site, you'll be awarded one of the following prizes." The prizes invariably turn out to be something along the lines of a pencil sharpener which, when described by the promotional material, sound like something else.) In short, Scemo was a hustler.

Just prior to joining the Dijon Clinic, Scemo *had* been working for "charity." He was running a scam in which boxes of light bulbs were dropped on people's doorsteps. Then, Scemo's associates (claiming to be blind and affiliated with some sort of rehabilitation group) called the victim's homes and tried to coerce them into paying about three times what the light bulbs were worth.

Scemo knew he had a different sort of client with the Dijon Clinic. He realized his customary boiler-room tactics weren't going to be enough to do the job. He needed a new approach, something bold, something daring, something that would capture everybody's imagination.

And thus, Nick Scemo created Cyborgs Izz Us.

The change in the clinic's name, as well as the four-story neon sign that came with it, might have been tolerable to the scientists at Dijon, except for those awful television spots. Scemo went nationwide with his appeal, buying lots of advertising time on Brewster Zarley's cable network. He used that time to put on the most loud and obnoxious series of commercials known to man. Scemo appeared in the spots himself, always in a different costume—a gorilla, the Statue of Liberty, Sherlock Holmes, it didn't matter—and his slogan was: "Remember, if you're dissatisfied with *any* part of your body, come on down to Cyborgs Izz Us and we'll replace it!"

Unfortunately, the ads worked too well. People from all over F.R.E.E.America started streaming into what had been the Dijon Clinic, seeking everything from hair transplants to hip liposuction. The doctors at first balked at performing such rudimentary procedures. But Scemo (who received a percentage of the business he brought in) reminded them if they refused, the clinic could be shut down in the face of wire fraud charges. They had to do a conscientious job as well, since Scemo had been dopey enough to offer a free 90-day trial guarantee with every procedure.

Occasionally there would be someone who came in with a problem the doctors were perfectly trained to handle. But usually when someone came in with a problem that presented a challenge, it was something beyond the technical capabilities of the Dijon Clinic or anybody else—somebody wanting a new head, procedures of that nature. Primarily, the doctors suddenly had so much mundane work to do, they no longer had time to conduct research.

Needless to say, the scientists at Cyborgs Izz Us are a disgruntled lot. Most of them would leave

tomorrow, if there was another clinic that was conducting the sort of research in which they're involved and had the funds to hire them. But there isn't, so the scientists are stuck. A variety of foreign agents have recently become aware of the situation and are trying to determine just how disgruntled the scientists are and if rumors of a silent, highly maneuverable, and full-speed leg harness are true.

Though heavy industry remains a significant factor in the GLA's economy, partly because of greater efficiency and partly because of low growth in demand, this region employs fewer workers than it did 10 years ago. There hasn't been a net loss in jobs—the increase in activity in the GLA's food processing industry has more than taken up the slack—but, as fewer workers are employed in the GLA's industrial factories, the power of the labor movement in F.R.E.E.America is on the wane. And the power of the unions has declined so much that it only remains significant in the GLA.

William Reynolds, the current head of the Reorganized American Federation of Labor, has done his best to stem the hemorrhaging of union power. In the mid-nineties, all of F.R.E.E.America's unions were consolidated into a single organization—the RAFL. This has improved the situation somewhat, giving labor a more unified front to present management. For example, in the old days, if restaurant workers at a hotel went out on strike, they had to wait and see if the maids and bellboys in the hotel workers union and the loading dock hands in the Teamsters would join them. Nowadays, if one group goes out, they all go out, because they're all part of the same union.

The trend has been going against the unions for several years now, and if Reynolds can hang on to what they still have, he'll be doing very well. But the new factories being built, such as the food processing plants throughout the GLA, don't tend to be union shops. Right-to-work law are prevalent in many regions, especially the SASD. Then there are the often violent anti-union activities conducted by Kent Mertz and the Temporary People.

The Temporary People don't just restrict their activity to strike-breaking, they also actively—and violently—try to discourage union formation and encourage union de-certification. This activity has so enraged the rank-and-file of the labor movement, that they've begun lashing out at the Temporary People, matching them in violence. Many locals have organized "defense brigades," taking part in paramilitary training after hours and on weekends. But these "defense brigades" are composed of part-time soldiers at best, and are no match for the better trained and equipped Temporary People.

The RAFL found out about this disparity in a tragic encounter with the Temporary People during a strike at a Gary steel mill in the late nineties. Seventeen union members were left dead while the Temporary People suffered no losses and only minor injuries. Because of this, the RAFL locals have been switching tactics and now use union funds to hire IOs to go after the Temporary People, often pooling the resources of several locals to hire the best help around. Naturally the union isn't saying much about this—Reynolds himself is kept deliberately uninformed so he can retain plausible deniability—and their tactics and targets remain unclear. However, this much is certain: In the last six months, the incidence of accidental death among members of the Temporary People has climbed dramatically.

There is one area in which there has been a major upheaval in the GLA—sports. Cleveland professional sports teams have become a dominant force, winning league championships in virtually everything.

It all began back in the mid-nineties with Roscoe Fletcher, the world's fastest man. Fletcher, a Cleveland native, never got involved in sports during high school, so he had no idea of how fast he was. One morning, as he was going through his morning workout before classes at a local junior college, he trotted past a struggling financial consultant named Spencer Kelso. Kelso hadn't had any formal athletic training, but he thought he saw something special about Fletcher. Kelso asked Fletcher if he wouldn't mind running 100 meters

against a stopwatch. Fletcher agreed, and snapped off a 100 yard dash in 9.0 seconds.

When Kelso told Fletcher he'd run close to world-record time, Fletcher just shrugged and said he could have done better, but he hadn't been running at full speed. So Kelso asked him to run one as fast as he could, and timed it at 7.5 seconds. Since this sprint was better than a second under the world record, Kelso thought there had to be some mistake, so he asked Fletcher to make one last run. This time Kelso timed Fletcher at 7.4.

Kelso, who in the last 10 minutes had decided to change his profession to sports agent, knew he had a potential gold mine on his hands—all he had to do was figure out how to exploit it. His initial thought was to get Fletcher a shot in the Olympic Trials coming up in a few weeks in Indianapolis. After he made a few inquiries into the Olympic tryout process, he learned it was impossible to get an unknown a chance to make the team. Still, he carted Fletcher down to Indianapolis hoping he could figure out something.

It wasn't until after Kelso's car blew a tire a short distance from the Hoosierdome that he came up with an idea. Cursing his disabled car, he saw the bus carrying the track team go past; he shouted at Fletcher to catch up with the bus and ask if anybody aboard had a tire iron. Fletcher had to run alongside the bus, which was going about 30 mph, for 600' before anybody noticed him. And though he wasn't given a tire tool, he was given a tryout.

Fletcher won the 100-meter dash, breaking the world's record by 2 1/2 seconds, and he would have won the 200-meter as well, had he not fallen down on the curve. Needless to say, everybody concluded he was juiced to the gills with steroids. When his first test came up negative, the officials scratched their heads, decided there'd been a mistake, and tested him again. And again. And again. After all the tests and all the interviews indicated Fletcher had never used the drugs in his life, the officials decided he was just incredibly fast.

Fletcher won the Olympic 100-meters, again in record time, and again passed a battery of drug tests. That brought the moment Kelso had been

waiting for—the signing of Fletcher's first professional sports contract. Fletcher signed as a free agent wide receiver with the Cleveland pro-football team, but he wasn't initially a success. Though he could easily outrun anybody on the field, he couldn't catch the ball if anybody was there to hit him. By the time he'd get in the clear, he'd be so far down field no quarterback could throw the ball to him. Unless a quarterback could be found to complement him, Fletcher was going to be an Olympic bust as a football player.

Kelso was despondent; his dreams of riches seemed to lie in ruins. He began drinking heavily and frequenting increasingly grungy bars. Then one evening, he shook himself from his stupor long enough to catch part of an amazing display at a table at the back of the tavern. There a man was taking on all comers in arm-wrestling and dispatching fellows 150 pounds heavier than him with ease. Kelso found a football somewhere and asked the man, who identified himself as Buster Carmichael, if he'd give it a toss. When they went into the street and Carmichael hefted the ball over 150 yards, Kelso knew he'd found his man.

The next day, Kelso took Carmichael out to the football team's training facility and got him to work out with Fletcher. Carmichael was awkward and didn't have a real good idea of what he was doing, but he could get the ball to Fletcher from any point on the field, so the team decided to give him a shot. And the pair has proven to be a success. Though they're useless if the team has the ball beyond its own 30, if Carmichael is given the time, he can always hit Fletcher from 70 yards and beyond.

Then Kelso thought, if these guys are natural athletes, they should be able to play more than just football, so he's signed them to professional baseball and basketball contracts as well.

Fletcher has been a bust as a baseball player. He's fast, but he can't judge a fly ball in the outfield, tends to overrun second when he uses his speed to steal, and he can't hit a lick. Carmichael has done better than Fletcher in baseball, as he uses his

arm strength to throw the 106 mph fastball which makes him the most feared relief pitcher in the league. However, when it comes to basketball, it's Carmichael who's been the washout. His upper-body strength doesn't help his game at all, since his vertical leap is about 6". Fletcher does much better, since he can beat anybody down court on a fast-break.

Since these two guys with their unique talents have been such a moneymaker for Kelso, he's been out all over the GLA looking for more like them. So far, he's come up with a couple, Johnny Tollentino, a guy with uncannily good eyesight who hit over .400 with the baseball team last year, and Barry LaFollette, an incredibly agile athlete who looks like he'll be the basketball team's point guard for several years to come. But Kelso keeps looking for more athletes all the time: His goal is to find enough athletes with unique abilities that he can stock all of Cleveland's professional franchises with players year-round.

Though there are any number of criminal elements at work in the GLA (not the least of which are the major criminal organizations of Family Dread and Archuleta) in Chicago the criminal activities seem to be run by a number of small crime families. They are involved in an on-going war for dominance and hasn't uncovered a clear leader. There are rumors that the big crime families have targeted Chicago as their next target for a takeover. Chicago's central location and rising power in the GLA makes it a plum target for acquisition by Family Dread or Archuleta.

There has been a growing number of incidences of gang violence in the city and the buzz on the street seems to indicate that there's going to be a lot more killing, looting, bombing and mayhem before this all gets straightened out.

Organizations and Characters

Reorganized American Federation of Labor (RAFL)

As the decade comes to a close, the labor movement in F.R.E.E.America has been in decline for nearly 40 years. The reason for the decline is simple: The number of blue-collar, heavy industry workers on which American unions traditionally have represented has fallen as that sector of the economy has become less important. For the most part, unions have been unsuccessful in organizing workers in the sectors that have taken on greater importance as heavy industry waned—service industries and the like. Without more aggressive recruiting of a new class of workers, demographics alone were bound to reduce the importance of organized labor in F.R.E.E.America.

But the federal government's firing of the Professional Air Traffic Controllers in 1981 put the decline of unions on a faster track. With that action, it became acceptable for employers to attack labor unions and help precipitate their decline rather than wait for union members to grow old and eventually die, thus causing a weakening of the union.

Lockouts by employers became more common than strikes by workers, as industry tried to make unions accept less favorable contracts. And, faced with taking watered-down contracts or watching as unorganized workers who would agree to lousy terms were hired in their place, more and more, union workers would accept the security of a lower-paying job.

William Reynolds, who'd risen from the machinists' union ranks in Youngstown, Ohio, to become president of the AFL-CIO in the early nineties, thought the best way to attack this problem was to consolidate labor's position. Though most unions were members of the AFL-CIO, they had grown undisciplined over the years, and no longer automatically respected each other's picket lines.

Reynolds' plan was to dispense with distinctions between coal miners, auto workers, and pipe fitters and gather all of the country's labor movement into a single organization, with a single local representing all of organized labor's interests at a plant. There was some grumbling—the professional football players didn't want to be part of the same bargaining unit as the concessionaire employees who hawked hot dogs in the stadium, for instance—but most went along when Reynolds established the Reorganized American Federation of Labor in the mid-nineties, and most those who didn't go along initially have since joined up.

But as the RAFL was being formed, the anti-labor movement was just entering a new, uglier phase. Violence against union workers surpassed that which accompanied the birth of the American labor movement around the turn of the century. Initially, this violence was sporadic and disorganized, but as more companies are swallowed up in the accelerating leveraged buyouts, and the arbiters need to make more money to service their debt, the violence against workers has become a common and tacitly accepted tactic which is expected with each new merger. Kent Mertz's Temporary People, with its squads of highly trained, readily deployed anti-union goons, has become the primary instigator of this violence.

Lately, the unions have started fighting back. First, many locals—especially those which were at shops which were the subjects of takeover rumors—started forming defense brigades; paramilitary outfits whose members received training after hours and on weekends. However, these units were composed of part-time soldiers at best, and as the Gary steel strike in the late nineties demonstrated, have been no match for the better trained and equipped Temporary People. The latest trend has been for the locals to pool resources to hire independent operators for protection in a possible confrontation situation, and, in fact, RAFL headquarters has a number of IOs on retainer for this very purpose.

But for some of the more militant locals, this isn't good enough, and they've been paying IOs to seek out and execute members of the Temporary Peo-

ple. It's even rumored that a few anonymous, large locals are offering a \$1 million bounty for Mertz's assassination. (Reynolds denies all knowledge of this, and careful steps are taken to keep him uninformed about it so he can continue to deny it.) This labor action has been gruesomely effective—many of the IOs the locals have hired have been Temporary People defectors—and employment by the Temporary People has certainly become less desirable than it once was. As a result, Mertz has had difficulty the last few months filling vacancies, and lately, the Temporary People has been forced to take only those IOs most desperate for employment.

The most radical locals (mostly old coal-mining units from West Virginia) are taking things a step further. They claim that organized goons such as the Temporary People are not the problem, but rather, the manifestation of the problem, that the real culprits are the Wall Street arbitragers who hire Mertz's legions. To this end, they have been helping finance Migrant Revenge, and may be assisting them on a more direct basis as well.

Rules Section

William Reynolds

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
55	53	20	51	78	38	37

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	53

Psychology: Cruelty (Some), Loyalty (Total), Passion (High), Piety (High), Sanity (Some), Selfishness (Little)

Tags: Constant worrier

Advantages: Mechanical Aptitude (3)

Disadvantages: Unattractive Appearance (1), Vision Impairment (2)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Metalworking (3), Basic Mechanic (1), Basic Firearms (1), Basic Melee (1),

Boxing (2), Social Chameleon (1), Speed Reading (3), Swimming (1), Gleaning (2), Persuasion (3), Basic Liberal Arts (1)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: With the tremendous anti-union sentiment that currently permeates F.R.E.E.America (and which has led to the creation of an outfit such as the Temporary People) Reynolds has just barely managed to hang on to the status quo. Despite the efficiency that Reynolds has brought to the American labor movement, maintaining the status quo has become increasingly difficult.

Thus, more radical elements of the labor movement have been coming to the fore. Reynolds has reason to believe that several of the more militant locals have been hiring IOs to knock off members of the Temporary People. He has heard rumors that there's a \$1 million bounty on the head of Kent Mertz, but he has chosen to remain uninformed about such actions, partly so he can deny them and partly because he's philosophically opposed to violence.

So far, violence seems to be the only practical alternative to the goon squad activity conducted by the Temporary People, and as the proponents of violence gain more success, they gain more power as well. From all appearances, the next time Reynolds is up for reelection, he'll have to fight off a serious challenge from the radical elements of the labor movement.

For that reason, Louis Lassiter, the single greatest anti-labor power in F.R.E.E.America, has been working behind the scenes to prop Reynolds up, though Reynolds is unaware of it. Lassiter secretly channels money into the campaign funds of moderate locals and works out deals with employers to make minor concessions to such locals so that the moderate element will prevail.

The way Lassiter sees it, his hardball tactics are effective against a pacifist labor movement, but will backfire disastrously against radicalized

workers more than willing to counter violence with violence. In order to the crush the labor movement once and for all, Lassiter needs to keep Reynolds. The problem is that if Lassiter's maneuvering is ever discovered, Reynolds is through and Lassiter may be as well.

Cyborgs Izz Us (Formerly the Dijon Clinic)

Founded in 1887, the Minneapolis-based Dijon Clinic quickly established a reputation as the finest medical facility in the Western Hemisphere. The clinic, run by founder Francis L. Dijon and his five sons, all of whom were physicians, strived to bring patients the most modern medical equipment, the most innovative surgical procedures, and the most demanding professional standards available anywhere in the United States.

The Dijon Clinic's impact was both immediate and substantial. It became the model all other large hospitals tried to duplicate, and its doctors standardized many of the common medical procedures still performed today.

Around 1910, the Dijon Clinic expanded its base and began conducting medical research as well. Its successes in the research field gained it even more acclaim. Several of the major breakthroughs in the fight against catastrophic diseases are directly attributable to research carried out by physicians working at the Dijon Clinic.

But as the 'nineties started to come to a close, a couple of things happened. First, the fight against catastrophic illnesses had largely been won. Since other facilities had already established the parameters for conducting research into the few "big" diseases remaining, the Dijon Clinic decided to take up cyborging, the development of artificial body parts.

Dijon scientists were attacking this field of study with their customary brilliance when the second factor came into play—money, or a lack thereof. As the federal government dwindled, so did its funding of medical research. Just as the clinic was on the verge of several important breakthroughs in cyborg research, the Dijon found itself in the unaccustomed position of being strapped for money.

So the Dijon Clinic did what any charitable organization in the same situation would do, it hired a professional fund-raiser. Unfortunately, it hired Nick Scemo. He figured the best way to raise money would be to offer the public something it wanted, and thus, he changed the Dijon Clinic into Cyborgs Izz Us.

Except Scemo only had a vague idea of what the Dijon Clinic did. For him, cyborging meant hair transplants, breast implants, and thigh liposuctions. He carried this message throughout the country through a series of particularly obnoxious cable TV ads. People swarmed to Minneapolis to get their tummy tucks and face-lifts. Scemo wasn't about to turn away anybody with money, so to accommodate the customers, he ordered all the research scientists out of the labs and into the operating rooms.

Scientists are only allowed to conduct research "off-the-clock," and after 12-hour shifts in an operating room, nobody can muster the energy to spend much time in the lab. So the clinic still lies on the verge of several important breakthroughs in cyborg research. Unfortunately, things are likely to stay that way as long as Scemo is allowed, for all practical purposes, to run the place.

This situation is not likely to end in the foreseeable future. Scemo's contract ensures he won't be fired, and his percentage of the take guarantees he won't leave of his own accord. As for the scientists, they're stuck. No other research hospital has any money either, so nobody's hiring, and there's no other place to go.

Needless to say, morale at Cyborgs Izz Us is the pits. Sergei Petrokov, Ruriko Nakeshita, and several prominent IOs are familiar enough with the situation that they've begun working the hospital, looking for someone disgruntled enough to talk. No doubt, they'll find several. While none of the doctors want to see Scemo dead, most of them wouldn't mind, say, seeing him wind up on a deserted atoll in the South Pacific. One wonders how long it will take one of the doctors to figure out they could swap information to an IO in return for that very favor.

Rules Section

Nick Scemo

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
44	46	56	21	50	50	51

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	34

Psychology: Cruelty (Some), Loyalty (None), Passion (Little), Piety (None), Sanity (Little), Selfishness (Total)

Tags: Compulsive liar

Advantages: Sixth Sense (2)

Disadvantages: Lechery (2)

Skills: Electronics (1), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (1), Basic Melee (1), Impromptu Weapon (2), Lock-picking (1), Pickpocket (1), Acting (2), Gleaning (2), Bureaucratics (2), Persuasion (2), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (3)

Metability: None

End Rules Section

Background: Scemo had some background in fund-raising for charity, but it was mostly running the scummiest sorts of boiler-room operations for the seamiest of charities. Scemo had not, as he claimed, served as the chief fund-raiser for the American Cancer Society for three years, and he does not have dual medical and divinity doctorates from Harvard. Somebody at the clinic should have been suspicious of anybody who would list the archbishop of Canterbury as a personal reference.

But apparently, nobody was, and now the Dijon Clinic—make that Cyborgs Izz Us—is stuck with him. The terms of his contract make firing him a virtual impossibility, and he's pulling in far too much money to want to leave of his own volition. About the only way to get rid of him would be for him to die, unfortunately the doctors who work for him are dedicated to saving lives, otherwise they might be tempted to help him on his way.

Rules Section

Masohiro Kinoshita

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
21	64	53	61	27	37	59

Sex	Male
Race	Oriental
Nationality	Japan
Native Language	Japanese
Age	45

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (Total), Passion (Little), Piety (High), Sanity (High), Selfishness (Little)

Tags: A nearly regal bearing

Advantages: Attractive Appearance (2), Presence (3)

Disadvantages: Night Blindness (2), Susceptibility to Disease (1), Vision Impairment (2)

Skills: Electronics (1), Computer Technician (2), Bow and Arrow (2), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3), Off-hand Firing (3), Basic Melee (1), Sword (3), Oriental Martial Arts (3), Interrogation (2), Acting (2), Driving/Motorcycle (2), Driving/Boat (3), Horsemanship (3), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (3), History/Political Science (3), Law (3), Foreign Language (Chinese—4, English—5, French—3, German—3, Russian—4)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Masohiro Kinoshita was being groomed by Japan's ruling Liberal Democratic Party to be the country's next prime minister. He had the resume for it. After a very successful business career that culminated with the vice-presidency of one of Japan's largest investment banks, he was elected to the Diet. After his first couple of terms in the legislature, he was given a minor portfolio in the Cabinet, and he eventually worked his way up to the most critical Cabinet post—he was named finance minister—and was generally thought to be next in line for the premiership.

But then Japan bought Detroit (a deal that Kinoshita, as finance minister, largely oversaw), and suddenly, the ambassadorship to the United States became the most critical position in the Japanese government below prime minister. Japan needed its best man in Detroit, and Kinoshita, out of duty, accepted without hesitation.

Kinoshita, a conservative well-versed in the way of Bushido, brings a brilliant mind and an aloof posture to the ambassadorship. Basically, he holds Americans in contempt—he thinks that they’ve sacrificed their position of leadership in the world because of an essential weakness in the national character. However, Kinoshita is too polite to let these feelings actively affect his day-to-day dealings with the residents of F.R.E.E.America.

Extremely tall for a Japanese, strikingly handsome, articulate (even in English), and possessing that elusive quality of presence, Kinoshita makes quite an impression. However, he is the sort who prefers to do most of his work behind the scenes. He’s not above hiring IOs to perform certain distasteful tasks for his government (though he’ll usually rely on Japanese agents), and he is the superior to whom Ruriko Nakeshita directly reports.

Rules Section

Sherman Carter

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
36	77	39	46	28	38	58
Sex	Male					
Race	White					
Nationality	U.S.					
Native Language	English					
Age	43					
Psychology: Cruelty (None), Loyalty (High), Passion (Total), Piety (Little), Sanity (Some), Selfishness (Some)						
Tags: Basketball fanatic, always wears high-top sneakers, likes to talk in funny voices and accents						
Advantages: Light Sleeper (2)						
Disadvantages: Clumsiness (2)						

Skills: Electronics (2), Horsemanship (2), Mimicry (1), Photography (2), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Literature/Journalism (2), Basic Science (1), Astronomy/Math/Physics (2), Biology/Botany/Zoology (3), Chemistry (3), Genetics (3), Foreign Language (French—2, German—2, Japanese—4)

Metability: Sherman Carter is the only known person in the world with two radically different metabilities: Not only is he a savant in the field of genetic engineering and gene splicing, he also has the metability of microscopic sight.

Carter’s microscopic sight metability is just what it sounds: When he concentrates on an item, he can view it microscopically. This ability allows him to manipulate the substances with which he is working much more easily than someone having to fumble with a conventional microscope can, and has complemented his savant ability perfectly.

Though he can usually turn the metability on and off, Carter must make an INT check to go into or come out of the metable state. If he fails the check, he cannot try to enter or leave the state (depending on which he was trying to do) for 2d6x10 minutes. When Carter is in the metable state, he is, as far as everyday sight goes, blinded, and must have an assistant nearby to assist him in most tasks. Furthermore, use of a conventional microscope does not further enhance his metability.

End Rules Section

Background: Carter has used his metable and savant talents to create more new varieties of plant life than anyone since Luther Burbank. Carter’s discoveries have been used to turn the GLA into the breadbasket of F.R.E.E.America and the world. Needless to say, Carter’s discoveries are of great economic importance and are coveted throughout the world.

Carter and his secrets are carefully guarded by GLA authorities, who have established a security detachment, “Carter’s Commandos,” specifically to protect him. Eight months a year, Carter is a security agent’s dream: All he does is get up in the morning, go to the lab, and go straight home to his farm when he’s done at night.

But the rest of the year, from mid-November until the end of March, Carter is a security guard's nightmare. That's because Carter loves his hoops, and has to go see them. He attends every Iowa State home basketball game, and most of the Cyclones' road games as well. If the University of Iowa is playing at home on nights when Iowa State is idle, he'll drive to Iowa City to see them. He gets tickets to every round of the NCAA tournament every season, and if Iowa State's playing in a different region, he'll shuttle between sites every day until they are eliminated.

All this gallivanting around to watch basketball games with huge crowds presents enormous security problems. Carter's Commandos attend all the Cyclones' home games as well, but since Carter often attends games elsewhere on the spur of the moment and buys tickets off scalpers at the gate, the security contingent often can't get into the arena to watch over him. Carter's Commandos fear this situation the most; they've foiled several kidnapping plots against Carter already because they were nearby and able to stop the attempts, which were always made on Carter in basketball arenas. But they're afraid one of these nights, somebody will try grabbing the professor while they're cooling their heels outside, and they won't be able to do anything about it.

Ohio-Lower Mississippi Basin Cooperative (OLMBC)

Life may be more desperate in the Ohio-Lower Mississippi Basin Cooperative (OLMBC) than in any of the other regional authorities. Made up of West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, Mississippi, and Louisiana, this area is traditionally poor and rural, and the cutoff of federal aid has made the region's endemic problems—poverty, hunger, illiteracy, and short life expectancy—more pronounced. And now, threatened with the loss of its greatest resource—its major rivers—the situation in the OLMBC is grim, and its future prospects appear worse.

Political leadership—or lack thereof—is a big part of the problem in the OLMBC. In no other region are state governments as uncooperative with one another. In the RMA, the states may work together *less*, but even they don't suffer from the sort of deep-seated suspicion that permeates the politics of the OLMBC and prevents the region from functioning as an effective political entity. The ineffectiveness extends down from the state governments: Counties won't work together with bordering counties; towns are suspicious of neighboring towns. The area's leaders are stuck in a political gridlock as living conditions in their region deteriorate.

The greatest problem facing the leaders of the OLMBC, the one that dwarfs all others, is the struggle with the GLA for control of the Mississippi and the Ohio rivers. People in the OLMBC have looked on in alarm as GLA states have begun to build a series of dams on the upper Mississippi and dredge and widen the Illinois and Des Plaines river ship channels.

If river navigation routes through Illinois are enlarged, then all the Midwestern barge traffic

can bypass the lower Mississippi, traveling down river to Cairo, then up river to Lake Michigan and the St. Lawrence Seaway, and by doing so, seriously damage New Orleans' standing as one of the few economically prosperous cities in the region. Dams on the upper Mississippi are seen as an even greater threat.

Though GLA officials have been assuring their counterparts in the OLMBC that the dams are only intended to store water which will be used to regulate water levels along the river and ensure the viability of barge traffic, people in the OLMBC are characteristically suspicious. They're afraid the dams will be used to regulate river levels all right, to reduce them to nothing south of Missouri, thereby destroying navigation along the lower Mississippi and forcing barge traffic to travel through Illinois and on to the St. Lawrence Seaway.

The GLA leaders have approached the mayor of Wheeling about possibly leaving the OLMBC for the GLA. This would help to free up the Ohio river for further exploitation by GLA interests.

Furthermore, as Dr. Sherman Carter invents more exotic plant species for GLA agriculture, the demand for irrigation water becomes greater, and the chances of water being diverted from reservoirs along the upper Mississippi is increased. A rumor has persisted for a long time that the RMA would like to fund a venture to build a canal to carry water from the upper Mississippi Valley to the east side of the Rockies. Just the appearance of survey crews along the north bank of the Ohio a few months ago caused fears that the GLA was planning to start building dams along that river as well. The OLMBC is in a collective dither over the situation.

But they don't have much idea of what to do about it, and probably even if they did, the OLMBC states would start bickering among themselves and fail to accomplish anything. Unfortunately, without a strong national government, there doesn't seem to be much the OLMBC *can* do to stop the GLA from damming up the headwaters of the Mississippi. The best solution would probably be for the OLMBC to present a united front and enter into serious negotiations with the GLA over the river's

future, but the consensus necessary for that plan of action doesn't seem likely any time soon.

Even the Ohio, whose banks the OLMBC shares with the GLA, is not exempt from GLA machinations. Missouri was admitted into the GLA largely that the region might consolidate control of the upper Mississippi. The alliance probably isn't above doing this sort of thing again, and recently there have been negotiations with West Virginia officials about dropping out of the OLMBC and joining the GLA. If West Virginia were in the GLA, the alliance could dam up the Ohio's headwaters and reduce the flow to a trickle. (Since cutting off water to the Ohio would affect the GLA's barge traffic along it as well, part of West Virginia's asking price for joining the GLA would be the construction of a canal in southern New York to connect the Allegheny with Lake Erie and provide an outlet to the sea for upper Ohio Valley barge traffic.) But even if the GLA can't (or won't) get West Virginia to join, the alliance could restrict the flow of the Ohio by damming up the Allegheny and the Monongahela. The knowledge that the GLA can do this has most of the OLMBC frantic.

About all the OLMBC has come up with to counter this, other than the sniping of river pirates in the Mississippi Delta, has been a plan urged by Kentucky Gov. Rev. Blotto. He wants to mobilize the Kentucky National Guard and march on Cairo. Naturally, this approach was dismissed by all responsible OLMBC leaders for its utter belligerence. But recently, the governor of Arkansas said he thought the invasion plan was a sound one, and the Rev. Blotto may be building a consensus. If civil war is ever going to break out in F.R.E.E.America, it will start because of the OLMBC-GLA rivalry.

The Rev. Blotto, the governor of Kentucky, is the region's most well-known personality, and its most powerful and feared as well. It was only a few years ago that the Rev. Blotto wasn't formulating plans for invading neighboring states, but was working as the host of an afternoon kiddie show on a TV station in Bowling Green. The show was pretty lame, and as a result, sponsors didn't call upon him to do spots for them. But one day, on the

rare occasion an advertiser was letting him read a commercial, Blotto the Clown wrapped it up by telling kids "to run straight to Grundle's Ice Cream Parlor." Within 10 minutes, the place was packed.

Nobody thought much about it at the time. Then, a couple of weeks later, Blotto told the children in his audience to make a funny face and hold it until the show returned the next day. The station's switchboard was jammed with calls from angry parents of grimacing kids who adamantly refused to stop. Incidents like this became more and more frequent until somebody realized what was going on: Though Blotto was pretty unimpressive in person, on television, he was able to convince just about anybody to do just about anything.

After discovering his influence over adults was every bit as powerful as that he displayed with children, the station's owners started having him read all the local ads. The spots were extraordinarily successful, and the station's revenues soared. As Blotto came to play an increasingly vital role in the station's viability, he decided he should be doing something a little more dignified than wearing a fright wig and a bulbous nose, and asked to anchor the 6 o'clock news. When the station refused, Blotto persuaded them it was in their best interests to comply with his demands—via the television, of course. By the end of the negotiations, Blotto not only got to anchor the news, he received a percentage of the station as well.

Blotto demanded complete editorial control over his newscasts, and they were, to say the least, weird. His broadcasts consisted of the sort of gobbledygook you'd expect to find in tabloids at the grocery store checkout stand: Elvis is alive and is king of the lost continent of Atlantis, that sort of thing.

When he wasn't reporting such "news," which he made up wholesale, he engaged in rambling monologues during which he would complain about a whole raft of concerns and cite an equal raft of conspiracy theories. For five nights a week, it was 30 minutes of the worst TV anybody could have found anywhere, at any time, in the history of the medium. Even if he was off his rocker, Blotto was

shrewd: He'd end every newscast by telling the audience to tune in the next day, and his ratings soared.

As Blotto spent more time doing the news, his behavior became increasingly bizarre. For instance, he insisted on using the name Blotto, even though, for the most part, he wouldn't assume his clown persona. But he'd wear the fake nose, and there were times when he would, inexplicably and without comment, read the news wearing his complete clown outfit. A couple times he appeared in a dress, and once he insisted on reading the news naked (luckily the desk on the news set covered up almost everything.)

Blotto was out of control, yet his ratings continued to climb, and advertisers continued to line up for him to do commercials. Feeling he deserved more, Blotto bugged the station's owners for a raise, which they refused to give him. So he went on the air one night and told the owners to deed the station over to him. They did. There was no way of stopping him when, a few days later, he announced the news was a device Satan used to hide the truth from the people and declared the format of his show would change from news to a religious program.

There wasn't much difference between the malarkey Blotto spouted as a newsman and as a religious broadcaster. But the Rev. Blotto found it a lot easier to appeal directly for money from his viewers. He told them to "dig down deep" into their pockets. Which they did, often, and in very large amounts. In just a few months, the Rev. Blotto was the richest man in the state of Kentucky (which, by then, wasn't saying all that much).

It was about that time the Rev. Blotto decided to get into politics. Declaring both the major party candidates to be minions of Satan, he began a write-in campaign for governor. Blotto made frequent appeals to the other candidates, asking them to withdraw from the race, and eventually, the one who tuned in from time to time, did just that. The other one, who refused to watch "that demagogic son-of-a-bitch," doggedly pressed on with his campaign—and lost, receiving less than 4 percent of the vote.

As governor, the Rev. Blotto continued his nightly broadcasts, and he continued to grow even stranger. After becoming governor, the Rev. Blotto, issued a televised appeal to a joint session of the Kentucky Legislature. He got the body to suspend the state constitution, institute the death penalty for crimes against the state, require mandatory service in the Kentucky National Guard, and give him carte blanche to "modernize" the Guard's equipment.

Blotto began purchasing all manner of expensive new weaponry for his troops, and soon, the Kentucky National Guard was the second-most powerful fighting force in North America. Anyone who complained about this buildup, or who refused to do his or her time in the Guard, was summarily executed for crimes against the state.

All this didn't go unchallenged. Prominent attorneys in the state, who did not watch television, knew any attempt to attack the Rev. Blotto in federal court would be an exercise in futility, but they thought that in state court, they just might stand a chance. They brought suit on a number of points, and prevailed on all of them at the trial level. The verdicts were unanimously affirmed on appeal. The attorneys sensed victory would be theirs and that the Rev. Blotto's statewide reign of terror would end when the Kentucky Supreme Court heard the final appeal and issued its ruling.

But the court allowed the governor to file a reply brief in the form of a videotape. The justices played the tape as arguments were being wrapped up, and, after having viewed it, decided they didn't even need to deliberate or write an opinion. They just voted 9-0 to overturn the lower court rulings and find for the state on all counts. The attorneys who brought the case were outraged, but not for long, for they were taken out and summarily executed for crimes against the state.

At this point, there doesn't seem to be anything anybody can do about the Rev. Blotto's power within the state of Kentucky. As long as he stays bottled-up in his home state, he may prove to be relatively harmless. Whether or not he stays bottled-up may be up to Nashville-based cable television magnate Brewster Zarley.

Zarley tried taking on the major television networks in the mid-'80s with his GoldenVision Network, programming made available for cable franchises and independent broadcasters. Zarley's efforts weren't entirely successful—the networks still dominated the television ratings—but his aggressive marketing of syndicated reruns, old movies, and second-rate original programming was instrumental in making television viewers aware of the alternatives available to them, and as a result, the networks' market share dropped. While Zarley might not have come out of it with the "fourth network" he'd sought, he played a big part in establishing cable's credibility and had become the preeminent cable programmer.

Because of his flamboyant style, Zarley tended to overextend himself, establishing new networks or services that might take years to catch on and become profitable. As the century drew to a close, Zarley found himself once again strapped for cash, so he turned to the Rev. Blotto with a deal for their mutual benefit: Zarley would use his religious programming cable network to provide a nationwide audience for the Rev. Blotto's nightly ranting, if the Rev. Blotto would do commercials for Zarley's sponsors and various cable programming. The Rev. Blotto, wanting to extend his influence outside the state of Kentucky, agreed.

It's a dangerous move for Zarley. Though he is leery of the Rev. Blotto's powers of persuasion, he is egotistical enough to believe he can control the Rev. Blotto, rather than the reverse. If Zarley's correct, he could wind up making a great deal of money from the venture. But if he's wrong, he could end up losing his entire operation to the Rev. Blotto. So far at least, things haven't worked out as they had been planned.

People from other parts of the country, especially the GLA, have heard of the Rev. Blotto and are fearful of him, and thus far, most cable distributors have refused to carry his show. However, his nightly broadcast now can be seen throughout most of the OLMBC, and the possibility exists that the Rev. Blotto could make the entire region, not just the state of Kentucky, his personal fiefdom.

Because of pervasive poverty, the OLMBC has had a more serious deterioration of its infrastructure than any other regional alliance. The electrical generation system is unreliable, the roads are often in such a state of disrepair that they're unpassable, and the drinking water may be unsafe. But the main way in which the crumbling infrastructure is noticeable is the collapse of an efficient communications system.

Some time ago, the major phone companies evaluated the economic climate in the OLMBC and made projections for the future. Not liking what they saw, the phone companies pulled out and stopped providing service. Without the FCC to bar them from taking such action there was nothing to stop them from leaving the OLMBC. The duty of providing phone service fell to individual communities. While some more prosperous cities such as Louisville and New Orleans may still be able to afford to maintain their microwave relay equipment and can keep up adequate telephone service, most of the smaller, poorer, rural towns cannot.

The loss of phone service in the backwoods towns has meant the destruction of effective communication. Everyone still has TVs, so there's some knowledge of world and national news, but local news is distributed only as fast as the Postal Service can deliver it. Not surprisingly, the Postal Service has grown progressively more unreliable as the century nears a close. The horribly inefficient communications, combined with the bad transportation system, have left some areas of the region—most particularly the Ozarks region of northern Arkansas, the Mississippi Delta bayous in southern Louisiana, and pretty much the entire state of Mississippi—extremely isolated, virtually cut off from the rest of F.R.E.E.America.

As might be expected, all sorts of wild tales, certainly exaggerated for the sake of drama, have come drifting out of these areas. There are rumors of hillbillies coming down from the Ozarks and setting whole towns afire, of river pirates once again plying their trade on the lower Mississippi, and of die-hard Confederate sympathizers resurrecting the antebellum South in deepest Mississippi.

pi. How much of this is true is conjecture, for nobody will really know until witnesses can go there and bring back a first-hand report.

The story out of Arkansas is this: Up around Batesville, in the north-central part of the state, a man identified as Clem McSpiddle, has periodically been leading a family of backwoods recluses, thought to be named Potter, out of the hills and into neighboring towns. The townspeople are threatened with the torching of their homes unless McSpiddle is paid off. Though the locals are vaguely familiar with the Potters—they've been inbreeding and living in the hills for generations—other than his name, nobody seems to know much about McSpiddle. Know one knows who he is or what he might be after.

At least McSpiddle's *modus operandi* seems familiar: On a weekday, usually in the early afternoon, he'll walk into town, carrying a bullhorn, with one or two of the Potters in tow. He'll proceed to the middle of town—the town square, if there is one—and have the Potter he has with him demonstrate his or her apparent pyrokinetic ability, such as setting a building in the city's center on fire. McSpiddle will then tell those who have assembled that there are several more Potters nearby, and if he is not brought a certain amount of money in quick fashion (the amount will vary depending on how much he figures the town is good for), the Potters will set the whole town ablaze.

So far, only Calico Rock, the first town in which he tried this act, has seen fit to call his bluff. The best evidence indicates that the Potters did indeed torch the town. At any rate, recent satellite photos indicate the town was recently substantially destroyed in a fire and that nobody resides there any longer. News of the Potters' abilities has spread throughout the area, but the extent of their abilities is still undetermined.

While the stories about McSpiddle and the Potters are not entirely credible, rumors about river pirates operating on the lower Mississippi apparently are accurate. Pirating isn't as glamorous as

it once was; mostly it involves hijacking barge shipments of various commodities and hustling them down to gypsy freighters on anchor in New Orleans harbor. Local law enforcement officials do little to restrict the river pirates' operations; since the victims are almost always GLA commodities shippers, the local authorities sympathize with the pirates more than with their victims.

In the last couple of years, a character calling himself Jean Lafitte III has emerged on the Louisiana river pirate scene. His real name is Harold Swanson, but he figured if he was going to lead the life of a pirate, he needed a colorful name. All decked out in his new persona, and displaying the sort of mannerisms one would expect from a second-rate character actor playing Long John Silver in a remake of *Treasure Island*, Lafitte has become a lively fixture in New Orleans night life, showing up at the popular, clandestine casinos in the French Quarter several nights a week.

Though he appears to be escaped from a bad movie, Lafitte/Swanson is a shrewd operator. The whole Lafitte act is probably designed to ingratiate the pirate with the local law enforcement officials. Nobody in Louisiana is going to apprehend a pirate named Jean Lafitte who preys on Yankee shipping (even if he is black), but they just might feel compelled to pick up somebody doing the same thing named Harold Swanson. Lafitte/Swanson is just one of several pirates working in the area, and his main accomplishment has been to loosely organize them.

It used to be the pirates would snatch any type of cargo which they could get their hands on; sometimes they'd wind up with 200 tons of corn when it was selling for 11 cents a bushel, other times they'd get a valuable cash crop and not be able to find anybody to take the cargo before it rotted. Lafitte/Swanson and his colleagues have begun operating a computerized clearinghouse of pirating information that solves these problems.

Shipments from upper Mississippi points and commodity prices are closely tracked so that only the most valuable cargoes are targeted. Furthermore,

Lafitte/Swanson is constantly updating his list of unscrupulous freighter captains docked in New Orleans, what they will take, what they will pay for it, and how much they can handle.

Through this operation, Lafitte/Swanson also ensures there is no duplication of the pirates' efforts, that the same cargo isn't targeted by two different pirates. Lafitte/Swanson doesn't directly receive anything for operating this service, the increased efficiency it brings his operation is enough reward for him. And, as one might expect, the reaction of the GLA shippers whose cargoes are being pirated has been to avoid the lower Mississippi altogether and reach the ocean via Illinois and the St. Lawrence Seaway. Ironically, Lafitte/Swanson's current success is what makes his future prospects look somewhat less promising.

As for the stories about the South having risen again in Mississippi, there's not much information.

Apparently, Beauregard Stevenson, a prominent farmer in Chickasaw County, has acquired a significant portion of the land in the area and has decided to operate it as an antebellum cotton plantation. Whether he is following the example of the old South closely enough that he even has black slaves providing the labor is currently unknown. However, the one report from that area noted that the boundary of Stevenson's spread is heavily fortified, which would indicate he has something he'd like to hide. It's probably best to assume the worst until more concrete information is available.

Organizations and Characters

Rules Section

The Rev. Blotto

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
43	77	48	34/100*	28	46	63

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	42

Psychology: Cruelty (Some), Loyalty (Low), Passion (Some), Piety (Total), Sanity (None), Selfishness (Total)

Tags: Sonorous voice, bulbous clown's nose

Advantages: Acting Ability (2), Empathy (2), Presence (3), Sixth Sense (1)

Disadvantages: Greed (3), Mood Swings (3) Overweight (1), Unmistakable Feature (1)

Skills: Disguise (2), Acting (3), Mimicry (2), Stage Magic (2), Ventriloquism (3), Basic Liberal Arts (1)

Metability: The Rev. Blotto has the metability of televised empathy. In person, his WIL is only 34, but when he's on television, his WIL is 100. The Rev. Blotto, when appearing on TV, can convince others to do things they otherwise would have the good sense not to attempt; not only does the Rev. Blotto have his WIL of 100, those in the audience unaware of his ability will function at $\frac{1}{2}$ WIL. When a member of the audience is aware of the Rev. Blotto's powers of persuasion, that person functions at full WIL in resisting the Rev. Blotto's suggestions, and if that audience member is hostile to the Rev. Blotto's intentions as well, the Rev. Blotto's WIL is reduced to 50.

The Rev. Blotto can use his ability to convince nearly anybody to do nearly anything short of sacrificing life and limb. But the power only works when the Rev. Blotto's message is received on a

television set. When encountered in person, the Rev. Blotto is fairly dull and unconvincing.

There is some evidence to indicate that repeated exposure to the Rev. Blotto's telecasts has a cumulative effect on those who watch him. For each seven consecutive days a character watches the Rev. Blotto's show, that character's WIL, for purposes of dealing with the Rev. Blotto, is reduced by 1. (This penalty is applied even if the character is actively trying to resist the Rev. Blotto.) One point of WIL can be regained for each full week a character goes without seeing any of the Rev. Blotto's broadcasts. However, once the Rev. Blotto reduces a character's WIL to 0, that character will do *anything* the Rev. Blotto instructs him or her to do and cannot regain any of his or her lost WIL.

End Rules Section

Background: The Rev. Blotto is the most well-known and powerful character in the OLMBC, but, because the OLMBC is such an economic and cultural backwater, he is generally paid little heed outside his home region. Born Frederick Woodbury, he studied theater for three years at Western Kentucky University before auditioning for and winning the role of Sailor Taylor, the sidekick to local kiddie show host Cap'n Andy.

When the man who played Cap'n Andy was charged with 93 counts of procurement after a yearlong undercover vice crackdown, the TV station's managers asked Woodbury to take over the kiddie show slot and give it a new format. He reemerged as the title character of "Blotto the Clown's Cartoon Funhouse." Woodbury took his job very seriously; he dropped out of school to work on it full time, started wearing his bulbous clown's nose at all times, and insisted everybody call him Blotto.

Unfortunately, he wasn't very good at it. Quite simply, kids didn't like him. He was teetering on the verge of cancellation when his persuasive powers were first noticed and put to use. From there, his ascent to power has been downright meteoric.

What people can't figure out about him is just when he went crazy. There's no doubt about it, the

Rev. Blotto's not just amusingly weird and whacked out, he's full-blown irrational, dangerous crazy. Those who have observed the Rev. Blotto for a long time think that he was never particularly stable, but that he didn't go around the bend until his fiancée and high-school sweetheart, beauty queen Renee LaDuc left him. Not only did she skip town two weeks before their scheduled wedding, she lit out for Tahiti to join Cap'n Andy, who'd jumped bail.

Apparently, the Rev. Blotto sees himself as some sort of prophet of God, and believes it is his sacred duty to establish a theocracy in F.R.E.E.America. However, the theological tenets of the religion he preaches are unclear—they usually change from day to day—his only constants are his reactionary nature and his virulent misogyny.

Rules Section

Brewster Zarley

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
20	68	37	63	67	29	63

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	44

Psychology: Cruelty (Some), Loyalty (Little), Passion (High), Piety (High), Sanity (Little), Selfishness (High)

Tags: A desperate sort of salesmanship that merely covers a deep depression

Advantages: Light Sleeper (2)

Disadvantages: Ego Signature (2)

Skills: Electronics (1), Computer Technician (2), Basic Firearms (1), Rifle (2), Shotgun (1), Basic Melee (1), Boxing (1), Forgery (1), Acting (1), Driving/Automobile (3), Driving/Motorcycle (2), Driving/Off-road Vehicle (3), Driving/Snowmobile (2), Driving/Boat (3), Horsemanship (2), Sailing (3), Skiing (2), Swimming (2), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (3)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section



The Rev. Blotto

Background: Nashville-based cable TV magnate Brewster Zarley is one of F.R.E.E.America's most prominent, colorful, and obnoxious personalities. Whether it's his wheeling and dealing or his weekend sports car racing, Zarley manages to keep his mug in front of the television cameras.

The fact that he owns a good number of those cameras helps a lot, for Zarley is widely perceived as a bozo. That isn't entirely true—he wouldn't have been able to get his programming into 95% of the households wired for cable if he was—but he gives everybody in F.R.E.E.America plenty of reason to think his is.

Sure, he wheels and deals a lot. And a number of those deals have gone spectacularly sour. And sure, he races cars, but he seems to never last more than a half-dozen laps before he blows an engine. But mostly, it's Zarley's propensity for granting television interviews in which he shoots from the hip straight into his foot that gives him his buffoonish reputation.

Though Zarley is reasonably successful—but not nearly as successful as he would lead people to believe—he is invariably leveraged up to the eyeballs. As a result, he's always scratching for ways to improve his cash flow. His latest move—teaming up with the Rev. Blotto—has proved to be more than Zarley can handle.

Zarley provides the Rev. Blotto a nationwide audience in exchange for the Rev. Blotto using his charismatic powers on behalf of Zarley's advertisers. So far, the arrangement has worked out well for Zarley. But now the Rev. Blotto is starting to make demands for a greater say in the cable network's affairs. Since nobody has been able to resist the Rev. Blotto's entreaties for long, Zarley is now running a terrific risk of losing the whole operation.

Rules Section

Jean Lafitte III

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
45	58	27	33	19	36	43
Sex	Male					
Race	Black					
Nationality	U.S.					
Native Language	English					
Age	33					

Psychology: Cruelty (Some), Loyalty (Little), Passion (Little), Piety (None), Sanity (Little), Selfishness (High)

Tags: Eye patch and ludicrous pirate shtick

Advantages: Acting Ability (2)

Disadvantages: Gambling (2)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Metalworking (3), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3), Rifle (1), Submachine Gun (1), Shotgun (2), Rocket Launcher (2), Basic Melee (1), Boxing (3), Lip Reading (2), Mimicry (2), Foreign Language (French—2)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Jean Lafitte III is really a former welder from Pittsburgh named Harold Swanson. Several years ago, Swanson came down from Pennsylvania for Mardi Gras in New Orleans. He thinks he had a good time, but can't remember for sure, because he got drunk, got in a fight, got beaten up, got robbed, and wound up in a coma in a hospital. When he finally came to he had no money and had lost his job in Pennsylvania, so he decided maybe Louisiana was a good place to live.

Swanson couldn't find work as a welder and eventually was hired as a deck hand on a tug. After he was there a few months, some of his buddies from the dock asked him to go out with them one night on what turned out to be a pirating raid; a half-dozen of them commandeered a tug pushing a load of scrap metal just north of the harbor and loaded the cargo onto a tramp freighter headed for Brazil before dawn.

Swanson found he liked the action he saw as a pirate, and, as he began staying up all night more and more and eventually quit his tug job to become a full-time pirate. Swanson had a flair for the work, proved to be adept at planning jobs, and in time, became the acknowledged leader of one group of pirates, even though he was a black Yankee from Pennsylvania.

Partly to fit in better, and partly because he was swept away with the romanticism of pirating (and partly because he was sort of off center to begin with) Swanson adopted the moniker of "Jean Lafitte III," claiming to be a direct descendant of the hero of the Battle of New Orleans. The act was pretty innocuous at first, but as Swanson became more successful as a pirate, his alter ego became more ridiculous. Using his Mimicry skill to add a broad Cajun accent, spicing up his language with a load of seafaring babble he'd picked up from old TV shows, and wearing an eye patch, he tried to imitate the stereotypical swashbuckling pirate.

The more overstated Swanson became, the more accepted he was in New Orleans night life. This probably worked to the advantage of all the pirates working the lower Mississippi. Swanson's Lafitte character was a figure of affection along Bourbon Street, which made it politically difficult for the authorities to move against the pirates. Besides, he and his men were only stealing from a bunch of damn Yankees from the GLA. As long as he didn't mess with the locals, Louisiana officials were willing to look the other way.

But Swanson wasn't devoting all his energies to his silly pirate act. Bothered by what he considered a lack of organization by the pirates, he began coordinating their actions so they wouldn't wind up stealing the same sorts of cargoes and depressing the black market value of what they were ripping off. This effort has progressed to the point that now Swanson oversees a data bank that includes information on all cargoes moving down river, current and projected prices for commodities, and listings of shady freighter captains who will handle illicit cargoes. So though he may appear to be a buffoon, Swanson/Lafitte runs a coldly efficient organization.

Rules Section

Beauregard Stevenson

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
62	66	50	35	33	56	58

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	53

Psychology: Cruelty (Total), Loyalty (High), Passion (Some), Piety (Total), Sanity (Little), Selfishness (High)

Tags: Always wears a white linen suit and Panama hat

Advantages: Animal Friendship (1)

Disadvantages: Allergies (1)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Carpentry (3), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (1), Rifle (3), Shotgun (3), Jungle Survival (2), Tracking (2), Security Systems (2), Animal Handling (2), Horsemanship (1), Swimming (1), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Philosophy/Religion (3)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: As states' rights theories made a comeback, so did the nasty traditions that had been closely tied to it, most significantly, institutionalized racism. Such actions were mostly confined to the rural areas of the South, but in those places, "separate but equal" facilities reappeared and lynchings and other forms of Klan violence were openly tolerated.

Such a reaction wasn't enough to please Beauregard Stevenson. He wanted to turn back the clock to the mid-19th century. After he used inherited wealth and Wall Street investment income to buy up most of the eastern half of Chickasaw County, there was nobody to stop him from establishing an antebellum cotton plantation, complete with black slave labor.

An elaborate security perimeter, complete with electrified fences and mine fields, has been constructed around the plantation both to keep the slaves inside and to keep outsiders from learning what's going on there. Not that he's completely secretive about what he's doing. He's been trying to talk the rest of the white farmers in the county into doing the same thing; so far, he's been able to persuade a couple to go along with him.

The main reason he'd like some more slave holders around is to defray the cost of his forays to capture more slaves. The first slaves on the plantation were local blacks, but the majority of the ones now working the fields were snatched off the streets of the ghettos of cities in the GLA and MAA, loaded onto semi-trailers, and trucked into Mississippi.

Enough is known about Stevenson and his operation that a coalition of black groups has been discreetly making inquiries, trying to organize a team of IOs to mount an operation against the plantation and free the slaves. Any IO who took on such a task wouldn't see much money from it—these groups are not well financed—but pulling it off would certainly establish that IO's reputation nationally.

Texas

Texas used to be a country, is still officially a state, and now functions much like a regional alliance. Back in 1845, Texans were willing to sacrifice some of their sovereignty to join a great union, but they weren't about to get involved in a crummy little regional alliance that would have them on the same footing as, say, Oklahoma. So Texas, as always, has chosen to go things alone.

The result is Texas is the most wide-open of any of the regional alliances. Texas is an experiment in capitalism in its purest form. Any consumer with a demand can find someone in Texas who's willing to sell whatever is desired. Though modern-day Texas is a rough-and-tumble place to do business and certainly not a healthy environment for the fainthearted, it's still a far cry from the MAA.

Anybody looking to make a buck should head for Texas; anybody looking to make a fortune has to go to the MAA. Which isn't to say there aren't fortunes to be made in Texas these days, it's just determining a formula for success in Texas is more difficult than it is in the MAA, where one's virtually guaranteed a position of enormous wealth if admission to the Wall Street club can be finagled.

Jim Bob Culpepper, the man who oversaw construction of the Rio Grande wall, remains governor in Texas. Any Texas official who engages in the sort of high-level standoff with the federal government as Culpepper did when he was building the wall is bound to become popular in the state. Never mind that the wall has generally been a complete failure. (Since everything's for sale in Texas, all the wall has accomplished is to channel illegal aliens to a few checkpoints where the guards can be bribed to allow them entry.) Style has always counted for more in Texas than substance.

If Culpepper has anything, he's got style. He junked the official state limo in favor of a white, late '60s Lincoln with steer horns mounted on the hood. He's never seen in public without his Stet-

son, his Cuban panatella, and his phalanx of Texas Rangers. He's the sort who can hobnob and cut deals with the big boys in the skyboxes at the pro-football games, then turn right around, head to the most poverty-stricken neighborhood in Dallas, hop out of the Lincoln to press the flesh—and be absolutely sincere in his dealings with everyone. He's a walking stack of contradictions, and thinks that's his strongest character point.

Culpepper decided he would give direction to the state by giving it no direction at all. Now, as he's well into his third term, this lack of direction is starting to shape up. Culpepper not only hasn't saddled business with a lot of burdensome regulations, he hasn't saddled them with *any* regulations, burdensome or otherwise. It took most of Culpepper's first term for businessmen to figure out he wasn't going to regulate them, and another term for them to figure out he wasn't going to be summarily chucked out of office. Now, in the middle of his third term, businesses have learned they can do whatever they want, and nobody is going to stop them. The result is a strong state economy which is not dependent on a single type of manufacturing or service industry to provide jobs.

Culpepper is paranoid, and more than a little bit corrupt, so he's greatly increased the size of the Texas Rangers and turned them into his personal bodyguard and goon squad. Since he's added more bodies to the Rangers than he needs or knows what to do with, they have shown some initiative and have begun running minor protection rackets and other scams, all in the name of the governor. Despite using the governor's name to make their collections, the Rangers don't seem inclined to cut him in on the action.

One of Culpepper's more popular moves as governor came when he annexed the Johnson Space Center in Houston and the superconducting Supercollider near Dallas. Culpepper has been urged to divest these holdings and sell them to private interests, but has refused. Which is probably for the best. It would be mighty hard to find a buyer who could come up with several billion dollars and then show a profit with a particle physics research facility. As for the Johnson Space Center,

it was used as the cornerstone for the development of Lone Star Space, the state's very own space exploration organization. Unlike the Supercollider, LSS could be sold to somebody who could make money with it, except, as Culpepper says, Texans sort of like the idea of having their own space agency.

Using the launch facilities on Matagorda Island, LSS so far has conducted recreational launches of scaled-down reusable launch vehicles. LSS has built four of these mini-orbiters, which touch down for soft landings out in West Texas and can be refurbished and relaunched in about four weeks. Anybody who's ever wanted to experience space travel (and has \$500,000 they don't mind spending) can sign up for one of LSS' biweekly space shots and get in line to make three orbits of the Earth.

LSS, by keeping costs low and cramming a pilot and eight paying customers into the mini-orbiters, has been able to turn this venture into a nice little moneymaker. There hasn't been a shortage of paying customers. People from all over the world have flocked to the Texas coast to undergo the four weeks' astronaut training required of all first-time space travelers. Pentagon officials have publicly fretted about the propriety of this, citing security concerns, but LSS ignores them. Business has been so brisk, LSS is considering adding another orbiter to its fleet and making the launches a weekly occurrence.

But LSS has been and will be involved in projects more significant than extraterrestrial joy rides. In the mid-nineties, LSS put a crude, two-man space laboratory into orbit. The purpose of the lab is to manufacture pharmaceuticals in the zero-gravity environment of space, and it's staffed by two-man crews which are rotated out every four weeks. This, too, has proven to be a good moneymaker for LSS. As for future projects, the LSS appears further along than anybody else in plans to build a permanent base on the moon, and it appears likely, given the disfavor into which NASA has fallen under Louis Lassiter's ownership, that LSS will begin receiving the bulk of the contracts for space weapons from the Pentagon.

Culpepper's wall did little to stem the flow of illegal aliens into Texas, and conditions in Mexico and Central America increased the number trying to make it into the States. Someone should have realized that a wall along the Rio Grande wasn't going to stop anyone really determined to enter the state, since there were several hundred miles of unprotected coastline along which they could enter. More to the point, in a state in which everything has a price, finding border guards willing to look the other way was never a problem. Since Texas officials were more easily bribed than those in the other border states, the flow of illegal aliens into Texas actually increased.

Finding the right border guards to bribe was a lot easier for gangs familiar with the area than it was for individuals moving up from points south, so Mexican crime families soon dominated the illegal alien trade. A violent struggle for control of the trade soon broke out. The first to be forced out of the business were the independent operators who'd undercut the larger organizations on the price they'd charge the people they smuggled into Texas. Since these operations were small and under-financed, it only took a few months for them to be wiped-out and for the four major alien-smuggling gangs, based in the major Mexican border towns—Ciudad Juarez, Ciudad Acuna, Nuevo Laredo, and Matamoros—to emerge.

In all but Juarez, these gangs weren't the old-line crime organizations which controlled traditional vice operations such as gambling and prostitution. Warfare quickly erupted between the new gangs and the established ones; since the alien-smuggling gangs were younger and had a greater proclivity for violence, they emerged victorious.

With the triumphs of the alien-smuggling gangs, the violence didn't subside, it entered a new, more deadly phase. First, there were the police to take care of. Mexican officials, who were traditionally in on the take, had been waiting and watching to see who emerged victorious from the gang wars, before moving in and seeking new, higher payoffs. But these new gangs were different. Where an old organization like Family DeLeon in Juarez might be respectful of tradition and continue to grease

the palms of local police officials, the younger gangs felt no such duty. When the cops started leaning on them, they exploded, determined to wipe out the police as they had other local rivals.

The police weren't prepared for this and suffered heavy losses initially. However, law enforcement officials had more resources on which to draw, and soon the Mexican armed forces were introduced into the fray. But the gang lords had assembled armies of their own, and what they lacked in resources, they more than made up for in terms of hard-nosed determination. After nearly three years of fighting, Mexican officials were no closer to establishing their dominion over the border towns than they'd been when they began, so they tactfully withdrew, leaving the lower Rio Grande in the hands of the alien-smugglers. With all vestiges of official authority having been removed, the gangs assumed a quasi-governmental function, providing health care, housing, and even, in the case of rape, theft, and the like, law enforcement to the townspeople of the cities that had become their power bases.

Had the four gangs been satisfied to control everything within their own spheres of influence, matters might have proceeded peacefully. All the gangs had hundreds of recruiters they sent south into other parts of Mexico and Central America, seeking economically disadvantaged workers eager to begin life anew in F.R.E.E.America. The trouble really began when these recruiters began running into conflict with one another.

Though prices for alien transport were more or less established, the recruiters would often undercut one another, causing resentment. Another tactic would be for recruiters to work in pairs, with one recruiter misrepresenting himself as a member of a rival gang and quoting would-be immigrants a much higher price than his partner would tell them. Still another tactic was for recruiters to misrepresent themselves as members of rival gangs and quote prospective illegal aliens prices that were considerably *lower* than the market average. The various handlers who would guide the folks who had been so duped on into Texas, would then rip off them off for increasingly

large sums of cash as the trip proceeded. Word would eventually get back to the swindled immigrants' home town, and the reputation of the gang that they *thought* had swindled them would be hurt.

Sometimes, the rival gangs would go so far as to intercept each other's caravans, waylaying them at designated checkpoints. There was enough of this going on that the gangs started sniping at one another, and eventually, full-scale war broke out between them.

The gangland violence which ensued rivaled the drug wars in Florida for bloodiness. Since a good deal of the killing was taking place across the border in Mexico, people in F.R.E.E.America didn't pay much attention to it. Naturally, the violence spilled across the border into Texas; border guards who were perceived to favor one gang or another over the others became frequent assassination targets. But more tragically, the illegal immigrants themselves became targets. Gangs would attack and kill their rivals' caravans. Or worse, hijack rivals' cargoes, collect the money, and then leave scores of people to suffocate in the backs of locked and abandoned panel trucks in the South Texas wasteland.

The gang which emerged victorious from this carnage, Family Archuleta, was based in Nuevo Laredo. Family Archuleta's success was a direct result of its brutality. Family Archuleta had a penchant for violence that matched any gang in F.R.E.E.America, including Family Dread. If anything, Family Archuleta is more formidable, because it is larger and more heavily armed. Family Archuleta controls almost all aspects of life on the Mexican side of the Rio Grande (there still are a number of factories which assemble electronics products for export into the United States, and Family Archuleta leaves these alone, figuring they're good for the community).

Being virtually the only game in town, Family Archuleta's membership now is thought to run in the tens, perhaps hundreds, of thousands. Having acquired all the military hardware the Mexican armed forces left behind after their war with the gangs, and being able to bribe army officials so that they can acquire still more weapons, Family

Archuleta looks more like a Lebanese militia than it does an organized crime family.

Family Archuleta doesn't just smuggle illegal aliens into Texas, it also transports them all across F.R.E.E.America, depending upon where there is a need for cheap labor. Since smuggling dope into the United States and transporting it to distribution sites all across the country utilized much the same network as the illegal alien operation, it was only logical that Family Dread turn over the importation end of the cocaine trade to Family Archuleta.

Family Archuleta had already started to move in that direction, and as strong as Family Dread is, it didn't have the strength to win a showdown with Family Archuleta on the Mexican gang's home turf. By the late nineties, Family Archuleta controlled almost all the organized crime in Texas. No type of illegal drug was brought across the Texas-Mexican border without Family Archuleta's permission, and the family also ran all prostitution, bookmaking, and protection rackets in the state. (Family Archuleta did leave crack street sales to Family Dread, partly as a goodwill gesture, but primarily because retail drug sales has never been an area that interested the family.)

Family Archuleta's power is so pervasive and unmistakable that, every now and then, some Texas official will start beating the drum for the Texas National Guard (which is close, but not quite as powerful as Kentucky's National Guard) to assault the gang's strongholds in northern Mexico and remove the scourge once and for all. But then Texans will look at the armor, artillery, and missile batteries placed on the opposite side of the Rio Grande and reconsider.

The wide-open nature of modern-day Texas has given it the ambience of the Old West—or at least the view of the region invented by old Hollywood cowboy movies. Since the state is renowned throughout F.R.E.E.America as being the place where anything can be obtained, it has become a magnet for IOs of all varieties. The IOs may not work in Texas—in fact, they rarely do—but Texas is where they hang out, partly because that's where everyone expects to find them and partly because it's where the deals go down.

For a long time, this activity was disorganized, and in a state the size of Texas, that disorganization was highly inefficient. For instance, a MGM company looking for a civil engineer to help it install computerized earthquake monitors into buildings being constructed in Soviet Armenia might waste six months poking through the phone books of Dallas and Houston looking for somebody qualified and available to do the job, when all along there was somebody out in Lubbock to do the work.

So the state stepped in and established IOI, Independent Operators International, a sort of referral service for Texas-based free-lancers that made one-stop shopping available for those seeking the aid of IOs. At first, IOI only listed the names of professionals, consulting engineers, medical specialists, and business advisers, who worked on a contractual basis. But the state soon expanded the service to include non-professionals, and heavy-equipment operators, seasonal workers, free-lance writers, and all manner of non-professional types involved in legal activities, were added to the listings.

One day an ex-Marine sought to have his services as a free-lance bodyguard listed with IOI, and a furor ensued. Though the service he offered was legal, the possibility existed that people wanting him to perform illegal acts would contact him through IOI if he were listed. The folks running IOI were in a dither and approached Gov. Culpepper and asked him about the situation. His response was, simply, "So?" Culpepper pointed out that, like it or not, Texas had become home base for all manner of spies, mercenaries, and professional assassins, and it made a lot more sense to work with them than to pretend they didn't exist. After all, Culpepper said, hit men buy groceries and automobiles just like everybody else, and if they were encouraged to conduct their business elsewhere, what concern was it of Texas? They would be good for the economy.

So IOI was expanded to cover every sort of independent operator imaginable. People from around the world knew if they needed any kind of free-lance operatives, from missionaries to mercenaries, all they needed to do was call an 800

number in Austin. The service was a boon to IOs of all sorts, and work became more plentiful. As work became more plentiful, more and more IOs moved to Texas, and, as Culpepper had predicted, it was good for the Texas economy.

Or at least parts of it. The IOs tended to congregate in and around Austin, and if not there, one of the other major cities in the state. Dallas still had the Supercollider nearby to guarantee its economic prosperity, Houston had LSS, and San Antonio a number of military installations. But there wasn't much going on in the smaller towns in the state. Bank-robbing outlaw bands, similar to ones which worked the area during the Great Depression, sprung up in smaller communities.

The most infamous of these outlaws is a pair of lovers named Barnstable Michelson and Claire Hillegas, popularly known as Barney and Claire. The pair's technique was unique, to say the least. Barney would appear in back of the tellers wielding a semi-automatic weapon and demanding all their cash. Since he appeared behind the counters, he'd have the drop on the bank guards, the surveillance cameras usually wouldn't pick him up, and he'd be able to see if one of the tellers tripped an alarm or put an exploding paint canister in with the loot to mark the money.

Then, just as mysteriously, he'd disappear, seeming to materialize in the sports car Claire had running outside. Even though Barney would be in and out of the bank quickly, a few times, on account of pure, dumb luck, police officers stumbled across them while they were in the act of robbing a bank and gave chase. But Claire, driving some color of Alfa Romeo CLS Quadrifoglio, would seem to push the car beyond its extraordinary limits, and quickly lost them every time.

Barney and Claire became folk heroes of sorts, especially in East Texas where they usually worked. If a suspect couldn't be found after a rural bank job, it would invariably be blamed on Barney and Claire, even if the m.o. wasn't similar. When a number of bank vaults began being looted—police didn't find any evidence of forced entry or of lock tumblers having been tampered with, the vault would just be empty when it was opened for

business in the morning—those crimes would be blamed on Barney and Claire as well.

But Barney and Claire, though well armed, never seemed to use their weapons (they've worked so efficiently so far there hasn't been any need to). Rumors persist that Barney and Claire are actually modern-day Robin Hoods, stealing from the rich and giving to the poor. When a package containing several hundred-thousand dollars in cash was left anonymously in the emergency room of the only hospital in Titus County with instructions that the money was to be used to prevent the hospital's imminent foreclosure, romantics decided it was the work of Barney and Claire. There are numerous reports of the pair giving large sums of money to struggling farmers in the area, to keep them from losing their land. Though these stories appear to be true, the bandits have subsequently robbed the banks to which the payments were due, becoming the ultimate recipients of their charity.

Terrorist activity is largely nonexistent in current-day Texas: The GENEcologists and the Millen-niasts find the political situation in the state too troublesome to bother with, while Migrant Revenge feels it can spend its time better attack-ing targets elsewhere.

Organizations and Characters

Rules Section

Jim Bob Culpepper

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
44	69	35	23	54	40	52
Sex	Male					
Race	White					
Nationality	U.S.					
Native Language	English					
Age	52					

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (High), Pas-sion (Some), Piety (Some), Sanity (High), Selfish-ness (High)

Tags: Always wears ornate cowboy boots and fancy 10-gallon hat

Advantages: Acting Ability (2), Presence (3)

Disadvantages: Mood Swings (3), Vindictiveness (2)

Skills: Bow and Arrow (3), Basic Firearms (1), Pis-tol (3), Off-hand Firing (1), Rifle (3), Submachine Gun (1), Shotgun (3), Basic Melee (1), Boxing (1), Driving/Automobile (3), Driving/Motorcycle (2), Fishing (3), Horsemanship (3), Basic Liberal Arts (1), History/Political Science (3), Law (3), Foreign Language (Spanish—3)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Under Culpepper's leadership, Tex-as has almost completely reverted to its cowboy roots, becoming far and away the widest open of any of the regional alliances. A person can buy *anything* in present-day Texas, and recognizing that, Culpepper established IOI—the independent operators' clearinghouse. As a result, the state is overrun with IOs, with most of those in the coun-try being based in Texas.

Culpepper's flamboyant style and pure Texas atti-tude insure that he'll be a force to be reckoned with in Texas politics for many years to come.

Family Archuleta

Family Archuleta, an organized crime gang based just across the Texas border in Nuevo Laredo, emerged in the mid-nineties as the victor in the vicious gang warfare between rival Mexico-based gangs for control of the illegal alien-smuggling business. The family now controls practically all the illegal narcotics trafficking in F.R.E.E.America, as well as most of the organized crime in Texas. They even work closely with Gov. Jim Bob Culpepper's Texas Rangers on a number of illegal activities.

Family Archuleta is probably the most powerful crime family in F.R.E.E.America. Not the most influential, mind you—everyone knows that's Family Dread—but the most powerful. Family

Archuleta is so large, so well organized, and so heavily armed, that no one, not even Family Dread dare oppose them. (Family Dread, in fact, allowed them to assume complete control of the drug importation business, since Hector Talisman realized his organization wasn't big enough to consolidate both the importation and the distribution sides of the drug trade.) During the gang warfare in Mexico in fact, Family Archuleta even made the Mexican army back down.

There have been a couple of abortive attempts by other gangs to move in on Family Archuleta's territory in recent years; all those gangs were wiped out to the man in a matter of months. But luckily for most, Family Archuleta seems content to manage what it has and not expand further. It's not that the family's members aren't greedy, they're just practical enough to know that overextension of resources is the best way to hasten the family's demise. Though they are aware of the dangers, Family Archuleta has been investigating the possibility of moving into the Chicago area.

Family Archuleta suffered heavy losses during the fighting of the mid-nineties, and as a result, its current leadership is unknown. It is assumed that Felix Archuleta, a nephew of the family's original founder, is currently running the operation. But rumors persist that Felix Archuleta was incapacitated in a gun battle with Mexican authorities, and though he's the nominal head of the organization, it's his brother Max who actually calls the shots. Regardless, Family Archuleta seems remarkably free of internal strife and appears as though it will be a force for some time to come.

Independent Operators International (IOI)

As the federal government fell into decline and the regional authorities gained prominence, Texas became the stomping ground for all manner of independent operators, from personal injury lawyers to mercenary assassins. Gov. Jim Bob Culpepper reasoned that if these sorts of freelancers were the basis of the Texas economy anyway, then the state ought to do something to help them out, and, hopefully, attract more of them to Texas.

Thus the state of Texas established Independent Operators International (IOI), a clearinghouse that, free of charge, will provide names and phone numbers to anybody seeking an independent operator to perform any sort of task. IOI's computer banks are extensively cross-referenced so a client can find somebody to precisely fill his needs and fit into his budget. Need a civil engineer with SCUBA and radio operator skills to check out the pilings on an offshore oil rig? Call IOI, and they'll give you a half-dozen names.

The one catch is that to be listed with IOI, one has to be a resident of the state of Texas. So as a result, most those IOs who weren't living in Texas already, have since moved there, at least nominally. Most the country's IOs are concentrated in the Austin area (where IOI is located), and even those whose business means they're constantly working elsewhere at least maintain a Texas address and phone number, because if you're not listed with IOI, you don't work.

Lone Star Space (LSS)

Back in the mid-nineties, in one of those brazen sorts of jingoistic acts on which Texans seem to thrive, Gov. Jim Bob Culpepper annexed the Johnson Space Center in Houston. By this time, the federal government was powerless to stop him, and thus, Lone Star Space was created.

So far, Lone Star Space has amounted to little more than the world's most expensive theme park ride. LSS will jam anybody with \$500,000 aboard one of its scaled-down reusable launch vehicles, and LSS can't work in enough launches to take care of the demand.

Which is not to say that LSS is an entirely insubstantial space agency. In the mid-nineties, LSS launched a two-person space lab for the manufacture of compounds in a zero-gravity environment. Indications are that the Pentagon is so upset with NASA's apparent sabotage of communications satellites, that LSS is going to be receiving all F.R.E.E.America's military business. So the future looks bright for Lone Star Space, just as long as NASA doesn't sabotage LSS's space vehicles as well.

The Rocky Mountain Alliance (RMA)

The Rocky Mountain Alliance (RMA) made up of Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, New Mexico, Utah, Colorado, Wyoming, Montana, the Dakotas, Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma, is the youngest and most loosely organized of the regional alliances. Which is not to say it is the most *disorganized* of the alliances—the OLMBC should get the award for that. A strong sense of libertarianism runs throughout the region, and most people in the area have little use for centralized government.

The addition of another layer of bureaucratic control would not be tolerated in the RMA states. Other states formed or joined regional alliances to fill the power vacuum left by the eminent demise of federal authority. Though people in the RMA thought the decline of federal power was a positive development and didn't want a new bureaucracy taking its place and restricting individual freedoms, they did see the advantages of presenting a united front to the other regional alliances. Eventually, all the landlocked states from the Great Plains west formed the Rocky Mountain Alliance, their purpose being not to work together so much as to not work against each other.

People in the RMA pretty much do whatever they want, as long as they don't hurt anybody, and sometimes, even if they do. Power in the RMA is largely concentrated in the hands of wealthy ranchers and large mining interests and if they choose to manage their holdings in an ecologically unsound fashion, well, that's just too bad.

Starting in the mid-'80s, prices for the oil and most of the minerals the region produced went through the basement. Mine operators either diversified into other businesses or went broke. With most of the big players bailing out, there was a time when the prices for mining property and oil leases reached rock bottom. A lot of sharp operators, who

could afford to let some capital sit idle for a few years, bought land in the RMA and waited.

Nobody bought more land than Sheik Hajid al-Faqr, a member of the royal family of one of the members of the United Arab Emirates. Had he lived, he would have been the most powerful figure in the RMA today.

But in the mid-nineties, with peace talks in the Middle East having been deadlocked for years, Iraq decided once again to invade Iran. This time, the Iraqis fired a massive bombardment of chemical weapons, hoped to finish off Iran in one bold stroke. As the Iraqis advanced on Tehran, the Iranians thought they had but one option: Massive retaliation with their own stockpile of chemical weapons.

Only the Iranians didn't use them on Iraqi troops or Iraqi civilians, they used them to strike at those they felt were supporting the Iraqi cause, the oil-producing Arab countries on the opposite side of the Persian Gulf from Iran: Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The sheikdoms of the United Arab Emirates were especially hard hit. In al-Faqr's country, virtually all the royal family and nearly 70 percent of the rest of the population, were either killed or left incapacitated by the attacks. Al-Faqr was one of the fatalities.

The warfare in the Middle East continues today as does the war's disruptive affect on petroleum prices in the world market. Immediately after Iran's retaliatory attacks, the price of a barrel of oil on the world market doubled and has inched slowly upward ever since. All those oil leases across Oklahoma and the rest of the RMA which al-Faqr prudently bought were worth at least twice what he'd paid for them, and the price of oil was once again high enough to justify new domestic exploration and production. The only problem was that al-Faqr was dead, and the royal house was in such disarray that it was unclear when, if ever, ownership of the leases would be determined.

The leases would have lain fallow if the manager of al-Faqr's U.S. holdings, an Englishman named Reginald Lexington-Palmer, hadn't stepped in. While the gulf states were still mourning their war dead, Lexington-Palmer petitioned a court in

Oklahoma City, where he had his office, to declare him the conservator for that part of al-Faqr's estate which lay within F.R.E.E.America.

The terms of the conservatorship left commercial exploitation of the estate to the sole discretion of Lexington-Palmer. These were terms to which al-Faqr's family would have never agreed. But they didn't have a chance to protest the terms because they didn't attend the court hearing—they didn't know about it. They were preoccupied with other things, such as burying their loved ones and rebuilding their country. Lexington-Palmer figured that, if he played his cards right, by the time they did wise up to what was going on, it would be too late for them to wrest control of al-Faqr's empire away from him.

Since the mining sector of the economy has rebounded as well, Lexington-Palmer's power extends throughout the RMA, from oil and gas fields in Oklahoma to copper mines in Utah. Given the current political climate in the RMA, he can exploit those holdings as efficiently—and ecologically irresponsibly—as he pleases. Lexington-Palmer's wanton disregard for the environment has earned him the label of "Public Enemy No. 1" from the GENEcology terrorists, and as a result, he's moved his headquarters to a luxuriously appointed concrete bunker in the middle of the plains 40 miles west of Oklahoma City. All his top assistants do double duty as bodyguards, and no one who hasn't worked for Lexington-Palmer for at least five years is allowed within the bunker's defensive perimeter. A contingent of at least 40 men guards Lexington-Palmer at all times, and twice that many are always on standby and available on short notice.

Even if their most hated enemy, Lexington-Palmer, weren't residing in the RMA, it would still be the region in which the GENEcologists were most active. The same political climate that encourages Lexington-Palmer to rape the environment in the RMA also comforts the GENEcologists. They eschew urban living, and given the situation, they have been able hole up in remote areas of national forests for months on end with-

out fear of molestation. Since they live in the RMA, they might as well do their terrorist acts there.

Lexington-Palmer has been the most frequent target of GENEcology attacks. They've made bids on his life several times, only really coming close when they introduced a bacteriological agent into the Oklahoma City water supply. This action killed over 200,000 people in the central Oklahoma area. The water supply was contaminated for a couple of years, and the tainted water claimed the lives of about a third of Lexington-Palmer's bunker staff. Though those members of his staff with quarters off-base were vulnerable to this GENEcologist tactic, Lexington-Palmer was unharmed. He had anticipated this sort of assault when he built the bunker and made sure it had a self-contained supply of well-water to protect himself.

Lexington-Palmer holdings, rather than his person, are usually the target of GENEcology attacks. Pipelines from his oil fields in Oklahoma and West Texas have been blown up so many times that now he trucks the oil to his refineries along the Texas coast; GENEcology terrorists would attack his tanker trucks, but the net loss isn't as severe. GENEcology terrorists have been responsible for causing cave-ins at his precious metal mines in Colorado, and they've managed to introduce heavy-metal contaminants from several of his open-pit mining operations into the local water supplies.

The deaths and injuries these terrorist actions have caused don't upset Lexington-Palmer nearly as much as the increase in insurance premiums these actions have brought about. In some states, he's persuaded the governors to mobilize the state National Guard to protect his facilities from further attack. In others, he's had to spend heavily to provide his own security. And he's not pleased about it one little bit. The rumor is that he has organized several commando squads to go into the remote corners of the West, find the GENEcologists, and wipe them out. Whether such operations are being conducted is difficult to ascertain, because if they're taking place, they're occurring in extremely remote locales.

In recent years, a group calling itself the People's National Parks Service has split off from the main GENEcology group. This group, less committed to violence than the mainline organization, decided with the collapse of the federal government, somebody had to be responsible for the country's national parks. There was no one they considered to be environmentally conscious enough to be trusted with the task, so they would have to save the parks themselves.

At first, their actions were confined to somewhat milder acts of violence than were usually associated with their more radical brethren: slaughtering cattle that ranchers had put out to range in Grand Teton, or blowing up a gold mining operation on the outskirts of Badlands while it was in its initial stages of construction. But they felt the need to do something more significant, and when their ranks swelled with members (mostly disgruntled and unemployed former federal National Parks Service employees who'd been laid off), they gained the strength and confidence to attempt the action they'd long dreamed of carrying out: The armed takeover of Yellowstone.

To their surprise, the job turned out to be ridiculously easy. The state of Wyoming had grudgingly taken over management of the park, only because the federal government had abandoned the role, and was unenthusiastically staffing it with maybe three dozen rangers, who were having to look after Grand Teton as well. The People's National Parks Service assaulted the park with about 400 heavily armed followers. The unarmed Wyoming park employees offered no resistance, and when the People's National Parks Service members explained their philosophy and what they were doing, the state workers thought it sounded like a darn good idea and joined up.

The People's National Parks Service immediately started doing two things: refurbishing the park according to their philosophical principles and charging tourists admission. Their main objective was to restore the park to what it looked like when fur trappers first came across it in the 19th century. They considered ripping out the roads, but decided the heavy equipment they'd need to do

that would cause more of a problem than it solved. They decided instead to let the roads deteriorate and ban motor vehicles.

Footpaths that had been built to make things easier for tourists were removed, though those that channeled pedestrian traffic and kept hikers from inadvertently trodding in paint pots and the like were kept. The souvenir shops and even the museum were shut down, and those stores which remained sold only essential foodstuffs and survival equipment. About the only modern conveniences which were retained were restrooms with indoor plumbing. After a long debate, the People's National Parks Service decided flush toilets were more environmentally sound and they were an acceptable technological trade-off.

To the surprise of the People's National Parks Service, its efforts were generally well received. The number of tourists visiting the park dropped at first, but those who did accept the hardships inherent with a Yellowstone vacation, were enthusiastic about the experience. Word-of-mouth was overwhelmingly positive, and soon, the number of tourists began increasing again. Anybody visiting the park was somewhat predisposed to the service's guiding principles, and after a few days of seeing the service's work and hearing the group's philosophy explained by true-believing park personnel, many would join up.

Yellowstone became a big moneymaker for the People's National Parks Service. There was a weekly admission fee upon entering the park. If a tourist wanted to see much of it inside of a week, they would have to rent a horse and saddle. If they didn't want to get lost and die of starvation, exposure, or grizzly attack, they would have to hire a guide. Since the People's National Parks Service's overhead was low—materials for most of the "improvements" they'd make were available in the park itself and the group's members would live off the land, receiving little, if any money—soon they accumulated more money than they knew what to do with.

At first, the People's National Parks Service gave most of its earnings to the GENEcologists. But as time passed, the service expanded its operations

and became more conservative, while the GENE-cologists increased their violence and became more radical. Eventually, the People's National Parks Service decided it needed to retain its earnings to further its aims throughout F.R.E.E.America and the two groups drifted apart.

With the success it had with Yellowstone (and the adjoining Grand Teton), the People's National Parks Service decided it should expand its operations. Their first objective was Yosemite; another large band of armed followers was sent out to take it over, only to find the park practically abandoned. The head of the parks department in Utah was sympathetic to their goals and convinced other state officials the best way to manage those lands was to hand them over to the People's National Parks Service. Thus the service acquired Zion, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, and Bryce Canyon National Parks. The state of Washington, strapped for cash, sold Olympic and Mount Rainier to the service. Oregon has offered the group a long-term lease on Crater Lake, and though the People's National Park Service would like to acquire it, the group feels its first responsibility is to consolidate its current holdings.

Above all else, the group would love to obtain Grand Canyon National Park, but that doesn't seem likely for the foreseeable future. Motel and restaurant owners and operators of other tourist-oriented businesses around the Grand Canyon have seen what has happened to their counterparts in the Yellowstone area—they all went broke—and don't want the same thing to happen to them. So they've prevailed upon Arizona officials not to bargain the park away to the People's National Parks Service.

The governor hasn't taken as obdurate a stand as the businessmen would like—after all, everything's negotiable—but she has stated publicly that she won't sell the park to the service for less than one billion dollars. Keeping in mind the service's past use of violence, the governor has posted 3,000 National Guardsmen in the Grand Canyon to prevent its seizure.

However, the People's National Parks Service has grown so conservative it now wouldn't consider

taking the Grand Canyon by force, even if there weren't any troops there. Though the service has been doing well financially, it doesn't have anywhere close to one billion dollars, so acquiring the Grand Canyon is a long way off. The other park the service would like to obtain is Glacier, up in Montana. Though they could probably strike some sort of deal for it, Glacier's on the periphery of the Aryan Nation, and the service is fearful about getting involved in anything up in that direction.

Though Lexington-Palmer controls things throughout the West where oil and mining are the chief economic interests, throughout most the rest of the Rockies, power lies with the various state cattlemen's associations and their umbrella group, the United Western States Beef Growers Associations (UWSBGA). The members of the UWSBGA, all wealthy landowners and/or cattlemen, are not quite as nasty as their predecessors from the Johnson County War days—for instance, they no longer string up sheepherders—but they're close.

The UWSBGA's primary goal is making certain all the land in the West is open range upon which their cattle can feed. Through pressure, economic incentives, and plain old political hardball, they've largely accomplished that. Cattle are now allowed to roam just about anywhere in the West in order to graze; they're accepted on pee-wee baseball diamonds in small towns, along the medians of interstate highways, and even in the wheat fields of farmers on the eastern slopes of the Rockies.

Given the political clout of the UWSBGA, this was fairly easy to attain. Getting unrestricted access to most federal land was also fairly easy. With the reduction of the federal role in the administration of public lands, there was nothing to stop the cattlemen from turning their herds onto national forest land. The only conflict the cattlemen encountered was with the lumber companies; though the cattle wouldn't graze in the areas where the loggers sought to cut timber, they'd often mill about across the roads in the valleys, preventing the timber company's trucks from moving the product out of the forests. This problem wasn't insurmountable, however. The two sides

got together, drew up some seasonal pasturing proposals, and returned to exploiting federal lands without paying to do so.

The problem came when the ranchers decided they needed access to national park lands as well. The federal government officially still owned these lands, but had turned management of them over to the states, and there were no high-ranking officials at either level who were about to stand in the way. But this proposal struck a discordant note with a lot of people, and not just the wilderness radicals of the People's National Parks Service. Many thought the sight of cattle grazing beneath the peaks of the Grand Tetons would somehow spoil their wild splendor. But after several years of public wrangling over the issue, the UWSBGA decided they'd heard enough and went ahead and let their livestock loose in the national parks, while asking, rhetorically, "Who's going to stop us?"

The answer, of course, was the People's National Parks Service, which, even as it grew increasingly less radical with maturity, never reached the point that it would blithely accept this sort of action. The service considered cattlemen's turning their stock out to range on national park land to be a wanton case of trespassing, and the group's standard procedure whenever it discovered domestic cattle grazing on national park land (even in those parks the service did not effectively control) was to shoot all the offending stock, slaughter it, and sell the resulting jerky in their supply stores.

Needless to say, this brought the People's National Park Service into direct conflict with the UWSBGA. Which was unfortunate, because the UWSBGA does resemble its 19th century predecessor in its move to reinstate the death penalty for cattle rustling. They've been successful in running such measures through the legislatures of Utah, Wyoming, and Montana, but there, as elsewhere in the West, the letter of the law doesn't much matter.

The UWSBGA has decided that rustling is a capital offense, and has taken to hiring "regulators" to enforce the penalty. Since the most blatant instances of "rustling" are those instigated by the People's National Parks Service, the regulators

spend a lot of their time in the national parks, hunting down perpetrators. Since the UWSBGA's definition of rustling is broad—for instance, they'd consider anybody who bought jerky from a park store to be a rustler—they'd consider pretty much anybody they might encounter in a national park to be fair game. And though the regulators' actions aren't pervasive—most of them lack well-developed survival skills and tend to be claimed by the elements—they present a constant source of worry and danger to the People's National Parks Service to which the service doesn't want to give a lot of publicity.

The UWSBGA's regulators are far more effective—and feared—out on the grasslands that are its power base. Cattle-rustling is a problem for the UWSBGA—poor farmers and transients often will take a head and slaughter it to get through lean times, and there are occasional large-scale jobs as well—but the regulators have adopted the attitude that whenever a calf disappears, whenever a head of stock turns up mysteriously mutilated in a pasture, or even whenever a cow wanders out on the road late at night and is clipped by a passing pickup, that it's the work of rustlers, and somebody's got to pay. If that means killing a family of potato farmers on a small spread in Idaho—more because they were convenient than because they might have done something—well, that's the way it's got to be. They were probably guilty of something.

Across the RMA, Indian tribes have begun exercising greater dominion over their reservations, and have joined together in a loose confederation, the Native Americans Association.

Fairly soon after the flare-up over the wall in Texas, the Utah state legislature officially recognized the de facto religious/political situation in the state and established the Mormon religion as the official state faith. However, this was met with stiff resistance from various radical sects in the more remote areas of the state. The radicals have, in effect, declared war on the rest of the state, and the rest of Utah has not been willing to fight back with the level of violence the radicals readily display. State officials still retain firm control of the area around the Great Salt Lake, but the outnum-

bered radicals, through the depth of the terror they instill, dominate the outlying areas.

Finally, there are the Nazis. A coalition of neo-Nazi groups finally did, in the mid-nineties, declare a separate Aryan state in the Idaho Panhandle and parts of western Montana, and either executed or "deported" all non-sympathetic government officials in the area to consolidate their control. What the Nazis plan to do next is unclear; they have virtually no contact with people in adjacent areas, and it's a region the rest the people in F.R.E.E.America shun.

Organizations and Characters

Rules Section

Reginald Lexington-Palmer

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
38	64	28	60	68	33	46

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	United Kingdom
Native Language	English
Age	59

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (Little), Passion (Little), Piety (Little), Sanity (Total), Selfishness (High)

Tags: Has pencil-thin mustache, wears an ascot

Advantages: Language Ability (2)

Disadvantages: Enemy (GENEology—2)

Skills: Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3), Off-hand Firing (3), Rifle (3), Shotgun (3), Basic Melee (1), Boxing (3), Jungle Survival (2), Desert Survival (2), Fine Arts (1), Piloting/1-engine (2), Speed Reading (2), Swimming (2), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Business/Economics (2), History/Political Science (3), Foreign Language (Arabic—5, Dutch—2, French—5, German—5, Italian—3, Russian—2, Spanish—3)

Metability: None known

End Rules Section

Background: Reginald Lexington-Palmer was pursuing a career in the British diplomatic corps when Sheik Hajid al-Faqr, a prominent member of the royal family of one of the United Arab Emirates, asked Lexington-Palmer if he would be interested in overseeing the family's British holdings. Though Lexington-Palmer had little formal business training, he proved to be adept at managing the properties, and al-Faqr soon moved Lexington-Palmer to the United States to oversee the family's considerable American holdings.

When al-Faqr was killed, Lexington-Palmer had himself named conservator of al-Faqr's holdings in the US into order to exploit them. Since this is somewhat illegal, time is of the essence to Lexington-Palmer, and he has begun exploiting every one of al-Faqr's holdings as inexpensively as he can. This means that he can't be bothered by niceties such as environmental regulations. Since most of these laws were promulgated by the impotent federal government, and since most of the holdings are in the RMA where libertarian principles prevail, there's nobody to stop Lexington-Palmer from befouling the environment.

Well, almost nobody. Lexington-Palmer has incurred the undying wrath of GENEology and they have made him No. 1 on their hit list. The GENEologists have mounted attacks on Lexington-Palmer operations across the RMA, and generally have exacerbated the environmental problems these facilities were causing. Lexington-Palmer doesn't care about the pollution, but these attacks are driving his insurance premiums through the ceiling. He's been prevailing upon local officials to crack down on the GENEologists.

But the word on the street is Lexington-Palmer doesn't expect law enforcement officials to control the GENEologists to his satisfaction, and he's begun organizing commando operations to go after them once and for all. Since GENEology continues to operate throughout the West, it must be assumed that Lexington-Palmer's mercenaries are either not yet in the field or are ineffective.

The Native Americans Association

One of the ways in which the decline of the power of the federal government was manifested was the bureaucracy's abandoning its responsibility to oversee the business affairs of reservation Indians. By and large, this was just fine with the Indians; they always thought they had a better idea of what was good for them than some condescending white bureaucrat in Washington, D.C.

As the Indian reservations were "deregulated," it became apparent to native Americans that they were competing with each other. The lands of the various reservations across the West yielded the same sorts of mineral resources and provided the same cheap labor pool. And as long as the reservations could be played against one another, the prices of what they had to offer could be kept depressed.

It was only logical for the nation's Indians to form the Native Americans Association, a loose confederation of reservation Indians that pursues common goals. The association has done quite a bit to improve the everyday lot of the reservation Indians. Since they were never subject to minimum wage laws, the reservations proved to be good sites for labor-intensive manufacturing plants, and since the cost of living on the reservations was low, the Indian factory workers came out okay. Furthermore, through the auspices of the Native Americans Association, the Indians essentially formed their own cartel, virtually controlling the price of some raw materials such as copper.

So life on the reservation, while still not great, is much better than it was 10 years ago. And the power of the Native Americans Association is substantial; it controls more land than any other single entity in F.R.E.E.America.

Though the organization is capitalistic in many regards, its leaders are confirmed political radicals. They're not satisfied with just the reservation land they currently have, they want all the land to which they feel entitled. And that's most of the country. To this end, the Native Americans Association, in conjunction with individual tribes, has been purchasing land adjacent to reservations and increasing the size of those reservations.

However, it appears this isn't all on the up and up. Rumors persist that the Native Americans Association has formed several goon squads of Indians who will employ whatever means are necessary to get a landowner to sell. These actions have many UWSBGA members talking about resuming the Indian suppression campaigns of the 19th century to put the native Americans "back in their place."

Nazis

"Nazi" is a pretty imprecise term in F.R.E.E.America, for up in the Idaho Panhandle region, there are all sorts of radical right-wing groups. From segregationist offshoots of the Ku Klux Klan to Libertarian extremists, everybody who resides in the Aryan State is generically called a Nazi, even though there are not many followers of Adolf Hitler in the area.

Nobody is real sure what the Aryan State is or when it was established. For a number of years, a variety of white supremacist groups in the area declared different parts of the Pacific Northwest to be white-only enclaves. For a long time, nobody took these declarations seriously, but as the power of the federal government declined, the white supremacists were able more and more to exert control over the region until their Aryan State was a de facto reality.

The extent of the area which the white supremacists control is unclear, but at the very least, it includes the Idaho Panhandle, a strip of eastern Washington, and large area of Montana to the east. What exactly the Nazis are doing up there is even less certain, as reports from refugees conflict.

Apparently, the various extremist groups in the Aryan State are in a power struggle, and treatment of minorities varies from group to group.

The less extreme extremists rounded up minorities, loaded them onto trucks, drove them just across the Utah or Nevada borders, and unceremoniously dumped them, while the real radical groups were exterminating those they considered non-Aryan and anybody else they thought posed a threat to them politically.

At any rate, the white supremacists seem to have cleared the area of all those they consider to be members of "inferior races" and have now turned to fighting among themselves. Experts figure the eventual winner in this conflict will be the genuine pro-Nazi element, as these groups—the most radical of the radical—are the most militaristic and by far the best armed.

Though the area the white supremacists actually control is unclear, it does appear that they are trying to expand their territory, primarily to the south and to the east. To halt this onslaught, local paramilitary "home defense units" have been organized to fight the Nazis, if things come to a head. But these efforts don't enjoy widespread support as many of the threatened areas' residents are sympathetic to the white supremacists, and the region's most powerful group, the UWSBGA, has apparently decided it makes good business sense to aid the Nazis.

Thus the extreme northwestern part of the country has become an area most people in F.R.E.E.America carefully avoid. Montana from Butte east, and Idaho from Boise south are considered safe, but venturing any closer to Coeur d'Alene than that is risking extreme danger.

The People's National Park Service

Originally an offshoot of the radical and universally reviled terrorist group, GENeCology, the People's National Park Service over the years has mellowed and become largely accepted in the RMA. The reasons they are generally tolerated are simple: The People's National Park Service hasn't been linked to a single violent terrorist act in several years now, and the group has done a splendid job of caretaking the national park system, which the federal government allowed to fall into virtual ruin.

Currently, the People's National Park Service controls Yellowstone, Grand Teton, Yosemite, Zion, Canyonlands, Capitol Reef, Bryce Canyon, Olympic, and Mount Rainier national parks. The group has been offered a long-term lease on Crater Lake in Oregon, and though it is interested, the service

would like to consolidate control of its current properties before acquiring others.

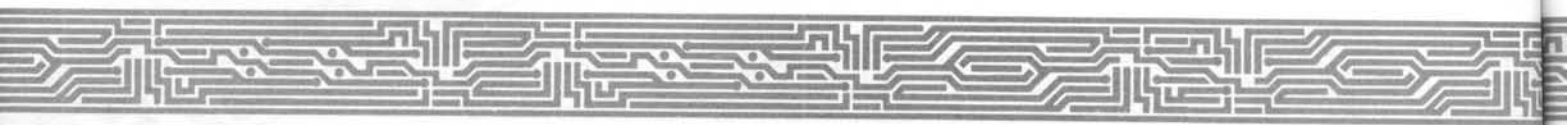
Acquisition of the Grand Canyon is one of the chief goals of the People's National Park Service, but that appears impossible without a change in the state government of Arizona. In theory, the service would like to get Glacier Park in Montana, but that's on the edge of the Aryan Nation, and the People's National Park Service doesn't want to get involved with anything up there. However, since response to the People's National Park Service has been generally favorable, the group's ranks continue to swell, making further expansion likely, and the service's leaders apparently are looking at moving into the national monuments of the West next.

Though the People's National Park Service is generally well received, that doesn't mean the group is without enemies. For instance, the owners of various tourist-oriented businesses such as restaurants and motels near national parks despise the People's National Park Service, since the service's policies have caused them all to go broke.

The service has on occasion come into conflict with Reginald Lexington-Palmer's headlong rush to exploit his holdings as quickly as possible. The People's National Park Service has generally won out in these confrontations, as Lexington-Palmer, seemingly uncharacteristically, has backed down. (In point of fact, Lexington-Palmer was merely being pragmatic; he considered the operations in which he and the service were conflicting to be marginal at best, and not worth the effort of facing down a committed opponent to maintain.)

But the chief opponent of the People's National Park Service is the UWSBGA. The UWSBGA has declared the People's National Park Service to be a rustling organization, and has sent squads of regulators into the national parks to eliminate the service's rangers.

These efforts have been largely ineffective. Though they're generally not as well armed, members of the People's National Park Service are all superb woodsmen and generally keep well away from the relatively clumsy and noisy regulators.



Furthermore, those members of the People's National Park Service who are armed, carry scoped rifles with which they are excellent shots; a single service sniper can track and pick off an entire band of regulators in a day's time.

But most important of all, the regulators, though often competent outdoorsmen, just don't have the survival skills necessary to cope with the extreme conditions they're apt to encounter. The People's National Park Service usual method of dealing with them is to lure the regulators into the most inhospitable area of the park and then leave them to die of thirst in the deserts of Bryce Canyon or freeze to death in the snows of the Continental Divide in Yellowstone.

While the regulators haven't been too good at knocking off those who are actually in the People's National Park Service, they have been somewhat effective at attacking the service's patrons. The regulators consider anybody they encounter in a national park to be fair game, and so they've been knocking off any campers they encounter. So far the People's National Park Service has been good at covering this up—after all, the national parks are wild lands, and nature shows no pity for those who are careless—but the service can't continue to hide this indefinitely. Once word of the new danger in the parks gets out, the People's National Park Service is going to lose a lot of popular support.

United Western States Beef Growers Associations (UWSBGA)

The UWSBGA is considered by most of the RMA to be a monolithic organization. It's not; rather, it's an umbrella group for all the state cattlemen's associations throughout the West. But that's little consolation to people in the RMA, as the character of the state cattlemen's associations covers the spectrum from nasty to vile.

The UWSBGA's opponents say the group's only aim is dominion over the RMA. Officially, the group has only two aims: ensuring the maintenance of open range throughout the RMA, and cracking down on rustlers. However, the way they

define those two goals and go about implementing them is so broad if they were to succeed in their aims, they would indeed effectively control all the region.

The UWSBGA has been very successful in opening all the range land across the RMA, using pressure, economic incentives, and political hardball to gain access for cattle to most of the public land in the region. The region's ranchers can let their cattle roam across farmers' fields as well, if they choose to. Sure, it's illegal, but the farmers are powerless to stop it. If they build fences to keep the cattle out, UWSBGA crews will just tear them down. And if the farmers offer stronger resistance, then they'll have to deal with the UWSBGA's regulators.

But the regulators are primarily concerned with implementing the other of the UWSBGA's primary goals, eliminating cattle rustling. Most states in the RMA have reinstated the death penalty for rustling, but the UWSBGA's regulators are too impatient to wait around for the nicety of a trial, and spend their time rubbing out suspected rustlers. The trouble arises in the UWSBGA's definition of cattle rustling: It's broad enough to include just about every non-vegetarian in the RMA.

Whenever there is a legitimate case of rustling in the RMA, the regulators will not rest unless the perpetrators are brought to their form of justice. More often than not, the regulators get the wrong person, but this doesn't concern the UWSBGA much, they're more interested in appearances than substance. The net result is most people in the RMA live in constant fear of the UWSBGA's regulators, because ordinary people are absolutely powerless to stop them.

The only group that has had any success standing up to the UWSBGA has been the People's National Park Service. And that's primarily because the People's National Park Service forces the regulators to operate in the service's arena, the national parks. There, because of their superior outdoors skills, the employees of the People's National Park Service enjoy a distinct advantage.

The Pacific Coast

There is no official regional alliance joining the states on the Pacific Coast. The region is still reeling from the effects of a series of disasters that occurred in the early nineties and no state wants to assume the responsibility for repairing the damage in another state that would follow from a forming an alliance. The states will get together on some minor projects—their air traffic control system is integrated, for instance—but for the most part, these states are choosing to go things alone—without a lot of success.

The first disaster to hit was the long-feared Southern California earthquake. Though plate tectonics indicated a large-scale quake was inevitable, the one that hit was far more disastrous than anybody predicted, measuring 8.8 on the Richter scale. With its epicenter on the north-central edge of the Los Angeles metropolitan area, the quake translated land a full 23' to the northwest, destroying virtually every structure in the area. The result was apocalyptic. The only areas of Los Angeles that weren't set ablaze by the ruptured gas lines were those that had been flooded when dams in the San Gabriel Mountains gave way and sent reservoirs water crashing into the northern suburbs.

One might have thought in the face of such a calamity, Washington politicians would have been able to put differences aside and work to ease the suffering of millions of their countrymen. Unfortunately, everybody thought the California earthquake emergency relief bill was the one bill that was certain to pass. Radicals from both extremes started tacking amendments onto the bill until the measure was so cumbersome and offensive nobody could support it. Failure to pass the bill brought charges and countercharges from all political sides, and rather than bringing legislators together, the California quake made federal politics even more fractious.

The state of California and various relief agencies did what they could, but their efforts were disorganized and not very effective. Some estimate that

as many people died after the earthquake due to lack of proper medical care as died in the quake itself. Regardless, the death toll was in the millions. California's governor did call out the National Guard to prevent looting and try to restore order.

Though the soldiers managed to control the situation, they couldn't be kept in the area indefinitely. When they left, there was no civilian authority to maintain the order the soldiers had restored. As it turned out, the only well-organized social group which remained intact, was the city's system of street gangs. Their reaction, of course, was to prey on the weak, destitute, and homeless, until the inevitable arguments over territory arose, and they began fighting each other. In short, L.A. had become hell on earth.

With the local banking system literally lying in rubble, and no federal assistance forthcoming, Los Angeles wasn't going to be rebuilt. Here and there, people reconstructed their homes, but for the most part, Los Angeles looks like Hiroshima, only larger.

It didn't take people long to realize there was nothing left for them in Los Angeles, and there wasn't likely to be anything for some time to come. So people started leaving en masse. After a few months, even the gang members stopped shooting at each other long enough to realize there was no money left in L.A., and moved their operations to cities which had not been ravaged, either going north to San Francisco, or east to San Bernardino, or south to San Diego.

Those who headed to San Francisco got there just in time for the next disaster. A series of aftershocks associated with the Los Angeles quake continued to rock areas all along the San Andreas fault for months after the Southern California disaster. For the most part, these tremors weren't too destructive (with the notable exception of the one which destroyed the dam near Folsom and caused most of Sacramento to be washed into San Pablo Bay). It got to the point people would hardly look up for anything that measured under 6 on the Richter scale.

When a moderately large earthquake struck about 100 miles northeast of San Francisco, everybody yawned. When it turned out that the quake had cracked the containment wall of a nuclear reactor and released a massive cloud of radioactive gas, people were more concerned, but not by much. The radioactive gas was expected to reach the upper atmosphere fairly quickly, a stationary front over the Pacific was expected to carry the cloud to sea where it would disperse in a relatively safe fashion.

But the tremor was not to be another aftershock from the Los Angeles earthquake, instead it was associated with the eruption of Mount Lassen, an active volcano. The enormous cloud of cinder and poison gas which spewed from Mount Lassen caused its own series of problems.

The front that was supposed to carry the radioactive gasses out to sea, instead carried it into the San Francisco Bay area. There, a temperature inversion caused by the greenhouse effect kept both the radioactive waste and the poison gas close to ground level for five days.

When this noxious cloud did lift, hundreds of thousands had died from breathing the poison air. Those who survived the virulent cloud face an increased risk of contracting cancer since they've been contaminated with radioactive waste.

Though the property damage in San Francisco wasn't as extensive as in the Los Angeles disaster, as a practical matter, it worked out the same: The half-lives of the radioactive materials which rained on the Bay have rendered the San Francisco area uninhabitable for the next three generations.

Understandably, neither Oregon nor Washington was interested in joining an alliance with California after all that has happened. California was going to have to figure a way out of its natural disaster mess by itself. Washington and Oregon began talks about forming a two-state alliance, but were still working out the details when the next disaster hit the Pacific Coast.

Back in the early nineties, under heavy pressure from the Washington state Congressional delegation, and needing an additional source of weapons-

grade plutonium, the United State Department of Energy reopened the nuclear reactor at the Hanford reservation. But safety concerns that had been raised—the design of this plant was nearly identical to that of the Chernobyl facility—were ignored, training was inadequate, and employee discipline was weak. So it came as no surprise to nuclear experts when, in the mid-nineties, the Hanford Nuclear Reservation became the site of the world's first honest-to-goodness full-scale nuclear meltdown.

The radioactive cloud that covered San Francisco after the Mount Lassen eruption was minuscule compared to that created by the Hanford meltdown. A 40-mile stretch of the Columbia River downstream from the reactor was turned into radioactive steam, which winds pushed east as far as the Dakotas—right over part of the Aryan Nation. Everybody within a 50-mile radius of Hanford was killed, the Columbia was polluted all the way out to Portland, and all of southeastern Washington and northeastern Oregon are still so “hot,” they remain incapable of supporting ordinary life forms.

Not all the humans in the area have been wiped out by the radiation. Many so-called “Wastelanders” wander the area slowly dying from radiation sickness and eking out a bleak existence. Food is scarce for the Wastelanders, and it's widely believed that they've turned to cannibalism for survival. There continue to be stories that the high levels of radiation have created a number of frightening mutations, though these reports are still unsubstantiated. For these reasons, people enter the contaminated region extending east from Hanford with caution and trepidation. Radiation aside, the areas on the periphery of the “hot” region are relatively safe, but the danger increases proportionately the closer one gets to Hanford.

It's hardly surprising that the Pacific Coast states have the highest rate of emigration of any region in F.R.E.E.America; major portions of the area are incapable of supporting life, and the industrial base is lying in ruins. Because the Pacific Coast states are such environmental disasters, the gen-

eral feeling in the rest of F.R.E.E.America is it's not going to make any difference if they're polluted some more.

Consequently, these states, especially Washington and Oregon, have become the repositories for the rest of the country's toxic wastes. Officials in the skeletal state governments which remain, are, of course, adamantly opposed to this, but powerless to stop it (their police forces are small and ineffective). The most common method of disposal of nuclear wastes is to air drop it onto the Hanford reservation; that area is contaminated for the rest of human time anyway, so additional radioactive wastes hardly compound the problem. Less exotic industrial waste is usually trucked into Oregon—taking it into Washington would mean driving through the Aryan Nation—and either dumped into pits dug in the periphery of the state's uninhabitable area or taken to "Fat" Chance for disposal.

It's a sad commentary on the region, but Harold "Fat" Chance is probably the area's most significant personality. His body has the unheard of ability to metabolize toxic waste and transform it into harmless, biodegradable byproducts. Weirder still, he seems to prefer to eat them. (He says PCBs taste a lot like licorice, except they have a sort of wintergreen aftertaste.) All he does, day in and day out, is sit in his house in Grants Pass and scarf down radioactive waste.

Eating all of this waste has not only made him very fat, it's made him very rich. Chance is the only scientifically proven method to safely dispose of many toxic industrial by-products, lacking other alternatives, conscientious companies which produce these wastes are forced to employ him.

As hearty as his appetite is, Chance can only consume about 60 pounds of waste a day. Since his services are so much in demand, he charges exorbitant fees. Thus, he's become quite wealthy, especially by current Pacific Coast standards. This has made him resented and scorned in the area and he's hired several bodyguards to ensure his safety. But the real threat to Chance comes from foreign operatives; many countries have decided that rather than addressing their toxic waste problem, they'll solve it on the cheap by kidnapping

Chance. None of them have succeeded, but the attempts are becoming more frequent.

The only major cities on the Pacific Coast to escape relatively unscathed from the disasters of the early '90s are Seattle and San Diego, and those two towns are doing very well. That portion California's high-tech industry which wasn't left for dead and didn't move to another region has relocated in Seattle. The city is still far from challenging Boston for the honor of high-tech leader of F.R.E.E.America, but with the aerospace industry concerns that still are located in Seattle, the city's creeping up on Boston in its level of espionage activity.

San Diego, on the other hand, has become the home of F.R.E.E.America's entertainment industry. The industry had to locate there or in Seattle, and San Diego's climate is better. While television and motion picture activity is currently booming, the real hot act in town is a musical combo called Professor Mohair and His Musical Mutants.

To label the six-piece group as a jazz combo would be limiting. They can play any kind of music, they just play everything as though it were jazz, improvising wildly and coherently taking the music six different directions at any one time. Fellow musicians are in awe of the Professor and his players, and even the best of them don't understand what the Mutants are doing when they're really hot.

Even if other musical artists only pick up on about a quarter of what the group's doing, that's enough to make Professor Mohair and His Musical Mutants the most influential musicians, classical or popular, working today. The record companies' scramble for their services gets downright nasty at times.

San Diego and Seattle have, in recent years, picked up some less desirable residents, too: WebOne and WebTwo. The breakdown in order prevalent throughout the Pacific Coast states suits the criminal organizations' needs nicely. WebOne ended up in San Diego, probably because the older folks appreciate the warm weather. Regardless of the climate, San Diego's proximity to the border facilitates WebOne's trade in old-line contraband and conspiracy. WebTwo has taken

root in Seattle, which is more fitting to its high-tech operation. Rumors abound that the massive fallout throughout the Pacific Coast states has created a raft of viable mutants, if that's correct, WebTwo's in a prime location to monitor things.

Another organization that has found the breakdown of society along the Pacific Coast to its liking is the Millenniists. Nowadays, the Millenniists roam freely along the edges of the "hot" areas of Washington and Oregon, without fear of restraint by law enforcement officials. Hanging out in this area has given them a new type of anarchic behavior in which they can engage. They now hijack the trucks loaded with toxic wastes headed to Oregon dump sites, and use the pollutants they obtain in extortion plots or random acts of terrorism in the other regions.

Finally, things in Alaska and Hawaii aren't a whole lot different than 10 years ago. The two states were always physically separated from the government in Washington anyway; now that there isn't much of a government from which to be separated it doesn't change things much. Philosophically, Alaska should be the northernmost member of the RMA, as everybody in the state is let alone to fend for themselves. As for Hawaii, the tourist industry is still the main business, and if anything, it's picked up.

Fewer travelers are coming in to Hawaii from the Lower 48 these days, but that's been offset by an increase in the number of Japanese tourists visiting. The Japanese are getting more involved in other ways, too: They've greatly increased their already substantial real estate holdings, and there is some fear that Hawaii could become the next Detroit.

Rules Section

Harold "Fat" Chance

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
71	69	34	20	57	53	52

Sex	Male
Race	White
Nationality	U.S.
Native Language	English
Age	27

Psychology: Cruelty (None), Loyalty (Some), Passion (High), Piety (Some), Sanity (High), Selfishness (High)

Tags: Exceedingly fat

Advantages: Acute Smell (1), Acute Taste (1), Observation (3), Natural Resistance: Poison/Drugs (3)

Disadvantages: Overweight (3), Short-winded (3), Unattractive Appearance (2)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Basic Mechanic (3), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3)

Metability: Chance has the unique metability to metabolize toxic waste. He can eat and digest, without harmful side effects, any poisonous substance known to man. This metability does not extend to radioactive materials, which will affect Chance as they would anybody else. How much Chance can consume in a day depends on how hungry he is on a particular day; under normal circumstances (i.e., he is not sick or feeling particularly full or famished from the night before), he can scarf down 2d6 + 10 gallons of liquid toxic waste or 1d6x10 pounds of solid waste a day.

No drug that Chance ingests will have any effect on him, no matter how much of it he takes. Even drugs with addictive or hallucinatory properties do not faze Chance.

End Rules Section

Background: Harold "Fat" Chance's odd metability was first discovered when he was 5. The casing on the old transformer his family had dumped behind the barn had cracked and was leaking, and one afternoon, his mother, to her horror, found Chance playing around the junk, not merely covered with transformer oil, but gargling the stuff as well.

An emergency crew cleaned Chance up, but the emergency room doctor confided in Mrs. Chance that, considering the toxicity of the PCBs young Harold had swallowed, there was really little hope for him and she should just take him home and make the most out of the short time the child had left. But Chance didn't die; he didn't even get sick.

Mrs. Chance, on the other hand, did both—she'd gotten PCBs all over herself trundling young Harold to the hospital. As he grew older, on dares and bets from classmates, he began consuming increasingly more disgusting and dangerous substances—rat poison, caustic drain cleaner, industrial-strength solvents—if anything, they seemed to make him more robust.

One day, after draining the crankcases of every vehicle brought into the high school auto mechanics class for oil changes, Chance began wondering if anything could hurt him. Figuring there was only one way to find out, the next night Chance broke into the storeroom of the high school chemistry class and consumed everything. Chance was not only completely unaffected, he found most of it quite tasty.

Chance figured this might be a better way to make a living than working on cars. After going around making demonstrations and signing the appropriate release forms, Chance started disposing of the toxic wastes of several local factories. It didn't take long until Chance was known nationwide and was providing his services to companies all across F.R.E.E.America.

As fat as he is, he can only consume so much a day, he has to be exclusive and only ingest the very most dangerous of substances. Since he's also about the only known way of disposing of most toxic material, he charges exorbitant prices and has become quite wealthy.

Wastelanders

When the nuclear reactor at the Hanford Reservation melted down and the radioactive contaminants drifted eastward, the lucky ones died straight away. The ones who weren't killed became "Wastelanders," zombie-like, vaguely human forms wandering the blighted area, slowly dying of radiation sickness.

The Wastelanders are known to be cannibalistic. Nothing, other than the Wastelanders themselves, can live in the area surrounding Hanford, and the

Wastelanders have to eat something to maintain their living dead existence. Generally, the Wastelanders will not kill their own to provide sustenance, preferring to go after any outsiders who venture into their domain.

For that reason alone, people tend to steer clear of the southern Washington area where the Wastelanders are most prominent. But trucks filled with toxic wastes from back east do have to enter the area, and those shipments draw Millienniest terrorists who try to hijack them. Thus, the Wastelanders always have an adequate supply of food.

There have been reports of the Wastelanders exhibiting a terrifying variety of mutations, though these claims are mostly anecdotal; very few people encounter Wastelanders and come back out to tell about it. At the very least, years of suffering have inured the Wastelanders to all forms of pain, and they seem to have nearly superhuman abilities. At any rate, those who have survived encounters with the Wastelanders report that they have to be blown apart before they stop advancing.

Which is to say, there are much safer ways of getting to the Pacific Coast than driving through Wastelander country.



Harold "Fat" Chance

F.R.E.E. America and the World

The United States remains a formidable military power and its banks maintain a stranglehold on Third World debt. In short, the country retains all the trappings of a great nation. These trappings are enough for most other countries to accept the United States as a great power and the US continues to act like one. For those countries with a better understanding of current-day F.R.E.E. America, their relationship with the country is strained.

These countries realize the hollowness of F.R.E.E. America's military posturing, and many American politicians are aware of their change in attitude. Yet diplomatic *de rigueur* dictates that both countries continue to act as though things are as they've always been, and neither country can formally acknowledge the reality of the situation. In short, F.R.E.E. America's standing in the world really is just a matter of perception.

Canada

Many Canadians feared that signing the 1988 free trade agreement with the United States would prove to be disastrous. They were concerned that Canada's economy wasn't large enough to compete on equal footing with their southern neighbor. Their main worry was that American economic power—and the American corporate institutions that came with it—would overwhelm Canada, robbing Canadians of their cultural identity and reducing Canada's status to that of Guam—just another American possession.

But things didn't work out that way. Canadian wages were about the same as American ones, but the lower value of the Canadian dollar made them lower in real terms. Thus Canada was able to provide raw materials to American manufacturers at a lower cost than American domestic producers could. Furthermore, the discrepancy in wages made Canada the ideal spot for Pacific Rim manufacturers to ship "unfinished goods" to avoid paying increasing American tariffs on their products.

Canadian middlemen would import electronic components, on which they paid little or no duty, from countries that were increasingly the targets of American trade sanctions, such as Singapore and South Korea, and then assemble the products. The resulting finished goods could then be exported duty-free to the United States, and Canadian firms reaped huge profits.

Instead of being economically dominated by the United States, the situation was reversed. True, Canada's prosperity was contingent upon its currency being valued below F.R.E.E. America's currency, but Canadian financiers shrewdly continued their heavy buying of American securities, so the Canadian dollar's value remained dependent on and inferior to that of the American dollar. The 1988 accord came to be resented—by Americans rather than Canadians.

Since the growth of the regionalism movement, however, Canada's position has begun to slip. The trade agreement with the federal government may still be in force and may keep F.R.E.E. America from imposing tariffs on Canadian goods, but many of the regional alliances—notably Greater Massachusetts and the GLA—have begun imposing their own tariffs. The regional alliances, so far, haven't placed duties on goods moving between F.R.E.E. American regions. Canada can still route goods through duty-free regions and from there move their goods to the rest of F.R.E.E. America, but this cuts into the Canadians' profit margin. The GLA has been wooing Ontario for some time now. Though there are no formal agreements yet, it looks as though Ontario might be the next addition to the GLA.

Canada understands better than any other country what's happening in the United States, and that's brought about a subtle, but fundamental change in the relationship between the two countries. As F.R.E.E. America's federal power declined and Canada's economic power grew, Canadians seemed to overcome the national inferiority complex they'd manifested for so long. Now, in fact, Canadians tend to be contemptuous of Americans, viewing F.R.E.E. America as a doddering power still reveling in former glories.

Mexico

The situation in Mexico has become better and worse in the '90s. The price of oil has increased dramatically and eased Mexico's debt load. At the same time, the US government's control of the country has weakened considerably.

The resumption of hostilities between Iraq and Iran and the subsequent disruption of Middle Eastern oil exports increased price of oil three-fold. Mexico was a chief beneficiary of the reversal in the oil market. F.R.E.E.America needed a reliable supply of oil, and Mexico, because of its proximity, was a logical source for it.

Treasury Secretary Kenmore Malone worked out an arrangement between MAA banks, Texas oil refiners, the Mexican government, and the Treasury, whereby the interest rate Mexico was paying MAA banks on its debt was cut in half, in exchange for Mexico providing, at the market price, all the crude oil the Texas refiners could handle. (The refiners also had to fund the construction of the pipelines to tie the Texas refineries to the Mexican oil platforms.)

While this arrangement was a boon to the Mexican economy, the US government's hold on the country grew more tenuous. Mexico's improved economic status brought pressure for improvement in the financial circumstances of the average Mexican. But wages didn't go up and food prices didn't come down, at least not to the extent Mexican workers had been led to believe they would. Dissatisfaction with the ruling PRI grew stronger and when the PRI claimed a victory in the 1995 presidential election, civil war broke out.

Officials in several Mexican states, especially the conservative ones along the northern border and the left-leaning ones that were strong around Mexico City, simply refused to accept the election results. The opposition parties went ahead and swore in their own officials and began operating their own local governments.

The PRI has been stuck for a response. The Mexican army isn't powerful enough (and loyal enough

to the PRI) to be brought into the conflict. To make matters more complicated, the powerful Family Archuleta crime organization has pledged its support to the opposition parties should full-scale fighting break out. So far, the violence—which is plentiful—has been confined to actions taken by the various parties' goon squads.

The increase in political violence has elevated the already high rate of emigration to F.R.E.E.America. The large number of Mexican emigrants, combined with the flood of refugees from other Latin American countries, has created a situation in the northern states that is especially volatile.

Central America

The situation in Central America hasn't changed much from the eighties. If anything, the events of the '90s made matters worse.

The Contras collapsed from their own topheavy weight and were fragmented into five or six factions, much like the tribes of Afghanistan following the Soviet pullout. The governments of Nicaragua, El Salvador, and Guatemala have toppled and been replaced by different faces, but not different policies. United States troops have been used in the area three times, once in Nicaragua as a "peace keeping" force, and twice in El Salvador to ensure the continuance of the current regime.

Panama is under seige as both the large American military contingent and the native government gear up for the takeover of the canal in 1999. No one in the region believes that the canal will be given up (Gen. Mullins has made statements on the subject), or that the Panamanians can take it without outside help.

In general, as democracy appears to slide away in the US, the governments in Central America have grown more oppressive, both on the right and left. The region is said to crawl with operatives from all nations, both those trained in espionage and those with metabilities, and even individuals with both. The resulting flood of immigrants north into

Mexico and beyond into El Norte is increasing, and no walls or rivers are keeping them out.

Japan

In the last ten years no other country has grown more contemptuous of America than Japan. Japanese culture dictates they display courtesy when dealing with Americans face to face (even if it is forced) but among themselves they call F.R.E.E.America weak and hopeless.

The Japanese, because of their control of Michigan, seem to understand the reality of the American political situation better than other foreigners. And this familiarity has bred disgust. The Japanese find Americans' inability to put self-interests aside for the furtherance of the common good to be emblematic of F.R.E.E.America's weak national character.

For years, Americans complained that by providing for Japan's national defense, the US was indirectly funding Japanese economic expansion at its own expense. Eventually, the Japanese heard enough of this sort of talk, and agreed to take on primary responsibility for their defense.

In order to accomplish this, they had to warp the constitution that Douglas MacArthur forced on them at the end of World War II which prohibited them from having armed forces. In the eyes of the Japanese, America's failure to play by the rules which it established was just another manifestation of national weakness.

The Japanese soon increased the percentage of GNP they spent on defense to roughly the same level as the Americans', yet their economic expansion continued, giving them more cause to be smug and condescending toward Americans.

The rebirth of the Japanese armed forces has rekindled Japanese dreams of territorial expansion. The Japanese have started using their newly acquired military strength to extend their influence. Japanese forces have largely replaced American troops in South Korea, and they've offered to take over the military facilities F.R.E.E.America

currently leases from the Philippines. Japan recently used its military position to help negotiate and implement a settlement in the Sri Lankan civil war that had been going on for the last decade. Having met with success so far, the Japanese are keen on learning where this military expansion can take them.

But there are some foreboding trends for the Japanese. For years, the Japanese succeeded by co-opting American technological discoveries and manufacturing the resulting consumer goods for less. But South Korea, Singapore, and other Pacific Rim countries are beating the Japanese at their own game, undercutting them on the cost of the same goods that the Japanese once undercut the Americans on. If this development were to result in a slowdown in the Japanese economy, the results could be disastrous for F.R.E.E.America, which has become dependent upon Japanese investors to purchase F.R.E.E.American government and industry bonds.

Western Europe

The countries of Western Europe recognize that F.R.E.E.America is experiencing the same sort of erosion of prestige they went through in the years after World War II. Western Europe and the US remain relatively close, but they see in each other their own spoiled dreams, and thus, relations aren't as close as they used to be.

In 1992, the European Community removed the last of the trade barriers between its member nations and started functioning as a single economic entity. But the Americans felt that with the removal of internal economic barriers came the implementation of external barriers to other, non-member nations.

Specifically, F.R.E.E.America thought the EC was sabotaging US agricultural exports by placing unwarranted restrictions on American produce. They objected most strongly to the subsidizing of European farmers which allowed them to undercut American farmers on price. The Europeans denied all of this, and the debate degenerated into

a series of charges and countercharges, tariffs and counter-tariffs.

The regionalism movement has eased these problems to an extent. Though the federal government is still incapable of acting, the governments of the regional alliances have managed to work out their own deals with the EC and largely put the matter to rest. But the bitterness of the trade war remains, and F.R.E.E.America's relations with Western Europe aren't likely to improve soon.

The Americans have finally succeeded in getting the Europeans to pick up a greater portion of the spending for mutual defense. But this hasn't come without a cost for the Americans. The more the Europeans assume the role of funding the NATO alliance, the more F.R.E.E.America becomes just another country in the organization.

But the military spending may have come at a heavy cost to the Europeans as well. The move to increase defense spending isn't a popular one in any part of Western Europe, but is considered especially distasteful by the West Germans and Dutch, whose parliaments approved the spending by narrow margins. Should those countries' parliaments, after the next set of elections, reverse that action, it could pose serious problems for the alliance. Furthermore, now that everybody's paying their fair share of NATO defense costs, F.R.E.E.America finds itself as just another member of the alliance, and rather than steering the organization toward US policy goals, more and more, F.R.E.E.America finds NATO moving in directions the country would rather not go.

The Soviet Union

Tensions between the Soviet Union and F.R.E.E.America have lessened all through the '90s. It hasn't reached the point where the two countries are allies, but nowadays both view China, rather than one another, as their biggest and most dangerous opponent.

Mikhail Gorbachev continues to lead the Soviet Union, and has expanded his policies of *glasnost*

and *perestroika* to the point that now Soviet citizens enjoy many democratic freedoms, including an open emigration policy and an unfettered (though state owned) press. But Gorbachev had to rely upon massive help from the United States to rescue him and his reforms.

As the Soviet Union became more open, the citizens' demand for consumer goods became greater, and Gorbachev realized it was beyond the capacity of the Soviet economy to fulfill those demands. So he cut a deal with F.R.E.E.America: In exchange for the consumer goods (mostly household appliances and electronics equipment) that he needed to maintain his hold on power, Gorbachev promised to end Soviet intransigence on a number of fronts in a variety of arms reductions talks the Soviets were conducting. As a result, F.R.E.E.America and the Soviet Union reached agreements on everything from conventional troop reductions to strategic arms limitations.

Which isn't to say there isn't a rivalry anymore. Both countries continue to maintain powerful militaries and the nuclear capacity to destroy each other several times over. But lately, Soviet and F.R.E.E.American interests don't seem to conflict that much, as both countries are paying greater attention to China.

China

During the early nineties, China came to be run by a younger, more reckless group, which sought to expand China's worldwide influence. Since China remains relatively weak technologically and economically, it has only its military strength to further its global goals. With the Soviet Union scaling back its commitment to Marxist revolutions, China has filled the void.

China's first notable success in this arena came in the mid-nineties, when India granted limited autonomy to the Punjab state. (It was, for all practical purposes, a grant of *complete* autonomy, with India only retaining control of some minor governmental functions. However, the government in

New Delhi wanted to avoid the appearance of capitulation, so the delegation of authority was made to sound less complete than it was.)

For years, China had supplied arms to and provided training bases for the Sikh extremists who sought independence. Next it was Namibia. Then South Africa found a pretext to declare the 1988 treaty in which it gave up its colonial claim to the area invalid and invaded the country. Expecting to meet only token resistance from the Namibian armed forces, the South Africans were stunned to encounter 20,000 Chinese paratroopers who had been mobilized inside of two days. The South Africans were driven back across the border and the situation returned to normal before the U.N. General Assembly even had a chance to pass a resolution condemning South Africa.

And so on, and so on. If there's an armed conflict occurring anyplace in the world, it's a safe bet the Chinese are involved on one side or another—and they appear far more willing to commit troops to a situation than the Soviets ever were. The fact that China is set to take over Hong Kong and may use it to become an instant economic power has both the Soviets and the Americans apprehensive.

Middle East

The Middle East is much the same as it was 10 years ago—a mess—only now the mess seems larger and even more impossible to clean up.

Lebanon is still deeply divided, with over 15 years of civil war having left little of value over which to fight. The peace overtures the PLO's Yassir Arafat made toward Israel in the late '80s were snuffed out when more radical Palestinian groups assassinated Arafat in Tunisia. With Arafat's death, the extremists took over the movement and dramatically increased the level of violence. The Palestinians in the occupied territories who at one time hurled rocks at Israeli troops are now throwing grenades. Border incursions by PLO commando squads have become almost a nightly occurrence. Despite increased safety precautions, acts of international terrorism committed by Palestinians are

on the rise. As a result, the Israelis are firmer in their resolve not to negotiate with the PLO, and the Palestinians are further from establishing a homeland than they were a decade ago.

But the real mess is in the Persian Gulf. After Iraq re-invaded Iran in the early-nineties, the Iraqis became more brazen in their use of chemical weapons, and it blew up in their faces. The Iranians retaliated with their own chemical weapons, only they targeted civilians and those countries which were perceived as giving the Iraqis material support. The result has been an eighty percent shut-down of Persian Gulf oil production; about all that's making it into the world market these days is a bit of Saudi crude that's transported by pipeline to the Mediterranean. Meanwhile, both Iran and Iraq continue the war, but neither side seems capable of winning or quitting. The conflict has degenerated into little more than daily exchanges of poison gas weapons lobbed at civilian targets.

The Third World

F.R.E.E.America's standing with the Third World, which hasn't been very high in recent years, is at an all time low as the century comes to a close. Largely because most Third World governments fail to distinguish between the interests of F.R.E.E.America and the interest of the handful of MAA banks to which these countries owe crippling debts.

The late '80s saw a general movement toward democracy in the Third World, but these new democracies, by and large, were unable to cope with the debt crisis facing their countries. They tended to impose severe austerity programs, which made the widespread misery more pronounced. Since these new democracies were, by nature, more accountable, their citizens tended to oust them in favor of more repressive regimes that promised to suspend debt service on the loans, if not renounce them altogether. So as the century ends, the MAA banks are desperately trying to hold onto those Third World loans upon which they think they can still collect in the face of international pressure to grant some sort of relief.

Mini-scenarios

TOP SECRET/S.I.

Old Faithfully Yours

Summary: A group of IOs tracks an industrial spy to the wilds of Yellowstone National Park during the dead of winter.

The Briefing: DeBergen Industries, a division of Cutey, suspects a former employee named Morgan Andrews of having pilfered the formula for its new super-conducting ceramic. Andrews was already under suspicion because of gaps in his resume which turned up when a security check was run on him, but since he had access to the formula and has now disappeared without a trace, the company fears the worst.

Before he left, Andrews tried to talk a couple of secretaries into going on a weekend skiing trip with him to Jackson Hole. Out of desperation, DeBergen figures that's where the search should begin. However, time is crucial—Andrews must be stopped before he can divulge the formula to a competitor—the PCs must pack quickly and proceed to Jackson, Wyoming, on a privately chartered jet.

The Set-up: "Morgan Andrews" is an alias for Lancaster Wallenstein, a notorious industrial spy working as a free-lancer for the Chinese. The plan had been for him to meet his contact at the ski resort in a week's time, but Wallenstein realized his cover was about to be blown and left early. He now has to cool his heels for another six days until his contact arrives and hope nobody discovers him in the meantime.

Rules Section

Lancaster Wallenstein

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
76	78	49	35	42	63	64
Sex						Male
Race						White
Nationality						US/Germany
Native Language						English/German
Age						37

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (None), Passion (Little), Piety (None), Sanity (Some), Selfishness (Total)

Advantages: Bilingual Background (2), Empathy (2), Sixth Sense (1)

Disadvantages: Greed (3), Vindictiveness (2)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Electronics (1), Computer Technician (2), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3), Rifle (3), Basic Melee (1), Knife (3), Silent Kill (3), Oriental Martial Arts (2), Disguise (3), Surveillance (2), Security Systems (2), Acting (2), Navigation (2), Skiing (3), Basic Science (1), Engineering/Electrical (3), Foreign Language (Chinese—2, French—4, Japanese—2)

Metability: None known.

End Rules Section

Wallenstein will surreptitiously keep an eye on the airport, checking for the arrival of anybody he suspects might be sent to track him down. Since the PCs will have left in a hurry, it's doubtful they could have packed for such a cold-weather environment in a way that wouldn't catch the attention of a trained observer. If Wallenstein spots anybody he suspects of being an IO, he'll be off; he's already rented a cross-country skiing outfit and purchased two weeks' provisions and other backwoods necessities.

The PCs will be able to track Wallenstein, but because of his talent for disguise, it will be difficult. On a $\frac{1}{2}$ INT check, a PC can track him from the airport to his first hotel room (where he'll change disguises). From there, the PCs will have to make $\frac{1}{4}$ INT checks to trace him from the first hotel to a car rental agency, to a second hotel, to a

cross-country ski outfitter, and, finally, to the ranger station on Jackson Lake in Grand Teton National Park.

If all the PCs fail to pick up his trail at a particular locale, they'll lose a day, as they will have to spend more time asking questions of people in the restaurants, bars, and other businesses in the area where they last traced Wallenstein. However, if they don't lose more than a day in tracing Wallenstein to the ranger station, then they will have a set of cross-country ski tracks to follow, making things more simple. (If the PCs lose more than a day, then falling or blowing snow will cover the ski tracks, and things will be much more difficult.)

But matters become simple if they can locate Wallenstein's ski trail. It wouldn't be unreasonable to assume the PCs lack both proper cold weather survival gear and the talent to use it. The PCs can double back to town and pick up the proper equipment, but that will cause them to lose more time, and if they're going to catch up with an expert skier such as Wallenstein, the PCs can't afford to lose any more time.

At the ranger station, Wallenstein will join up with a group of eight skiers (five male, three female) and three People's National Park Service guides (two male, one female) who are setting out on a rugged, circuitous trip around Yellowstone National Park, which is just to the north. Once the PCs reach the ranger station they must be careful about asking questions, otherwise the rangers will suspect them of being UWSBGA regulators. The PCs will be able to determine roughly the course Wallenstein's party will be taking, but won't be able to persuade any of the already suspicious rangers to accompany them.

The PCs can wait for the excursion to return in a week's time, but by doing that, they run the risk that Wallenstein will leave the group and permanently ditch the PCs by heading to Cody or West Yellowstone, Montana, and from there, to points unknown. Alternatively, the PCs could divide into two groups, with some of them trailing Wallenstein and some of them waiting for him at the ranger station, but to do so would be to risk weakening their force.

If the PCs decide to continue following Wallenstein (and the Administrator should subtly encourage them to do so), then they will have to make frequent Navigation and Survival skill checks to keep from getting lost and/or dying of exposure. However, they will eventually catch up with the group of skiers he has joined, somewhere on the west side of the park. This, in turn, will present a couple of problems.

First, Wallenstein will have changed disguises yet again, and there will be three other men in the party—two skiers and one of the guides—who will be approximately the same height and weight as Wallenstein. Thus, the PCs will have to get very close to the group to identify Wallenstein, and even then it'll be difficult. At a distance of over 100', identifying Wallenstein will be impossible, and inside 100' they'll only identify him on a $\frac{1}{8}$ INT check. If any PC gets within actual reach of the group, identification can be made on a $\frac{1}{4}$ INT check, and if the PCs join the group and ski with them for a couple of hours, they can identify him on a $\frac{1}{2}$ INT roll.

But joining the group will be a dicey proposition because of the second problem: If the PCs are carrying *any* sort of weapons, the People's National Park Service guides will immediately assume they are UWSBGA regulators and will begin firing upon them. Since they are expert woodsmen, as well as crack shots, this is not something the PCs should invite.

(Treat the guides as generic soldiers with level 3 abilities in Rifle, Sniper Rifle, Arctic and Temperate Survival, Tracking, Counter-tracking, Navigation, and Skiing. All three carry scoped hunting rifles. The skiers, other than Wallenstein, are generic thugs, with level 3 ability in Skiing, and level 1 or 2 abilities in the survival and tracking skills. None of the skiers, including Wallenstein, appears to be armed, though Wallenstein has some weaponry hidden on his person and some more in his gear. What exactly he's carrying is left up to the Administrator.)

And if that weren't enough, some actual UWSBGA regulators will chance upon the scene about the time the PCs catch up with the skiing

party. The PCs will be caught between the skiers and the regulators, the skiers being about 300' up a tree-covered mountainside from them with the regulators about 300' downhill from them.

Because of all the trees, neither the regulators nor the skiers will be able to see one another. However, both will be able to spot the PCs on a $\frac{1}{2}$ INT roll. If the regulators spot the PCs, what the heck? They've got orders to kill anybody they encounter and will start blasting away. (There are 1d4 + 4 regulators, who are generic soldiers with level 3 skills in Rifle, level 1 skill in Sniper Rifle, and level 2 skills in Driving/Snowmobile and Navigation. All of them carry either a scoped rifle, with which they are less proficient, or an assault rifle, which has a shorter range. The snowmobiles they have are another 300' down the slope, and have enough gas in them to make it to the west entrance to the park.) Once shooting breaks out, the guides will spot the PCs, and, figuring they are regulators, will begin firing upon them as well.

In all the confusion, Wallenstein will slowly move away from the rest of the skiers and circle around down slope from the PCs. He doesn't know about the regulators, but he'll be able to spot them, safely avoid them, and, upon seeing they have neither skis nor snowshoes, ascertain they came via snowmobile. He'll then make his way further downhill until he finds the snowmobiles, whereupon he will disable all but one of them, ride off, and get hold of his contact.

If the PCs fail to stop Wallenstein during all of this, they not only blow the mission, they still stand a good chance of getting waxed in the cross fire. Their best bet will be to worry first about the regulators. Of the two groups, they're probably the least formidable, and if the PCs can take care of the regulators, then they might be able to convince the guides that they're innocent third parties. If may be a slim chance, but hey, that's why these IOs pull down the big bucks.

Way Out West

Summary: A group of IOs is hired to ride shotgun on a convoy of toxic waste being shipped to Oregon to be dumped.

The briefing: Business hasn't been good for your group of IOs lately, so economic circumstances has forced you to take one of those jobs that's always available for soldiers of fortune desperate for work—protecting a convoy of toxic waste being organized in the GLA for dumping someplace in eastern Oregon or Washington.

The deal's simple. You get half up front to make sure waste tipping fees are covered. Come back with empty trucks, you get the rest. Come back with some of the trucks or some of the waste, your pay's reduced. Come back with no trucks or full trucks—or don't come back at all—and you don't get paid. (The pay for this assignment is up to the Administrator. It should pay, within the context of a particular campaign, enough to be reasonably lucrative, but not so much that it would seem worth the risk if some other kind of work was available.)

The states in the RMA figured out long ago that some of the convoys heading to waste sites in the west were off-loading their wastes in Wyoming or some other RMA state and now meet convoys at the state line with an armed escort that stays with them until they leave the RMA. So dumping the stuff before the PCs get to Oregon is not a viable option.

The IOs will join the convoy in Kansas City, right before it crosses out of the GLA. The various industrial concerns organizing this effort will supply two drivers for each truck (Use generic thugs with level 3 Driving/Truck skill armed with short-range sidearms; to determine the weapon, roll 1d6: 1-2: automatic pistol, 3-5: submachine gun, 6: sawed-off shotgun) as well as enough tanker trucks to fuel them (with a comfortable safety margin) for the entire round trip. The IOs can

split up however they choose to guard the convoy. They'll receive outfits which will provide a degree of protection from radiation and toxic wastes, and will be loaned whatever sort of vehicles they require. The IOs will be expected to provide their own weapons. The number of trucks in the convoy will depend on the number of PCs in the game, but there should be at least five trucks loaded with waste and two tankers.

The set-up: If the PCs decide against trying to dump their cargo short of the Oregon state line, things will proceed in a fairly dull fashion for the five days it takes to cross the RMA. (The roads are in such disrepair that traveling any faster with a lethal cargo of high-level toxic wastes would be dangerous and foolish.)

If the PCs *do* decide to try dumping the cargo elsewhere, they will first have to persuade, bribe, or force the drivers to go along with them. If the drivers ultimately refuse, even at gunpoint, to go along, then the PCs will have no choice but to head on to Oregon.

If the PCs can get the drivers to agree, they have two options: They can either do away with the escort the state has provided them or they can try running the back roads and hope they escape detection.

If the PCs try sneaking away from or eliminating their state escort (there will be one patrol car, each carrying two generic policemen, for every two trucks in the convoy, rounded down), they will meet with stiff resistance. Furthermore, if any member of the state escort survives for more than 10 turns after becoming aware of hostilities, he will be able to send out a distress signal and a massive response will ensue—1d10 National Guardsmen aboard 1d4 helicopter gunships within 1d10 + 20 minutes of the distress signal.

If the PCs try running the back roads, they will have to do so upon leaving the GLA; state escorts notify their counterparts in bordering states about convoys and turn over convoys to the border state's escort at a predetermined checkpoint on

the state line. Even the back roads are still checked frequently for illegal convoys by various means of surveillance. The level of surveillance is directly proportional to the quality of the road. Whereas all the back roads are bad, those that only require a 1/2 Driving skill check from each driver every hour also are patrolled frequently enough that there is a 50% chance of detection every hour. There's only a 25% chance of detection every hour on the truly horrible roads, but then, these roads require the drivers to make a 1/4 Driving skill check every hour. If a convoy is detected, a massive response along the lines of that which answers a distress call will ensue.

If the PCs follow procedure all the way into Oregon, then they'll cross over from Idaho somewhere around what's left of the town of Ontario. Various obstacles alongside the road will prevent the PCs from dumping their cargo before reaching the first turnoff, about 10 miles up Interstate 84 from Ontario. More obstacles will channel the convoy to a heavily fortified dump site guarded by 1d4 + 2x10 heavily armed generic thugs behind hard cover. The waste tipping fee that will be demanded will be 25% more than the up-front money the PCs received.

If the PCs don't have the money to pay the tipping fee, or they want to come out of this with a bigger profit, they will have no choice but to travel deeper into the blighted region. If any PC makes a successful INT check, that PC will remember that there were billboards alongside the main road advertising another dump site a few miles further down the road with far, far less expensive dumping fees.

The turnoff for this second dump site is along a narrow, winding road threading through the mountains to the east. The road is only wide enough for a single lane of traffic, and the truck drivers will have to make a 1/4 Driving skill check if they wish to go faster than 10 mph. The convoy will follow the road for 10 or 15 miles, and during this time, any PC making a 1/2 INT check will notice oddly scored tree stumps along the road. After the convoy's followed the road for a little

more than an hour, anybody making a $\frac{1}{2}$ INT check will hear a muffled explosion to the south, and any PC making a separate, $\frac{1}{4}$ INT check will see 1d4 figures in camouflage hiding alongside the road.

Right after the distant explosion, a series of blasts will go off nearby, and trees will come crashing down upon the road, both in front of and behind the convoy. The convoy then will be besieged by 1d10 + 10 typical GENEcologists (see *F.R.E.E. Lancers*, page 82). Since the GENEcologists are trying to hijack the toxic wastes the trucks are carrying they will take no actions that would endanger the trucks and won't be armed with anything more lethal than submachine guns.

If the PCs defeat the GENEcologists (which can only be done by wiping them all out) and search the area, they will, on an INT check, discover the logging equipment the GENEcologists planned to use to clear away their roadblocks. It will take about four hours to remove the trees, and after the road is cleared, the PCs will find that if the trucks proceed up the road for about another hour, they will come to an abandoned dump site, one apparently taken over by the GENEcologists.

If the trucks dump their wastes, turn around, and head back toward the main highway, they will be safe. However, if the PCs decide to camp for the night at the dump site or otherwise hang around for more than two hours, they will be attacked by another, larger and better armed group of GENEcologists (2d10 + 10 of them, and this time armed with mortars and grenade launchers and not showing much concern for the trucks).

Getting back to the highway, however, will not be a guarantee of safety. The muffled explosion that might have been detected was the sound of the bridge over the Burnt River being blown up by the GENEcologists, making return by the original route impossible. One of the truck drivers who's made this run several times before will say that the convoy will have to drive northwest all the way to Pendleton before it will find a road leading to the east and back to safety.

The problem with this is Pendleton is the heart of Wastelander country, and any road leading east out of there will go straight through the middle of the Aryan Nation. To reach safety, the convoy, at the very minimum, will have to cross back over the Snake River, an obstacle so treacherous it can only be crossed at a bridge. That means sticking to the main roads.

It will take approximately seven hours to get to Pendleton, and approximately another seven hours to cross the Snake and get out of Wastelander country. The closer the convoy gets to Pendleton, the better the chance of an encounter with the Wastelanders. After driving for an hour, roll a 1d8. On a roll of 8, the convoy will encounter a group of Wastelanders. For each additional hour of driving, increase the chance of a Wastelander encounter by one until the convoy reaches Pendleton, at which time the chance of a Wastelander encounter decreases by one for each hour of driving.

For figuring this encounter check, use only the actual driving time; time spent battling Wastelanders along the way doesn't count. If the PCs wish for the convoy to travel faster, then they can double their speed and alter the chance of a Wastelander encounter by two every hour. However, driving this fast means making a $\frac{1}{2}$ Driving skill check every half hour, and those who might be lucky enough to survive a truck crash are going to be hard-pressed to survive the Wastelanders who will eventually swarm over them.

Wastelander tactics are crude and obvious. They will barricade the road with whatever means is available, forcing travelers to get out and clear away the debris. When the travelers leave their vehicles, 1d6 + 6 Wastelanders will swarm over them.

Wastelanders should be treated as generic thugs with two modifications. First, because of their ability to absorb pain, every body area of a Wastelander will have double the normal damage boxes. Secondly, the highly radioactive Wastelanders never carry weapons, using their bare hands to inflict damage instead. Their first successful

attack against a character will rend the protective clothing that character is wearing. Subsequent successful attacks against that body area will result in 1d4 points of CON due to radiation, in addition to whatever bruise damage might have been inflicted. (The Administrator can determine any additional long-term effects of radiation poisoning.)

The Wastelanders will continue to attack until they are destroyed or until the vehicles move on. Once the barricade is cleared from the road sufficiently to allow the trucks around it, the convoy can proceed.

If the convoy makes it safely across the Snake, it will then shortly encounter one last barricade, this one made up of a number of black sedans and manned, not by Wastelanders, but by 1d6 + 6 men in black uniforms.

This, of course, is the border checkpoint for the Aryan Nation, its purpose is to ensure that nobody from an inferior race enters their domain. As long as everyone in the convoy is white (there's one chance in three of any truck driver being non-white), then they'll allow the convoy to pass. But if these guys spot any non-whites, they'll order everybody out, and an additional 1d6 of similarly uniformed men will emerge on each of the other three sides of the convoy.

Any PC seeing the roadblock, makes a $\frac{1}{2}$ INT check, can figure out what this is all about. If there are any non-whites anywhere in the convoy, the PCs are going to pretty much have to run the roadblock. That won't be that tough—semi-trailer rigs can smash through Buick four-door sedans without much trouble—but the driver of the lead truck will have to make a $\frac{1}{4}$ Driving skill check and the drivers of the other trucks will have to make a $\frac{1}{2}$ Driving skill check to get through without crashing.

If the PCs crash through the barricade, then 1d4 + 2 cars will give chase. (For the chase cars' stats, use **Max Spd:** 110, **Accel:** 12, **Handl:** -10, **Brake:** 35, **Prot:** -45, **#Pass:** 5, **Range:** 360,

Cost: 22,550.) Each car will contain four generic soldiers, one of whom is the driver. The drivers have a level 2 Driving skill, while the others have level 3 skills in the assault rifles and grenade launchers they carry.

The cars will continue to give chase until they are wrecked, the convoy is stopped, or until the chase goes about 150 miles, to the where the highway branches off about 125 miles north of Boise. About 50 miles north of the fork, 1d2 + 1 more cars, coming from the other direction, will join the action.

The road over which this chase is conducted is a two-lane highway that's in pretty good shape. Still, it winds through the Salmon River Mountains, and the Administrator should call for frequent Driving skill checks from everybody involved. Just how many are needed are left to the imagination and mercy of the Administrator.

If the PCs survive the chase, then they're home free. They'll be out of the Aryan Nation, back onto a safe highway, with nothing left to attack. And all the way back to Kansas City, they can contemplate why they don't just go on unemployment when the work's slow.

Labor Pains

Summary: A group of IOs trying to keep top-secret military technology from falling into Soviet hands inadvertently gets caught up in labor violence.

The briefing: Maj. David Wiley has a problem. He's the Pentagon's point man for a contract to develop a new super-strong fiber into lightweight bulletproof clothing for the armed forces, but he's afraid security at the plant which will be manufacturing the clothing is lax. So he's hired a group of IOs to come in and plug security leaks.

The formula for the fiber was developed by researchers at M.I.T., and Cutey has acquired an exclusive license to the patent. A number of Cutey scientists, working independently at a variety of Cutey subsidiaries, then developed the technique of weaving the fiber into a lightweight, bulletproof fabric.

Since the advantage is the fabric's extraordinarily light weight—the cloth is about the same weight as canvas, and though bulky, can be adapted to most everyday uses. Orville Flanagan decided that in order to take full advantage of it, he needed people with experience in textile manufacturing. To that end, Cutey purchased Rhode Island Textile and Apparel.

Rhode Island Textile and Apparel hasn't had much experience in handling sensitive military contracts. Actually, none at all. Before it was purchased by Cutey, the company's main line of business was knocking off versions of high-fashion designs for sale in discount department stores. This lack of experience with security matters is what concerns Wiley.

Thor Bjornsen's Hammer Associates is nominally in charge of security at the plant, as it is at all divisions of Cutey. Maybe it's because Rhode Island Textile and Apparel is in Providence, outside Hammer Associates' normal sphere of influence, but the security consultants' presence isn't

at all noticeable. As a result, Wiley's in a near panic, though he's making a game effort to mask it, and has had to turn to outside help to ensure security.

Right now, only a half-dozen scientists, all of whom now have been gathered at Rhode Island Textile and Apparel, are familiar with the entire manufacturing process for the cloth. Those six are William Blaylock and Herman Bell, who were involved in the original fiber research at M.I.T., and Kermit Henry, Stacey Davis, Tony Patterson, and Andre Jones, researchers at various Cutey subsidiaries who further refined the process.

If there is a leak, it will have to come from one of those six scientists, and the IOs will be expected to keep them under close surveillance. The IOs will be provided with wiretaps on all the phones at the Rhode Island Textile and Apparel complex, and whatever other electronic surveillance equipment they feel they need, as well as whatever covers they wish to assume to operate freely inside the complex. However, Wiley will insist that one of the IOs pose as the secretary to the scientists, whose desk is in an outer office leading into the six scientists' offices, so there will be somebody who can keep an eye on the whole group at once.

As the IOs get up to leave the briefing, Wiley will add one more thing: The plant's textile workers' labor contract has expired, and they may be going out on strike, but they probably won't, and even if they do, it's nothing to worry about.

The setup: Wiley is actually a double agent in the employ of Sergei Petrokov, and he's hired the IOs not to plug a security leak, but to flush out the Hammer Associates operative he's guessing Bjornsen has planted among the scientists. Wiley doesn't have the secret information yet, and is waiting for the Hammer Associates operative to be exposed before making his move. If a suitable length of time passes without the IOs finding the Hammer Associates plant, then Wiley will assume there isn't an undercover agent, and will go ahead and complete the transaction.

However, there is a Hammer Associates plant, namely, Stacey Davis. Because of the hurry-up nature of this project, Bjornsen hasn't been able to staff the plant as he normally would, so he's using a highly placed undercover agent until production of the bulletproof fabric is started up, and Hammer Associates can put a regular security team in place.

Wiley has intentionally gone over the heads of Hammer Associates in hiring the IOs, so that neither knows of the other's presence. Any espionage activity conducted by Davis, even though it's meant to protect the security of the fabric process, should arouse the suspicions of the IOs, and vice versa. If the IOs expose anybody, it's going to be Davis, and once that happens, it will be safe for Wiley to finally acquire the formula and manufacturing process from Herman Bell, the scientist he's compromised.

There are really only three NPCs about whom the Administrator really needs to worry: Wiley, Davis, and Bell. The statistics for them are as follows:

Rules Section

US Army Maj. David Wiley

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
60	62	58	43	51	59	60

Sex Male
 Race White
 Nationality US
 Native Language English
 Age 48

Psychology: Cruelty (High), Loyalty (Little), Passion (Little), Piety (Little), Sanity (High), Selfishness (Total)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Electronics (1), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (2), Off-hand Firing (2), Rifle (3), Sniper Rifle (1), Submachine Gun (3), Hand Grenade (3), Grenade Launcher (2), Basic Melee (1), Knife (2), Silent Kill (2), Oriental Martial Arts (3), Interrogation (3), Security Systems (2), Piloting/1-engine (3), Piloting/Helicopter (3), Basic Science (1), Chemistry (3), Engineering/Mechanical (2)

Stacey Davis

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
52	68	51	65	37	52	60

Sex Female
 Race Black
 Nationality US
 Native Language English
 Age 32

Psychology: Cruelty (Some), Loyalty (High), Passion (High), Piety (Little), Sanity (High), Selfishness (Little)

Advantages: Observation (3)

Disadvantages: Allergies (1), Vision Impairment (2)

Skills: Basic Tool Use (1), Electronics (1), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (3), Off-hand Firing (2), Rifle (1), Submachine Gun (3), Shotgun (2), Basic Melee (1), Knife (2), Silent Kill (2), Oriental Martial Arts (2), Interrogation (3), Shadowing (2), Stealth (2), Surveillance (3), Security Systems (3), Gleaning (2), Basic Science (1), Astronomy/Math/Physics (3), Chemistry (1), Foreign Language (French—3)

Herman Bell

STR	INT	REF	WIL	CON	MOV	DEX
21	72	33	65	25	28	53

Sex Male
 Race White
 Nationality US (Naturalized German)
 Native Language English/German
 Age 44

Psychology: Cruelty (Little), Loyalty (Little), Passion (Little), Piety (Little), Sanity (Little), Selfishness (Little)

Advantages: Bilingual Background (2)

Disadvantages: Clumsiness (2)

Skills: Electronics (1), Basic Firearms (1), Pistol (2), Driving/Boat (2), Horsemanship (2), Musical Instrument (Cello—3), Sailing (2), Basic Liberal Arts (1), Basic Science (1), Astronomy/Math/Physics (3), Chemistry (3), Engineering/Chemical (3), Foreign Language (French—3, Italian—4)

End Rules Section

The statistics on the other four scientists don't really make that much difference, and the Administrator can make them whatever he or she pleases. However, we're talking about real smart people here, so they should all have INTs of 65 or better as well as highly advanced education skills, with an emphasis on science.

The Administrator can string out the undercover investigation aspect of the game for as long as he or she pleases, making all the scientists perform actions that might reasonably bring them under suspicion. After doing that for a week or so of game time though, the Administrator should get things really rolling by having a number of odd circumstances arise on the same day.

First, the union workers at the complex will have decided to go out on strike. Since most of them work in the plant on the other side of the complex from the office and laboratory building in which the scientists spend their time, this won't have a direct effect on the IOs yet, but it's something of which they should be cognizant.

Second, a Pentagon inspection team consisting of uniformed officers from the various branches of the military will conduct a surprise check of the facility, and will spend the entire day with Wiley. If any PC thinks to call the Pentagon to check out the legitimacy of the inspection team and is willing to put up with three hours of getting the run-around (make a WIL check), then he or she will learn the guys with Wiley are phonies. Similarly, any PC who engages in conversation with a member of the inspection team for more than 10 minutes and makes a $\frac{1}{2}$ INT check will ascertain they are fakes. (Since the inspection team members will try to avoid conversation if at all possible, this won't be that easy.)

Finally, a little after noon, the PCs will hear an electronically altered voice on one of their phone taps say, "Petrokov's boy will move tonight." The call will be made during lunch hour on the old rotary phone that hangs in the employee break room, and the caller will hang up before the destination of the call can be traced. Since the call is

made on a phone to which everybody has access, and is made at a time when all the scientists except Bell are out of their offices, unless the IOs are shadowing the scientists, they won't be able to figure out who made the call.

The PCs should show up in force that evening. Any PC who comes to the facility in the evening who makes a $\frac{1}{4}$ INT check will realize the janitorial crew working this evening is entirely different. That's because tonight's janitorial crew is actually a Hammer Associates strike team which was summoned by Davis with the mysterious phone call from the break room.


Besides the new set of janitors cleaning the building—and of course the picket lines which have gone up outside the plant—the really odd thing going on at Rhode Island Textile and Apparel tonight is the number of people who are working late. Wiley's still there, as are all the members of the Pentagon inspection team, as are Davis, Bell, and at least one or two other scientists.

Around 9 p.m., as the noise from the picket lines becomes noticeably louder, the janitors will begin cleaning up in the offices of the scientists. When a janitor gets around to doing Bell's office, he'll come flying out the door, screaming that Bell's dead.

Bell's been poisoned by Davis (Thor Bjornsen doesn't like small-timers hornning in on his action), but though Davis has been able to slip something into Bell's coffee in the break room, she hasn't been able to slip the file of documents he was planning to turn over to Wiley tonight out of Bell's office yet.

The janitor will run screaming straight across the hall into Wiley's office, and will try to use his feigned hysteria to impede Wiley and his henchmen for as long as possible. In the meantime, Davis will attempt to sneak into Bell's office and make off with the file during the confusion.

How exactly this all transpires will depend to an extent on the reactions of the PCs. They could keep Davis from making off with the file, or man-



age to keep Wiley and his men out in the hallway a bit longer, allowing Davis a better chance to get away with the documents. At any rate, in fairly short order, Davis will be poking her head out of her office, pretending to wonder what all the ruckus is about, Wiley and his minions will be gathered in the outer office leading into Davis', Bell's, and the other scientists' offices, and the janitors will be gathered in the hall just outside.

When everybody's where they're supposed to be, a furious gun battle will erupt outside. It's a squad of Temporary People shock troops fighting it out with a bunch of IOs hired by the union local, but that won't immediately dawn on the folks inside the office building, and everybody but Davis will panic and go for a gun. (There are five janitors and five military inspectors, all of whom are Generic Soldiers with level 3 ability in whatever weapons they carry. The janitors all have submachine guns hidden on the carts they push, while each of the inspectors has an automatic pistol and two grenades.)

After everybody pulls a piece, they'll start shooting at one another, and the PCs can join in as they please, purposely stay on the fringes, or get caught in the cross fire. If Davis has managed to ease her way toward the hall, she'll feign panic and run down the hall screaming hysterically, with the file hidden in her purse. If she can't get to the hall, she'll cower in her office, waiting for things to die down so she can slip out.

As long as she's not confronted by someone with a gun, Davis will retain her cool. Once cornered, however, she'll produce a small-caliber automatic from someplace and protect herself. If she's pursued down the hall, she'll run into the women's restroom and will come out with the submachine gun she's hidden in there.

The main thing the PCs need to do to succeed on this mission is keep the file Davis has stolen from falling into Wiley's hands. If Davis retains the file, fine; the secrets don't fall into Soviet hands. But since neither Davis nor the PCs realize they are working for the same side, it's unlikely they'll resolve this peacefully.

If the PCs manage to neutralize all the competing agents and latch onto the file, they're still only halfway home. A pitched battle between the two sides of a labor dispute is still being waged outside, and the PCs will have to get past the two sides to reach safety. The problem with that is that neither the Temporary People shock troops nor the labor operatives know who the PCs are, and both sides are going to naturally assume anybody they don't recognize who's carrying a gun is an enemy and will open fire upon them.

The Temporary People shock troops are mostly around the center of the compound, and the union IOs are concentrated along the perimeter of the complex. All the operatives on both sides of the labor dispute are Generic Soldiers with level 3 abilities in the weapon they carry. (Half will have assault rifles, the other half submachine guns; the Administrator chooses.) The PCs will have to make their way through a set of 1d6 + 5 of each of them.

If the PCs manage to get through all of this with the file on bulletproof fiber securely in hand, well, then it's a good news-bad news sort of situation. The good news is that they'll have latched onto a technological secret for which a number of governments and organizations will pay a great deal of money. The bad news is that they will have made an enemy of Thor Bjornsen—and he's not the sort of fellow you want mad at you.



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ISBN 0-88038-725-4



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